

Race, Sports and Media

Fall 2024 • JOU 4714/MMC 6936 • Matherly Hall 0009 • Mondays • 1:55 p.m.-4:55 p.m.

Herbert Lowe

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My office: Weimer 3101. My virtual office hours: 3-5 p.m. Wednesdays and otherwise by appointment only. [Using my Microsoft Booking portal](#) is the best way to schedule a one-on-one meeting with me.

Course Summary

In his book, “From Jack Johnson to LeBron James: Sports Media and the Color Line,” editor Chris Lamb contends that the most significant and publicized stories in the campaign for racial equality in sports have reflected the overall quest for equal and civil rights in the United States.

College and professional athletics have long been integrated, but race continues to play a major role in sports, Lamb states. Sports journalists once ignored racial issues, he said, but they now contribute to the public’s evolving racial attitudes on matters both at and away from where the contests are played.

This course will examine the longstanding relationship of sports and media and how it not only accelerated the pace of integration in America, but also reinforces social values; sometimes challenges social norms; and draws on race, class and gender to match sports values with cultural values.

We will consider issues involving sports, race, gender, sex and sexuality; what happens when race, religion and sports collide; how matters related to race, criminal justice, politics, patriotism and militarism affect audience perceptions of athletes; and stories of athletes using their public roles to not only overcome adversity, but also to advocate for broader social justice and self-determination.

This semester, we will also explore and evaluate a variety of films and documentaries focusing on race, sports and media that have helped the public to better understand and appreciate social change in the U.S. and internationally. We will review all or parts of several such films and documentaries together during class time, and you will also between class sessions take in others that you have chosen.

Course Objectives

Students in this course will be able to relate:

1. How media coverage of race, sports and culture has evolved from slavery through present day.
2. How sports have affected societal views on activism, class, criminal justice, race, religion, etc.
3. How sports and race have reflected cultural views on gender equality, sex and sexuality.
4. How athletes have used their platforms to advocate for a more diverse and tolerant world.
5. How sports and race are relayed across cultural mediums (TV, film, books, podcasts, social media).

Noteworthy

Each student is responsible for:

1. Reading, understanding and abiding this syllabus and its contents and directives. This includes doing all of the work assigned from the first module to the last. Regardless of why he/she/they are unable to do so, a student who does not may be withdrawn from the course per UF policy.
2. Abiding any announcements or directives the instructor sends the class or any one of you individually via UF email or most likely Canvas. Expect to see interaction from the instructor via these platforms concerning relevant matters that will be discussed as a class soon after.
3. Completing all assigned readings as class participation and quizzes will affect grading.

In addition:

- Outreach to the instructor is welcomed but should be short, course related, grammatically correct and necessary. Replies from the instructor will be short and sweet and as soon as possible.
- A security reminder: Your UF password is the only thing protecting you from pranks or more serious harm when using Canvas. Don't share your password with anyone. Change your password if you think someone else might know it. Always logout when you are finished using the system.
- Unauthorized recording and or sharing of recorded materials from this course is strictly prohibited.
- If your performance in this course is impacted by your experiences outside of class, let me know.

Technical Support

Call 352-392-4357 for help resolving technical issues related to accessing or using Canvas or other connectivity (wireless, VPN), email software configuration, browser and GatorLink authentication issues.

UF Computing Help Desk: <https://helpdesk.ufl.edu>

Students With Disabilities

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with disabilities and who have registered with the UF Dean of Students Office. This office will provide relative documentation to the student, who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodations.

UF Disability Resource Center: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

Counseling Center

Personal or health issues such as depression, anxiety, stress, career uncertainty and or relationships can interfere with your ability to function as a student. UF's Counseling and Wellness Center (CWC) offers support for students in need. CWC is located at 3190 Radio Road and open each weekday from 8 to 5.

UF Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc>

Course Evaluations

Please offer respectful feedback about this course online via GatorEvals. Guidance is at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Evaluation results are at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results>.

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty shall not be tolerated in this course. That includes but is not limited to using any work done by another person and submitting it for a class assignment; submitting/repurposing it for/from another class; copying and pasting text written/published by another person/organization without sufficient attribution, regardless of a link to the original work; illicit fabrication/use of artificial intelligence (such as ChatGPT); using images produced by someone else without explicit permission by the creator. Attribution is not the same as permission. Most images found online are not free to use.

UF Student Honor Code: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code>

UF Student Resources

UF students have access to tutorials (video-based and otherwise) from which to learn outside of class time certain software and equipment needed to accomplish various required tasks this semester. These resources include but are not limited to the library, tutoring, career resource center, etc.

UF Student Resources: <http://ufadvising.ufl.edu/student-resources.aspx>

Diversity Statement

The UF College of Journalism and Communications Department of Journalism embraces a commitment toward an intellectual community enriched and enhanced by diversity along a number of dimensions, including race, ethnicity and national origins, gender and gender identity, sexuality, class and religion. We expect all of our journalism courses to help foster an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society. Students are at all times to show respect for one another as well as for the instructor. If something was said in relation to this class (by anyone) that made you feel uncomfortable, please talk to me about it.

Deadlines

Late assignments may not be accepted unless an emergency can be documented. An assignment submitted late could be graded as a zero. If an illness or a personal emergency prevents you from completing an assignment on time, advance notice and written documentation are required. If advance notice is not possible because of a true emergency, written documentation will be mandated ASAP. Generally speaking, we will function as if working in a professional workplace: You don't do your work (on time) you risk losing your job. In other words, students who miss deadlines will suffer consequences. Given this is a sports-related class, and as someone else once relevantly put it: What happens when you turn in your fantasy football lineup late? Same concept.

Extra Credit

No "extra credit" shall be accepted other than what's described on page 10. Each student is expected to do the same amount of work and achieve the same outcomes. This proves to be fair when considering that students have different circumstances unrelated to class. Imagine those students, for example, who must work three jobs, and don't have as much time to do extra credit as those who don't have to work.

The instructor will not grade according to effort as it is the outcomes that matter. He will be mindful of whether your work is trending forward or backward when it's time for assignment or final grades.

Readings

The instructor and course aims to adhere to the UF Center for Teaching and Learning's Affordable UF Initiative (see <http://teach.ufl.edu/affordable-uf>). Indeed, this course has earned an "affordable UF badge" (see <http://teach.ufl.edu/affordable-uf/affordable-uf-badges>). The instructor and our friends at the UF library consistently work to ensure access to the required readings are available through the course reserves section on Canvas or at the Library West branch of the George A. Smathers Libraries.

Given the newness of this course iteration, the instructor will offer details about required readings week to week. Students in the course in the past have been asked to read all or parts of:

- "From Jack Johnson to LeBron James: Sports, Media and the Color Line" © 2016 by Chris Lamb
- "Ways of Grace: Stories of Activism, Adversity and How Sports Can Bring Us Together" © 2017 by James Blake with Carol Taylor
- "When Race, Religion and Sport Collide: Black Athletes at BYU and Beyond" © 2016 by Darron T. Smith
- "More Than A Game: A History of the African American Experience in Sport" © 2018 by David K. Wiggins
- "No Slam Dunk: Gender, Sport and the Unevenness of Social Change" © 2018 by Cheryl Cooky and Michael A. Messner
- "The Revolt of the Black Athlete: 50th Anniversary Edition" © 2017 by Harry Edwards
- "Playing While White: Privilege and Power On and Off the Field" © 2017 by David J. Leonard
- "Evolution of the Modern Sports Fan: Communicative Approaches" © 2017 by Andrew C. Billings and Keon A. Brown
- "Cross-Cultural Journalism: Communicating Strategically About Diversity" © 2016 by Maria E. Len-Rios and Earnest L. Perry
- "The Unlevel Playing Field: A Documentary History of the African American Experience in Sport" © 2003 by David K. Wiggins and Patrick B. Miller

Other Readings and Viewing (\$)

Academic journal articles, book chapters, magazine and newspaper articles, as well as various audio and video matter will be assigned throughout the semester, both per the syllabus and as unanticipated issues and reports arise in sports, media and society. Students shall be expected to stay up to date on current events and breaking news related to race, sports and media. That means regularly perusing websites of newspapers, magazines and broadcast outlets as well as sports-only websites including but not limited to ESPN, The Players' Tribune, The Athletic, Front Office Sports, etc.

NOTE: Some such reading or viewing material – including some films and/or documentaries – the instructor assigns or a student selects may require a small purchase or subscription fee. Every effort will be made to limit the costs to each student. Experience shows that it is rare that a student incurs a cost.

ESPN's Andscape (formerly The Undefeated)

The course's conception was inspired by TheUndefeated.com – now Andscape – ESPN's daily online platform devoted to the intersection of race, sports and culture. Pay close attention to its daily offerings.

Essay and Class Presentation

Please review the instructions and rubrics for the essay and class presentation assignments in Canvas and be sure the instructor approves your choices before investing too much time on them.

Yes, your essay and presentation can be on different topics, but they can be on the same one, too.

Your essay and presentation should demonstrate critical analysis of a topic related to one or more course objectives. It shall honor the assigned course readings and take advantage of your additional research on the topic. Most certainly, the essay can help propel you toward your presentation.

Student presentations during prior semesters have ranged from “Cheerleading: An Intersection of Race, Sports and Culture” to “Black Male Athletes at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs)” to “The Rise of International Athletes in the NBA” to “Dancing With the Athletes” (A Review of Athletes on “Dancing With the Stars”) to “Prominent Jewish-American Athletes of the 20th and 21st Century.”

Others: “From Rags to Riches” to “The Problem With Latin Americans in Sports Media” to “How Society’s Attitudes and Behaviors Shape LGBTQ Athletes Experience” to “Objectification of Female Athletes in the Media” to “Hockey Is For Everyone: Why Are There So Few Minorities Playing the Game ...” to “Analyzing Sports Media Shortcomings in Telling Athletes’ Humble Beginnings Stories.”

A presentation may use audio or video clips, but there must not be an over-reliance. Generally, consult with the instructor in advance if you think more than 25 to 33 percent of your 15-minute presentation or more than five minutes would consist of multimedia. Keep in mind: This is an oral presentation that is to demonstrate critical analysis of a topic related to one or more of the course objectives.

You may use either Microsoft PowerPoint, Apple Keynote or even Prezi for your content presentation.

Definitely check to ensure all webpages and or associated multimedia files are in place; last thing you want is for your video or audio to not work when and how you want it to.

For the class presentation, your attire should reflect you’re taking this opportunity seriously.

Each student shall offer peer-review written feedback on everyone else’s class presentation.

Definitely abide the writing assignment mandates just below before submitting your written work.

Always remember this is a journalism class, so be mindful of grammar, spelling and punctuation.

The same goes for the textual matter in your presentation. Don’t give away points.

Writing Assignments

All writing assignments should be turned in:

- On a Word file with 1-inch margins (top, bottom, left, right), 12-point Times New Roman font with Format<Paragraph spacing set at zero, zero, none, single in the dialog boxes (please ask).
- With the file named as either studentlastname_slug.doc or studentlastname_slug.docx.
- With your name, JOU 4714 (or MMC 6936 for graduate students) and date, on three separate lines, all single-spaced in the top left corner and as otherwise advised by your particular lab instructor.
- Be sure to enter two line breaks to create a space between paragraphs.

All assignments must be submitted or posted by the specified deadline.

Failure to abide by these expectations could result in grade penalties.

Assignments and Grading

At all times remember these two things: 1) As in sports, as in life, you will be rewarded for results, not just for effort. 2) A 10 point per day grade reduction may be applied to any assignment submitted late.

Final grade calculations: 930-1,000, A; 929-900, A-; 899-870, B+; 869-830, B; 829-800, B-; 799-770, C+; 769-730, C; 729-700, C-; 699-670, D+; 669-630, D; 629-600 D-; 599 and below, E.

Attendance and Class Discussion (100 points) and Canvas Quizzes (200 points)

- We will have a quiz each week related to assigned readings and module material.
- Let's have vibrant discussion worthy of any sports talk show. We may also delve into matters relating to race and culture but not sports. Disagreement shall be respected. Disrespect will not be tolerated.
- Each unexcused absence or lateness may result in a 10 or five point penalty, respectively.

Viewing Memos (300 points)

- We will watch and evaluate several films and documentaries that focus on race, sports and media (and culture, criminal justice, activism, class, religion, gender, self-determination, etc.). These viewing opportunities will generally align with the material in that week's module, or the one coming next; they will happen sometimes during class and other times as an assignment to complete before the ensuing class. The one-page viewing memos will demonstrate your attentiveness and critical thinking skills, and they will ideally serve as a springboard for discussion during our next meeting.

Essay (100 points)

- Each undergraduate will offer 1,000 words (four pages, double-spaced, with references) that relate to one or more of our objectives as well as honor the assigned reading and includes research beyond the course material. Each graduate student will do the same but offer 1,500 words (six pages).
- The essay may or may not be used as a springboard toward your class presentation.
- A listing of approved essay options from prior semesters will be outlined in the Module 14 video lecture as well as on designated spaces on Canvas and in class periods during the semester.

Class Presentation

- Each undergraduate will do an instructor-approved, 15-minute class presentation that relates to at least one of our objectives, honors assigned reading and includes research beyond the course material. Each graduate student will do an instructor-approved, 30-minute class presentation.
 - (50 points)
 - A 500-word abstract (two pages, double-spaced) shall explain your choice and inspiration for your class presentation and earn the instructor's approval before moving forward.
 - (100 points)
 - An annotated bibliography shall help guide your presentation and include at least 12 primary and/or secondary sources. (Material from the assigned readings can be used for the presentation but shall not be included among these sources.) Each of the 12-plus sources shall include a paragraph summarizing its contents and presentation value.
 - (150 points)
 - All of your classmates shall offer peer review feedback on each class presentation.

Course Schedule

This syllabus represents our current plans and objectives. As we go through the semester, these plans may change based on developing news or learning opportunities. Such changes – which shall typically be communicated via Canvas announcements – are unforeseen and should be expected.

What follows is intended as a roadmap for the semester. A complete list of assignments – including the weekly online video lectures and related quizzes – shall be conveyed within each module on Canvas.

MODULE 0: ORIENTATION – AUG. 26 to SEPT. 1

In this module, you will learn the course objectives and what is expected of you. You will learn about the concepts of race, sports and culture, but also about an ESPN website devoted to those concepts daily. (We will also discuss issues related to gender and internationalization often during the course.)

You will also reveal why you decided to take this course – and which or who, if any, are your favorite sports, teams or athletes. Don't worry: Even if you don't care one bit about sports, so long as you care a lot about race and culture, this course is still very much for you.

This module also introduces you to the signature course assignments: an abstract, essay, annotated bibliography and a class presentation. They may or shall relate to one or more of the course objectives as well as honor (but, of course, include research beyond) any of the course readings.

MODULE 1: FROM THE BEGINNING – SEPT. 2-8 (No class on Sept. 2 because of Labor Day)

In this module, you will learn how Black Americans in the United States have participated in sports as far back as slavery, through the earliest days of organized baseball, boxing and horse racing during the Jim Crow era as well as athletics in the Army. You will also be introduced to 18th and 19th century sports figures like boxer Tom Molineaux and champion sprint cyclist Major Taylor.

Readings, Screening and/or Viewing Memo

- TBA

MODULE 2: JACK JOHNSON, JESSE OWENS AND JOE LOUIS – SEPT. 9-15

In this module, you will learn how heavyweight boxing champions Jack Johnson and Joe Louis and Olympic track and field star Jesse Owens became pivotal athletes in U.S. history – and how it was that many journalists reflected societal norms through their reporting and opinion columns.

Readings, Screening and/or Viewing Memo

- TBA

MODULE 3: (RE)INTEGRATING PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL & FOOTBALL – SEPT. 16-22

In this module, you will learn how the National Football League came to exclude Black athletes, how sportswriters for white and Black newspapers covered the re-integration of professional football, and how the Black press helped lead the way toward re-integrating major league baseball.

Readings, Screening and/or Viewing Memo

- TBA

Your abstract proposing your class presentation is due at 12:30 p.m., Monday, Sept. 16.

MODULE 4: (RE)INTEGRATING BASEBALL AND NEW'S YEAR DAY SEPT. 23-29

In this module, you will review how sportswriters covered Jackie Robinson's entry into major league baseball, learn of the public relations campaign waged by Robinson and a Black sportswriter to cast his groundbreaking season as an unqualified success – and also about the racial politics of college bowl games in the South in the middle of the 20th century.

Readings, Screening and/or Viewing Memo

- TBA

MODULE 5: THE REVOLT OF THE BLACK ATHLETE SEPT. 30 to OCT. 6

In this module, you will learn how an alliance between Muhammad Ali and the Nation of Islam meant to merge professional boxing with Black economic power – led to the canceling of a heavyweight fight; about the “revolt of the Black athlete” in the 1960s, and in particular how the print media covered the protest of two U.S. sprinters at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City.

Readings, Screening and/or Viewing Memo

- TBA

Your essay is due at 12:30 p.m., Monday, Sept. 30.

MODULE 6: MEDIA AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OCT. 7-13

In this module, you will learn about how Sports Illustrated sought to produce a series of stories about the Black athlete as socially responsible journalism, how sportswriters covered Curt Flood's lawsuit against major league baseball, and how the media covered both Hank Aaron's pursuit of the career home run record and a newspaper revealing that Arthur Ashe had AIDS.

Readings, Screening and/or Viewing Memo

- TBA

MODULE 7: MICHAEL JORDAN AND FAMILY VALUES OCT. 14-20

In this module, you will learn how the marketing of Michael Jordan as a man with “family values” changed how society thought of Black men in post-Reagan America, how the Rush Limbaugh-Donovan McNabb saga reflected the problems of whiteness in contemporary sports, and how media covered Barry Bonds' chase of Hank Aaron's home run record.

Readings, Screening and/or Viewing Memo

- TBA

MODULE 8: REDEMPTION AND “THE DECISION” OCT. 21-27

In this module, you will learn how coverage of Michael Vick's dog-fighting case helped to frame a race and redemption narrative, about sports fans weighing in online on the decision to hire Black coaches, and how the LeBron James and “The Decision” reflected the country as it entered the age of Obama.

Readings, Screening and/or Viewing Memo

- TBA

MODULE 9: WHEN RACE, RELIGION AND SPORT COLLIDE OCT. 28 to NOV. 3

In this module, you will learn about what happens when race, religion and sport collide, as demonstrated by Brandon Davies' dismissal from the Brigham Young University basketball team and the Tim Tebow and Jeremy Lin phenomena; about the challenges of Black athletes in the NCAA in particular and college in general, and about the advent of name, image and likeness in college sports.

Readings, Screening and/or Viewing Memo

- TBA

Your annotated bibliography is due at 12:30 p.m., Monday, Oct. 28.

MODULE 10: "PLAYING WHILE WHITE" NOV. 4-10

In this module, you will learn how athletes such as Johnny Manziel, Marshall Henderson, Tom Brady, Larry Bird, Josh Hamilton, Maria Sharapova, Ronda Rousey, et al., demonstrate how whiteness is central to the commodification of athletes and the sports they play – and why whiteness matters within sports, and what that tells us about race in the United States. You will also consider the legacy of the Black quarterback, the objectification of female athletes, and why those who are Black are unapologetic.

Readings, Screening and/or Viewing Memo

- TBA

MODULE 11: "ROLE MODELS OR CRIMINALS" NOV. 11-17 (No class on Nov. 11 – Veterans Day)

In this module, you will learn about the effects of race and severity of criminal activity on audience perceptions of professional athletes; consider whether athletes who become criminal defendants are stereotyped by the media as well as whether athletes are or should be role models; and review examples of how race, sports, criminal justice and media intersect, including two high profile prosecutions against Allen Iverson in the 1990s and the Duke University lacrosse team in the 2000s.

Readings, Screening and/or Viewing Memo

- TBA

WEEK 13: CLASS PRESENTATIONS I * NOV. 18-24 (No class on Nov. 25 – Thanksgiving break)

During this session, you will offer peer evaluations pertaining to the class presentations that you and your classmates will work on this semester. As you know well by now, yours and all of the presentations will honor at least one of the five course objectives related to the intersection of race, sports and media.

Readings, Screening and/or Viewing Memo

- TBA

WEEK 15: CLASS PRESENTATIONS II * DEC. 2

During this session, you will offer peer evaluations pertaining to the class presentations that you and your classmates will work on this semester. As you know well by now, yours and all of the presentations will honor at least one of the five course objectives related to the intersection of race, sports and media.

*** The number of undergraduate and graduate students enrolled shall dictate the scheduling of class presentations. The tentative expectation is for the presentations to occur on Nov. 18 and Dec. 2.**

MODULE 12: ACCIDENTAL ACTIVISTS EXTRA CREDIT OPTION **

In this module, you will learn how a Black tennis athlete was tackled and handcuffed by a police officer in a case of “mistaken identity” and then faced the incident with dignity, using it as an opportunity to raise awareness about the dangers of racial profiling. You will also learn about other athletes who used their public roles to advocate for broader social justice even when it meant risking the loss of fans, sponsors, teammates or even the freedom to compete.

MODULE 13: “YOU RUN LIKE A GIRL” EXTRA CREDIT OPTION **

In this module, you will learn about the history of women’s sports and women in sports journalism and broadcasting; the perception of female athletes (including physical, emotional and psychological myths) related via the media and Hollywood; the impact of Title IX on society; and how women have used sports to further their generations-long quest for equal pay and opportunity.

MODULE 14: TALES OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT (ESSAYS) EXTRA CREDIT OPTION **

In this module, you learn how the intersection of race, sports and culture are conveyed across movies, documentaries, podcasts, books, etc. Instructions about how to submit your best 1,000-word essay (four pages, double-spaced, sourced) or 1,500-word essay (six pages, double-spaced, sourced) will be offered. So, too, will an expansive list of storytelling options suitable for your essay.

MODULE 15: CLASS PRESENTATIONS EXTRA CREDIT OPTION **

In this module, you will review instructions about what that class presentation you have been working toward this semester, and hopefully glean inspiration from what your peers have done before in the class. As you review them, always keep in mind that all presentations should at a minimum honor at least one of the five course objectives related to the intersection of race, sports and media.

**** The deadline for completing the “extra credit” module quizzes shall be 11:59 p.m., Dec. 4.**