

WRITING FOR SPORTS MEDIA

PROFESSOR	Joe Gisondi
EMAIL	jjgisondi@eiu.edu
OFFICE/HOURS	Buzzard Hall, room 2546 MW 10-11 a.m. T 2-3 p.m.
PHONE	Leave message with dept. secretary at 217-xxx-xxxx
TEXTS	Field Guide To Covering Sports AP Stylebook

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students will learn the fundamentals of gathering, organizing, evaluating and writing sports information in accepted professional style across news media and media relations platforms. By the conclusion of JOU 3706, students will learn:

1. To engage with diverse ideas, individuals, groups and cultures in order to produce sports information accurately, fairly and under deadline situations across multiple news and public relations media platforms. (Learning Goals: CT 1, 7 WC 1-4, 7 SL 1-7 RC 1, 2)
2. To collect, comprehend, analyze, synthesize and critically incorporate source materials gathered from research, observation and interviews. (Learning Goals: CT 1, 2, 4 WC 1-7 SL 1-7 QR 1, 3 RC 1, 2)
3. To comprehend and apply mobile journalism strategies in order to deliver sports news through social, video, audio and digital applications for websites, phones, apps, and other emerging media. (Learning Goals: CT 1, 2 WC 1, 3, 4, 7 SL 1, 4, 5 RC 1-4)
4. To create sports reports that are well-organized, focused, and cohesive and that apply proper use of Associated Press Style, grammar, spelling, word usage, and sentence structure. (Learning Goals: CT 1, 4 WC 1-7)
5. To comprehend legal and ethical issues affecting news media professionals (Learning Goals: CT 1, WC 4, 6, 7 SL 1 RC 1, 2)
6. To comprehend strategies, rules, terminology, and practices for covering multiple sports. (Learning Goals: CT 2, 4, 5 WC 5 QR 1)

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Plagiarism is the unpardonable sin of journalism, an act that essentially ends a journalist's career. Plagiarism could also end a student's career. There is nothing wrong with using information from another source so long as it is clearly credited. If you take a quote or information from another publication, cite it. An assignment determined to be plagiarized will be given a grade of "0" and the responsible student will receive an "F" for the course. Plus, this student will be referred to the appropriate EIU board for discipline. According to the university's policy, students who plagiarize are eligible for dismissal from EIU.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Contact the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) for answers regarding accommodations, auxiliary learning aids and physical accessibility. Diagnostic information regarding the disability must be submitted so the appropriate accommodations can be arranged. Refer to the Undergraduate Catalog for information.

ABSENCES & MAKE-UP WORK

Students are expected to be in class on time and remain until the dismissal. Students may not make up quizzes or assignments missed for tardiness or an unexcused absence. If you miss class when an assignment is due, you will receive a "0" for that assignment. You are responsible for all material covered or assigned during classes.

ASSIGNMENTS

Name	Pts
Game coverage (2)	20
Coaching reports	15
Column	10
Media Relations	10
Podcast	10
Enterprise story	15
Fantasy Coverage	10
Final	10
Total	100

- **GAME COVERAGE:** Students must cover two EIU or Charleston High School athletic events during the semester that are written and submitted on deadline on our class WordPress website. These stories must rely on your own original reporting for an event that you attend, which means you must interview coaches, players and any other relevant, significant sources for a story that should be at least 400 words, include multiple visuals and be submitted by midnight on the day the sports event takes place. Minimum sources: 3. Contact the sports information director to request access to press boxes, post-game conferences and locker-rooms, if available, at least a week before any event you plan to cover.
- **COACHING REPORTS:** Coaches at EIU will visit class to offer insights into their respective sports as well as on their interactions with media. These conversations are off-the-record, meaning you cannot report on any conversation beyond the class assignment. Write these stories as if you were writing a minifeature or covering a press conference. So take accurate and comprehensive notes, listen careful for compelling and significant information and then write a 400-word, single-spaced story that focuses on interesting and newsworthy information. Include both direct and indirect quotes. This story needs to be edited for clarity, language, style and grammar before being submitted in the appropriate D2L folder (Coaching Report 1, 2, 3.). You must write three coach stories through the semester, which are worth 5 points apiece.
- **SPORTS COLUMN:** Columnists are reporters with an opinion. The best columnists are also keen observers, precise writers and excellent storytellers. Students will write a 400-plus word sports column that relies on original reporting and ideas. Drop this into the proper D2L folder by midnight of this addresses a live event and within 48 hours if you address a breaking news item or issue.
- **ENTERPRISE STORY:** Students will research, report and write a 1,000-plus word sports story connected to a sports issue, topic, or individual connected with athletics at EIU or in Coles County. This story must reference at least three primary/expert sources, be timely, include video, photos, and multiple hyperlinks before being published in the proper format on our class Word Press page. This story will require a great deal of time, but it should also yield a story worth of promoting in your portfolio. Work hard, have fun and take creative chances. **Stories won't receive a grade if they fail to fulfill any of the requirements cited above.** You may show me multiple versions of this story before the due date. In addition, this story may not be published until approved and submitted for a final grade. You must review at least version of this story with me before the due date. Due April 20.

- **SPORTS MEDIA RELATIONS:** Students will develop material suitable for publication in sports media relations publications.
- **SPORTS PODCAST:** Students will produce a 10-minute sports podcast in the WEIU-FM radio studios on a topic that is timely and relevant to this class. These podcasts will likely be shared with fellow students on a class website. You must show up on the time scheduled in the studios by the instructor in order to complete this assignment. No make-ups will be allowed.
- **FINAL:** Students will write a game story in class based upon information supplied by the professor.

DEADLINES

Assignments will have a full letter-grade (10%) deducted each day that an assignment is late. In-class assignments may not be made up. All assignments are required to be typed and double-spaced with the proper headings. If they are not typed, assignments won't be accepted and will be considered late.

GRADING

A – 90 to 100%
B – 80 to 89.9%
C – 70 to 79.9%
D – 60 to 69.9%
F – below 60%

CLASS REVISIONS: This syllabus may be changed at any time during the semester by announcement of the instructor.

Schedule of Assignments

Weeks 1-2 **FROM SPORTS FAN TO SPORTS REPORTER:** Overview of style, approach, traits, language, knowledge and skills needed to develop and present content for multiple sports media platforms. Understanding diverse audiences by focusing on trends, changes and elements of sports in print, on-line and broadcast. Read Chapter 1 in *Field Guide To Covering Sports*, pp. 3-9

ETHICS AND LEGAL ISSUES: Read Primer A: Ethics in *Field Guide To Covering Sports*, pp. 323-329.

AVOIDING CLICHES: Read Primer E in *Field Guide To Covering Sports*, pp. 355-358

Week 3 **SPORTS BLOGS:** Address how to post information online, write headlines, follow formats and insert hyperlinks, photos and video. Read chapter on blogging in *Field Guide To Covering Sports*, pp. 67-72.

Week 4 **COVERING COLLEGE AND HIGH SCHOOL BEATS:** Read *Field Guide To Covering Sports*, pp. 336-354.

Weeks 5-6 **GAME COVERAGE:** Reporting and writing about live sports events across print, digital, social media and electronic platforms – before, during and after these events. We'll also address keeping statistics, taking notes, beat coverage, analysis, stats, approaches and alternative story formats.

Week 7 **MULTIMEDIA APPROACHES:** Read chapters in Part II of *Field Guide To Covering Sports*, pp. 89-106. Review approaches to sports podcasts.

Week 8 **FEATURES:** Developing, producing quick-take and lengthy sports features for print, digital and electronic platforms. Read *Field Guide To Covering Sports*, pp. 44-60

Weeks 9-10 **SPORTS MEDIA RELATIONS:** Review press guides and other promotional material. Develop content for sports media use.

Week 11 **SPORTS COLUMNS:** Read *Field Guide To Covering Sports*, pp. 61-66.

Week 12 **TV & RADIO:** Developing podcasts and post-game analysis.

Week 13 **WRITING ABOUT FANTASY SPORTS:** Read in *Field Guide To Covering Sports*, pp. 330-335.

Weeks 14-15 **MORE GAME COVERAGE:** Reporting and writing about live sports events across print, digital, social media and electronic platforms – before, during and after these events. We'll also address keeping statistics, taking notes, beat coverage, analysis, stats, approaches and alternative story formats.