Sample Syllabus for
JRNL 4970 SPECIAL TOPICS IN JOURNALISM
(Topic: Sports Journalism)

Course Number: JRNL 4970

Prerequisites: JRNL 2210, junior or senior, majors only (COMM, JRNL, PRCM, RTVF, AGCO) and COI

Class periods: 12:30-1:45 p.m., Tuesday and Thursday

Instructor: Dr. John Carvalho

Office: Tichenor Hall 216

Telephone: Ext. 4-4454 (on-campus)

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Office Hours: Monday & Wednesday, 10-11:30 a.m.; Tuesday and Thursday, 2-4 p.m.; or by appointment (please ask)


Course Overview: This course will explore the changing world of sports reporting – mainly in newspapers and magazines, though sports broadcasting will receive some attention as well. Students will learn not only how to cover sports events, but also how to cover the broader issues confronting sports today. Written assignments will provide students the opportunity to apply the professional techniques of journalism within a sports context.

Course Competencies: After taking this course, a student should be able to:

1. Understand how sports journalism has evolved and its relationship to the development of sports as a cultural force;

2. Apply the basics of news reporting (research, interviewing, story organization, etc.) to the development of sports coverage;
3. Cover different sporting events effectively;

4. Discuss the legal and ethical issues facing sports journalism; and

5. Explain how advances in technology can help the sports reporter.

Course Procedures: This course incorporates two teaching methods:

1. Lecture-discussion. You will be assigned readings that prepare you for that day's discussions and will be expected to actively and effectively participate in classroom discussions. In most cases, readings that are not in the textbook will be given to you at least one class session in advance. Where Web sites are available, you will be responsible to locate those readings on your own.

2. Writing. Sports reporting is like any professional skill: You get better with practice! You will be assigned a variety of sports journalism assignments (game coverage, interview, observation). Expectations will be spelled out clearly for each assignment. The student’s grade will reflect the extent to which these expectations are met.

Attendance Policy: The Tiger Cub gives the basics of the Auburn University attendance policy. As such, students in any class are responsible for being aware of it. This professor’s highlights:

Please be on time. Beyond attendance issues, lateness is disruptive and a bad professional ethic to tolerate.

Assignments. If work is due on a day you are absent, you are responsible to make sure the work is turned in on time. If work is assigned on the day you are absent, you are responsible for picking up a copy of the assignment.

Unexcused absences. If you have more than four unexcused absences, you will be assigned an F regardless of assignment grades.

Plagiarism: Academic dishonesty is an offense that will be reported to the Academic Dishonesty Committee. The Auburn University Student Academic Honesty Code has this to say about plagiarism:
“Violations . . . [include] the submission of themes, essays, term papers, design projects, these and dissertations, similar requirements or parts thereof that are not the work of the student submitting them. . . . When direct quotations are used, they must be indicated, and when the ideas of another are incorporated into a paper, they must be appropriately acknowledged. Plagiarism is a violation. In starkest terms, plagiarism is stealing – using the words or ideas of another as if they were one’s own. For example, if another person’s complete sentence, syntax, key words, or the specific or unique ideas and information are used, one must give that person credit through proper documentation or recognition, as through the use of footnotes.”

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** I am open to working with all students. Any student needing special accommodations should contact the Program for Students with Disabilities, 1244 Haley Center. Only those students who provide documentation will be accommodated.

**Cell phones:** The major new source of rudeness in the classroom today. Whether you turn it off and stow it, or don’t bring it at all, follow these two rules: They never appear and they never ring.

**Grading:** Grading is based on the student’s performance in completing assignments. Please note: As is the case with print media assignments, the instructor does not accept late work. The only exception to this is instructor error. Late assignments will be critiqued, but you will receive a “0” for a grade. Please note, too, that misspellings and style errors are not acceptable in completing assignments and will be graded down aggressively.

**WRITING ASSIGNMENTS..................................................................................................................50 PERCENT**

Each assignment for this class will earn 10 points, unless otherwise noted. The grades from these assignments will be weighted equally and averaged to determine the grade. Please note: Given the instructor’s policy on not accepting late assignments, missing a deadline will have a near-fatal effect on your grade – more than you might think.

**FINAL EXAM.............................................................................................................................30 PERCENT**

The final exam for this class will be comprehensive, combining short essays,
objective questions, and writing.

**MIDTERM**

The midterm examination will also be comprehensive, combining short essays, objective questions, and writing.

**TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE**

**Week 1**

**Week 2**
ASSIGN: Article analysis exercise.

**Week 3**

**Week 4**

**Week 5**
Sept. 13: The game story, Part II: at the scene. READ: G-SR, 106-118. ASSIGN: Game coverage exercise
Week 6
ASSIGN: Post-game exercise. DUE: Game coverage exercise.
DUE: Post-game exercise.

Week 7
“All the King’s Men,” by Michael Leahy (“Best,” pp. 119-141).

Week 8
Oct. 6: Midterm exam.

Week 9
Oct. 11: Coach Tuberville’s press conference

Week 10
Oct. 18: Putting it all together: game coverage. ASSIGN: Volleyball/soccer article

Week 11
Oct. 27: “Making a Play for Players,” (“Best,” 162-167)

Week 12
Nov. 1: New technologies and sports journalism. READ: G-SR, pp. 299-310;
Nov. 3: Award-winning sports Web site. READ: TBA.

Week 13
ASSIGN: Column assignment

Week 14
Nov. 15: A brief, uninformed word about broadcasting. Professional visit.
READ: TBA. DUE: Column assignment.
Nov. 17: Field trip to the AU Network

**Week 15**


Final Exam on date and at time scheduled by the University