

**SPORTS REPORTING
ENW 322**

SPRING 2006

INSTRUCTOR: Jack Cavanaugh
Class Meets M TH 9:30-10:45 A.M.
Classroom: Donnarumma 148

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Office Hours: Monday and Thursday 8:45-9:30 AM and 10:45-noon in room 141 in Donnarumma Hall. Generally I will be on campus only during class days, but meetings can be arranged at the mutual convenience of the instructor and students.

Prerequisites:

College-level skills in spelling, punctuation, grammar, writing and typing and familiarity with computer word processing. Interest in and at least a rudimentary knowledge of sports.

Required materials:

- Contemporary Sports Reporting. By Douglas Anderson, Nelson-Hall Publishers
- Pocket dictionary
- AP Stylebook & Libel Manual. Perseus Books.
- Stenographer's notebook or legal-sized pad for game reportage and for class notes
- Floppy discs for classroom computers
- Home dictionary and thesaurus. Instructor recommends Roget's or The Oxford American Thesaurus of Current English.

Suggested supplementary texts:

- On Writing Well. By William Zinsser. HarperCollins Publishers, Inc..
- The Elements of Style By William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White. Macmillan Publishing Co. Excellent and entertaining book on grammar that many writers resort to throughout, and even beyond, their careers. Highly recommended, especially for students who have some difficulty with grammar and punctuation.
- Best American Sports Stories of the Century. By David Halberstam.
- SportsWorld: An American Dreamland. By Robert Lipsyte. Quadrangle Books.
- Sports Illustrated: 50 Years of Great Writing.
- Best American Sports Writing of 2005.

Overview of Course:

This will be a serious journalism course during which you will learn the basic fundamentals of sports writing, with a heavy emphasis on clear and lively writing and accurate and comprehensive reporting. By the end of the semester, you will have learned how to:

- Overcome any fears and apprehensions, such as "writer's block", that you may have at the beginning of the course.
- Write lucid and comprehensive sports stories.
- Write enticing leads that seize the attention of readers.
- Write sports feature stories.
- Cover a wide variety of sports events, including baseball, football, basketball, hockey, tennis and golf.
- Prepare for coverage of games and other sports events.
- Conduct interviews with coaches, players and others.
- Take effective game notes - scoring, running accounts, etc.
- Cope with deadlines by writing backup copy in advance and during games and other sports events.

The course also will cover the changing role of sportswriters, and to a lesser degree sports broadcasters, over the last decade. Largely because of skyrocketing salaries and revenues, the latter at both the professional and college level, sportswriting has become much more demanding and complex over the last decade. Moreover, the breach between sports writers and the athletes they cover has continued to widen. More than ever before, far more coverage is now given to non-game matters such as contract disputes, free agency franchise shifts, controversies over public funding for stadiums and sports arenas for multimillionaire owners and millionaire athletes, substance abuse, a steep rise in the arrests for athletes and the increasingly rowdy, and even violent, behavior of spectators. We will also touch on America's sports culture in general and how there is a greater fixation than ever on sports, in large measure because of the ever-growing number of sports events, the lengthening of seasons and the proliferation of sports talk programs throughout the country. In a nutshell, sports nowadays, particularly on the professional level, is far more big business than it is fun and games. As a result, as you will learn, covering sports is more difficult and more challenging than ever.

Class Format:

Early lectures will focus on the above points and will be supplemented by several guest speakers. Students will be assigned a minimum of 20 sports events to cover, including Fairfield University men's and women's basketball, baseball, softball, lacrosse games and tennis matches. Game stories will either be written in class or written on the day of the event or on the following day and emailed to the instructor. There will also be some optional assignments for extra credit. Students also will edit, critique and evaluate one another's stories in class.

Requirements:

1. Students will be expected to read the sports section of the Connecticut Post daily, along with the paper's news section, and also The Mirror. Stories in both papers will be analyzed and evaluated in class on a regular basis. It is also recommended that students read at least the sports section - and hopefully more - of a New York City newspaper of their choice.
2. All assignments must be typed and double-spaced on 8-1/2 by 11 inch white copy paper
3. Do not break up sentences at the bottom of a page. Instead, start a new sentence on the succeeding page. Also, make certain to write MORE at the bottom of a page when your story is not yet complete and to write END/jc (with your initials after the END) or to write ### at the end of your stories.
4. In editing copy, students are to use standard journalistic copy symbols from the Associated Press Style Book.
5. On all written assignments, students must, in the upper left hand corner, write on separate lines their names, the course number, the date the assignment is due (or, in cases where assignments are handed in late, the date the assignment was handed in along with the date it was due) and the slug for the story (e.g., STAGS). On succeeding pages, on separate lines, your name and the slug should also be in the upper left corner - e.g., JONES, 1st add STAGGS, and then, on succeeding pages, JONES, 2nd add STAGS, again with the name and slug on separate lines.
6. All assignments must be handed in on time. Late assignments will cost students one full grade unless there are mitigating circumstances.
7. All work must be submitted at the beginning of class, or in advance, clipped together and not stapled.

GRADING SUMMARY

15 game assignments (approximately) 75 points
Three feature stories (each worth 5 points) 15 points
Class quizzes 5 points
Class participation 5 points

EXTRA CREDIT

I strongly urge students to write for the campus newspaper, The Mirror, either on a staff or freelance basis and also, if possible, do sports internships. In some cases, students may be encouraged by me to submit to The Mirror certain stories that have been written for class. However, when you are working on a story that you believe may be worthy of submitting to The Mirror it is imperative that you inform anyone being interviewed that your story may appear in the campus paper. Grades on stories written for class that appear in The Mirror will increase by half a letter grade; thus, a B will be increased to an A-. I can not stress hard enough how important newspaper clippings of your work - either in the campus newspaper or in other publications - can be during a job search. I will at times note at the end of a paper whether I think it is a good prospect for The Mirror.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. You will be permitted two cuts without penalty. After that, starting with a third cut, you will be penalized two points for each cut, meaning that with five cuts you will have accumulated 10 penalty points, which will be deducted during the calculation of your grade. Absences for valid reason -- illness, family emergencies, etc. - must be given in advance whenever possible or at the latest by 6 p.m. the day of the absence, either by email or telephone. Work missed during absences must be made up to by the following day and submitted to the instructor via email. Chronic lateness also will affect a final grade.

INSTRUCTOR'S WRITING BACKGROUND

More than 30 years as a print journalist, most recently as a sports and feature writer for The New York Times for the last 20 years. In addition have written for Sports Illustrated, the Reader's Digest, Golf Digest, Tennis Magazine, The Sporting News, the Chicken Soup book series and the inflight magazines for American, Delta and United Airlines. Author of *Damn the Disabilities: Full Speed Ahead!*, a book about people, most of them young, who have overcome disabilities to excel in sports. Recently finished a book for Random House on the life and times of former heavyweight champion Gene Tunney, which will be published next fall. Also spent six years as a writer and reporter for ABC News and two years as a reporter for CBS News.

PLAGARISM

Under no circumstances should any student pass off someone else's work as their own. That is plagiarism, a serious offense which, if proven, can lead to an F in the course. Also, do not recycle any past writing assignments in this class. That too, can lead to an F in the course.

EXTRA HELP

Although the instructor will correct grammatical mistakes in stories to the best of his ability, students who have difficulty with grammar, punctuation/or sentence structure. The Writing Center is an excellent resource and students in need of help should take advantage of this facility.

January 23, 2006

Sports Reporting class schedule

Monday, Jan. 23 Brief lecture on style points, story structure, "leads," grammar, punctuation, etc. Discuss football coverage and Sunday's games.

Give class an hour to write 500-word game stories. Homework: read Chapter One in text and prepare to write - in class on Thursday -- 500-word advance story on Super Bowl game pegged on interest on Fairfield U campus. Get at least two quotes from students, professors and any other information you might find relevant..

Thursday, Jan. 26 Discuss Chapter One. Return and go over last Sunday's game stories. Brief lecture on changes in sports coverage over last two decades. Discuss basketball coverage and pass out scoring sheets and media guides. Give class 45 minutes to write feature story on student sentiment about Super Bowl game. Homework: cover either Fairfield women's basketball game against St. Peter's at 630 pm Friday or men's game at 830 pm against Manhattan, both at Harbor Yard Arena. Students can do second game for extra credit. Write 500-word stories in class Monday. Also, read Chapter Five on basketball coverage.

Monday, Jan. 30 Go over and then return advance stories on Super Bowl game. Give class hour to write basketball game stories. Turn in with scoring sheets. Homework: write 500-word advance story for Thursday on Super Bowl game based on newspaper and Internet stories Read Chapter two from text on Philosophies of Sports Reporting.

Thursday, Feb. 2 Discuss and return basketball game stories. Go over hockey coverage and discuss Fairfield U club hockey program. Write 250-300-word report entitled "Main Problems I Have With Writing" and turn in at end of class. Homework: cover Super Bowl game on Sunday, starting at 630 pm and write 500-word story in class on Monday. For extra credit: cover either Fairfield women's basketball game against Marist Sunday at 1 pm or men's game versus Niagara at 330 pm, both at Harbor Yard Arena. Optional coverage: Fairfield versus Rider men's basketball at 7 pm Friday at Harbor Yard Arena. File story on Rider game via email by 5 pm Saturday. Write Sunday game stories in class on Monday. For extra credit: cover women's swimming meet against Manhattan at 630 pm Friday and write 300-word story in advance of next class.

Week of Feb. 5 Write Super Bowl and basketball game stories in class on Monday. Discuss impact of Super Bowl game on American society and growing impact in general of sports despite increasing misbehavior by both athletes and spectators. Whether astronomical salaries have had deleterious effect on sports. Cover women's basketball game versus Canisius Saturday at 1 pm or men's game against Iona at 330 pm. Write stories in class Monday.

Week of Feb. 12 Write game stories in class. Discuss Chapter two. Cover men's home game Tuesday against St. Peter's and women's game against Siena on Friday. Write game stories in class. Read Chapter Three from text on PreContest coverage and discuss in class.

Week of Feb. 19 No class Monday, Presidents' Day. Cover women's basketball game Monday night against Manhattan at 730 and against Loyola Saturday at 7 pm or men's game versus Marist Saturday at 9 pm. Read Introduction and first chapter from SportsWorld: An American Dreamland.

Week of Feb. 26 Write game stories in class. Discuss Introduction and Chapter One from SportsWorld. Write 300-word assessment of Mirror sports section Guest speaker: Fairfield Athletic Director Gene Doris. Take notes on talk and write 500-word feature. Cover Fairfield game(s) in MAAC tournament over weekend.

Week of March 5 Discuss Gene Doris talk. Read first three stories from David Halberstam's Best Sports Stories of the Century and second and third chapters from SportsWorld. Write 500-word personality profile of Fairfield U athlete of your choice for March 12.

Week of March 12 Collect personality profile features. Have students critique one another's features. Discuss stories from Halberstam book and chapters from SportsWorld. Go over baseball coverage - terminology, etc. Read Chapter Six on baseball coverage in text.

Week of March 19 Assign baseball and softball game coverage. Read first three chapters from Best American Sports Writing of 2005. Guest speaker from Connecticut Post sports department, most likely columnist Chris Elsbury. Take notes on talk and write 400-word feature for next class.

Week of March 26 Discuss assigned chapters and guest speaker's talk. Go over tennis and lacrosse coverage. Read Chapter 10 on tennis coverage in text. Assign baseball, softball and lacrosse games to cover. Readings from Halberstam and Lipsyte (SportsWorld) books.

Week of April 2 Discuss assigned readings. Write game stories in class. First quiz on sports terminology. Read Chapter 7 in text on golf coverage. Homework: cover baseball or softball games and lacrosse game or tennis match. Cover NCAA Final Four men's and women's basketball games off television. Assign additional readings from Halberstam book.

Week of April 9 Write Final Four game stories in class on Monday. Discuss quiz and readings. Write game stories in class Monday and Thursday. Read three separate editions of Connecticut Post sports sections and write 300-word analysis of section

Week of April 16 No class on Monday. Discuss Connecticut Post sports coverage. Read three separate sections of New York Times sports section and write 300-word analysis, comparing coverage and writing with Connecticut Post sports section. Additional readings from Best American Sports Writing of 2005. Assign baseball, softball, tennis and lacrosse events to be covered. Write 500-word feature on sports topic related to Fairfield U.

Week of April 23 Discuss New York Times sports coverage and latest readings. Second quiz on terminology and story structure. Assign final game coverage. Have students critique one another's features.

Week of April 30 Discuss latest game coverage and quiz. Final overview of course. Discuss career options: sports writing, sports broadcasting, sports public relations, including work in college sports information offices. Course evaluations.