

MCOM 2315.001
SPORTS COMMUNICATION
Fall 2024

Class Schedule: Online,
asynchronous format
Instructor: Dr. Terry L. Britt
Office hours: Th 10 a.m.-noon and by appointment
Office: CAS 220
Phone: 903-565-5713
Email: tbritt@uttyler.edu

I. Course Description:

An exploration into the theory and practice of communication across specialized contexts sports professionals face and the development of journalistic and strategic communication skills needed to succeed in them, including areas such as the press conference, sports feature content, and sports reporting.

II. Student Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

Competency: Public Speaking

1. Display and master invention, disposition, style, and delivery skills in the presentation of informative, persuasive, and invitational messages to effectively impact a given audience. (Program Learning Objective – Public Speaking)
 - a) To analyze and practice communication that creates or results from complex social organizations.
 - b) To understand, analyze and practice informative and ethical written and oral communication in forms and styles appropriate for various situations, purposes and audiences.

- c) To identify, understand and practice various professional communication roles in sports.

Competency: Analysis and Systemic Inquiry

- 2. Access and analyze appropriate scholarly sources necessary to understand and analyze communication-based research questions and problems.
 - a) To identify, access, and comprehend appropriate scholarly and journalistic sources necessary to answer communication-based research questions, problems, or issues.
 - b) To utilize appropriate scholarly and journalistic sources in group discussion and analysis of topics particular to the social and cultural dimensions of sport, its participants, and its organizations.

Competency: Mediated Presentation

- 3. Gather and effectively communicate information to targeted audiences in a variety of mediated formats.
 - a) Demonstrate skills essential to media professionals and the development of content for dissemination to identifiable audiences.
 - b) Produce content appropriate to specific media channels, including print or digital news, audio-based media, and public relations.

III. Course Evaluation

Column/opinion writing (2)	15%
Game story or sports feature article	20%
Audio Podcast Feature	15%
Press release	20%
In-class activities and discussion	10%
Final Exam	20%
TOTAL	100%

A = 90-100%	B = 80-89%	C=70-79%	D=60-69%	F=0-59%
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IV. Required Texts

- A. Required: For this semester, no textbook is required. However, you should sign up or renew your free, university library-provided subscription to The New York Times. Other course readings will be linked or provided via Canvas each week.
- B. Recommended:
 - 1. Associated Press Stylebook 2024-26 or AP Stylebook Online subscription

V. Assignments

- A. (15%) Column/Opinion Writing on Issues in Sports (Due dates – Oct. 9 and Nov. 13) Twice during the semester, you will write an original sports column or opinion piece of 750-1,000 words on a significant social, cultural, or business issue. This may include topics we discuss in class during the semester. Personal experiences of sport-related topics are welcome within the paper, but please provide an analysis of the experience that clearly ties to issues and concepts we have discussed. Content will be evaluated based on content, grammar, and structure. **This assignment group addresses learning objectives 2(a) and 2(b).**
- B. (20%) Sports event game story or feature story (various due dates): You will cover one live UT Tyler sports event this semester (the sport and contest is up to you, but you **must** provide me at least 24-hour notice prior to the start of the event). Non-UT Tyler sports events are acceptable if you are willing to make a request for and receive a press credential for the event. Alternatively, you may, with prior approval from me, write a sports feature story on a local athlete or sports-related group or organization. In either case, you will notify me upon the completion of the event (or completion of interviews for a feature), from which time you will have 24 hours to produce and submit a 500-750 story. Work will be evaluated based on quality of content, story structure, and proper grammar and punctuation. **This assignment addresses learning objectives 1(a), 1(b), 1(c), 3(a), and 3(b).**
- C. (15%) Audio podcast feature interview (Due Sept. 30): This audio assignment will have you interview a current UT Tyler student-athlete of your choice or other sport-related interview subject. You will produce a 5-6 minute audio spotlight which will be graded on knowledge of the subject, narrative building with identification of your subject's main theme and supporting details, and expression and organization of ideas. You will also be assessed on storytelling content, your delivery and technical elements of the audio production. **This assignment addresses learning objectives 1(b), 1(c), 3(a), and 3(b).**
- D. (20%) Press conference (Due Oct. 23): This assignment will involve a mock press conference I will set up with a UT Tyler athlete or team on a specific class meeting date. The assignment consists of three parts: First, a short advance press release announcing the press conference and providing relevant background information, plus a set of five (5) well-developed questions you would like to ask at the press conference; second, activity and participation in the press conference itself; and third, a follow-up press release (250-300 words) highlighting the content from the press conference. **This assignment addresses learning objectives 1(a), 1(b), 1(c), 3(a), and 3(b).**
- E. (10%) In-class activities and discussion: You are expected to be an active participant in class discussion and in-class activities and presentations throughout the semester. You should come to class each day having completed all reading assignments for that day and be prepared to engage in respectful discussion or

debate on various sport-related topics. Additionally, certain class days will feature special themed discussion topics, activities, or in-class assignments which require your undivided attention and participation. **This assignment group addresses learning objectives 1(a), 1(b), 1(c), 2(a), and 2(b).**

- F. (20%) Final exam (via Canvas Dec. 9-13 with two-hour time limit): The final exam will cover materials discussed in class, readings from throughout the semester, and terms and concepts from your media production assignments. The format of the final exam will be finalized no later than Nov. 20 but is likely to include multiple choice or true/false questions, short answer questions, and 1-2 short concept explications. **This assignment group addresses learning objectives 1(a), 1(b), and 1(c).**

VI. Extra credit opportunities: I will offer each student in this course 5 points added to the lowest assignment grade(s) for the semester for the following:

- 1. Patriot Talon published story, video, or audio story** – For the first time in the publication's history, the Patriot Talon is moving to an all-digital format. This is an excellent time for you to get involved with student media and put your media production skills to work. You must successfully pitch a story idea to the editor-in-chief, produce the story, and have it published on the Patriot Talon website or e-newsletter.
- 2. Participation in media research project** – During the semester, there may be a media research project conducted by myself or another Department of Communication professor. To encourage participation in these projects, I will offer extra credit for documented participation prior to the week of final exams.

VII. All Assignments Are Uploaded to Canvas.

- A. Your analysis papers and other assignments will be submitted to Canvas. Deadlines are vital elements in every form of sports communication and cannot be missed. A missed deadline will result in a 10% deduction per day.

VIII. Policies

- A. **Course Withdrawal:** The last date to withdraw from Fall 2024 classes is **Monday, Nov. 4.**
- B. **Final Examination: Available on Canvas Dec. 9-13. There will be a two-hour time limit once you begin the exam.**
- C. **Electronic Devices:** Turn off all electronic devices including cell phones and MP3 players. Allowing a cell phone or other device to ring during class is rude and disrupts class. No text messaging or checking the time on your cell phone during class. Keep these devices in your backpack during class.
- D. **Use of Computers in Class:** Do not use computers during class for reading/writing e-mail, surfing the Web, playing games, working on assignments for other classes, or writing letters. You may use a laptop computer only for taking class notes. If you use your laptop for any other purpose, I will require you to immediately close the computer.

E. Assignment Policy:

1. Assignments will be given throughout the semester. Students are responsible for all course materials, including, but not limited to, class lectures, handouts, workbook and textbook reading assignments.
2. Assignments and due dates may be changed at the instructor's discretion with fair notice to students.
3. Students must complete all assignments to pass the course. This does not mean that merely completing all assignments guarantees the student will pass the course.
4. Unless otherwise specified, assignments are due at the beginning of class.
5. All papers must be typed or word-processed using the format required for the assignment.
6. Spelling, grammar, and structure are as important as the content of any written work.

F. Late Assignments: Late assignments are discouraged and will be assessed a penalty prior to evaluation. Assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on the date specified.

G. Attendance and Tardiness Policy: Students are expected to attend class. **If you must miss a class session due to an illness (doctor or health clinic note required), funeral of an immediate family member (copy of obituary or service program required), or university-sponsored activity, please contact me as soon as possible to inform me of your expected absence.**

Five or more absences from class, unless resulting from a prolonged illness that requires the student to remain at home, will result in the deduction of one letter grade from the final course grade. See the current UT Tyler catalog for the university's policy on student responsibility for missed classes and assignments. Be familiar with the university's drop policy. Students who anticipate being absent from class due to religious observance or university-sponsored activities should inform the instructor by the second class meeting. **Students over 15 minutes late are considered absent. If a student must be absent the day an exam or assignment deadline is scheduled, he/she must notify the instructor before class time. No make-up tests or assignment deadline extension will be allowed if the instructor is not given a legitimate excuse before the time of the exam or assignment deadline.**

H. Recording of Class Sessions: Class sessions may be recorded by the instructor for use by students enrolled in this course. Recordings that contain personally identifiable information or other information subject to FERPA shall not be shared with individuals not enrolled in this course unless appropriate consent is obtained from all relevant students. Class recordings are reserved only for the use of students enrolled in the course and only for educational purposes. Course recordings should not be shared outside of the course in any form without express permission.

I. Artificial Intelligence Policy: Artificial intelligence (AI) engines, bots, or applications may not be used on assignments without prior approval from the instructor, and only then with substantial justification and specific identification of what will be created

through AI and included in the assignment submission. Under no circumstances can AI be used to deceive, significantly alter, or fabricate assignment content; violation of this policy will be treated as plagiarism and will incur penalties as allowed by university policy.

Class Schedule (subject to change)

NOTE: Course readings for each week will be accessible on Canvas.

M, Aug. 26 – Introductions; Sports Communication icebreaker activity

W, Aug. 28 – Key points of course expectations; Overview of audio podcast assignment; discussion of assigned readings

M, Sept. 2 – Labor Day

W, Sept. 4 – Sport as community; overview of reporting assignment

M, Sept. 9 – Sports reporting workshop session; AP Stylebook usage

W, Sept. 11 – The impact of sports media and its career fields

M, Sept. 16 – Sports media (cont.)

W, Sept. 18 – Fan culture and social identity through sports

M, Sept. 23 – The cost of being a sports fan

W, Sept. 25 – Fan experiences (be prepared to talk about your own)

M, Sept. 30 – Legends, heroes, villains, and mythologies in sports; audio podcast assignment due by 11:59 p.m.

W, Oct. 2 – Legends, heroes, etc. continued

M, Oct. 7 – Women in sports/gender issues in sports

W, Oct. 9 – Women/gender cont.; first opinion/column writing assignment due at 11:59 p.m.

M, Oct. 14 – Race and ethnicity in sport

W, Oct. 16 – Baseball's segregated era

M, Oct. 21 – Politics and nationalism in sport

W, Oct. 23 – Multinational competitions (Olympics, World Cup, others); Press release assignment due by 11:59 p.m.

M, Oct. 28 – Performance identity

W, Oct. 30 – Skills, motivation, and training in sports

M, Nov. 4 – Interpersonal communication in sports

W, Nov. 6 – Team communication in sports

M, Nov. 11 – Coaching and officiating sports

W, Nov. 13 – Youth and scholastic sports; second opinion/column writing assignment due by 11:59 p.m.

M, Nov. 18 – Crisis communication in sports

W, Nov. 20 – The commodification of sport; ALL sports reporting assignments should be submitted by this date

M-F, Nov. 25-29 – Thanksgiving week break; no meetings

M, Dec. 2 – Gaming in sport (gambling and fantasy leagues/simulations)

W, Dec. 4 – Sports video games and e-gaming

Final exam: Online via Canvas during finals week (2-hour time limit)