

Race, Sports and Media

Spring 2025 • JOU 4714/MMC 6936 • Turlington Hall Room 2336 • Mondays • 1:55 p.m.-4:55 p.m.

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His office: Weimer 3101. His office hours: Wednesdays and Thursdays mostly by appointment only. Use fantastical.app/ten299/loweclass as the best way to get on his calendar for one on one meetings.

Course Summary

Noted sports scholar Chris Lamb contends that the most significant advances 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.

With that in mind, this course will examine whether the women's basketball star Caitlin Clark is popular because of her talent and style of play, or because she's white, straight and of the heartland? What of media coverage of Clark versus other Black female athletes and women's sports overall?

This course will certainly not be all about Caitlin Clark. We will also focus on how women athletes have for decades fought for access, equity, self-determination and social justice. From Billie Jean King and Althea Gibson to Venus and Serena Williams to Simone Biles and the U.S. women's soccer team to, yes, WNBA players long before Clark, let's examine why obstacles of race, sexuality, sexism, hypocrisy and stereotypes require so much of not only women athletes, but also women in media, too.

We will also consider what happens when race, religion and sports collide; issues involving sports, race, gender, sex and sexuality; 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.

Course Objectives

Students in this course will be able to relate:

1. How (women's) sports have affected societal views on class, criminal justice, race, religion, etc.
2. How whiteness matters within sports, and why its central to the commodification of athletes.
3. How women athletes have used their platforms to advocate for a more diverse and tolerant world.
4. How sports and race reflect cultural views on gender equity, identity, physicality, sexuality, etc.
5. How media and professional and college sports organizations consider intimate personal violence.
6. 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 work done for another class; copying and pasting text written by another person without quotation marks and or without complete attribution, which usually includes a link to the original work; illicitly using 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 6. 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.

Required Texts

The instructor and course adheres to the UF Center for Teaching Excellence'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.

Students should expect to read a significant portion of:

- "Social Issues in Sport Communication: You Make the Call" © 2023 edited by Terry L. Rentner and David P. Burns

They should expect to read portions of several if not all of these texts, among others:

- "The Unlevel Playing Field: A Documentary History of the African American Experience in Sport" © 2003 by David K. Wiggins and Patrick B. Miller
- "A Contemporary History of Women's Sport, Part One: Sporting Women, 1850-1960" © 2014 by Jean Williams
- "Cross-Cultural Journalism: Communicating Strategically About Diversity" © 2016 by Maria E. Len-Rios and Earnest L. Perry
- "Ways of Grace: Stories of Activism, Adversity and How Sports Can Bring Us Together" © 2017 by James Blake with Carol Taylor
- "More Than A Game: A History of the African American Experience in Sport" © 2018 by David K. Wiggins
- "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
- "No Slam Dunk: Gender, Sport and the Unevenness of Social Change" © 2018 by Cheryl Cooky and Michael A. Messner
- "Routledge Handbook of Sport, Leisure and Social Justice" © 2024 edited by Stefan Lawrence, Joanne Hill and Rasul Mowatt
- "Say Her Name: Centering Black Feminism and Women in Sport" © 2025 by Letisha Engracia Cardoso Brown

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. Students shall be expected to stay up to date on current events and breaking news related to race, sports and culture. 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, etc. NOTE: Some such reading or viewing material the instructor assigns or a student selects may require a small purchase or subscription fee.

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 Microsoft PowerPoint, Apple Keynote, Canva, Prezi, etc., 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_topicname.doc or studentlastname_topicname.docx.
- With your name, class name and date on three separate lines, all single-spaced in the top left corner.
- With the text as double-spaced and with indentation for new 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)

- 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.

Canvas Quizzes (200 points)

- We will have a quiz each week related to the assigned readings and module material.

Discussion Board (300 points)

- We will have discussion board prompts each week related to the readings and module material.
- We will also review and evaluate films and documentaries focusing on race, (women's) sports and media and that sought to help the public better understand and appreciate social change in the U.S. and internationally.
- It's expected you will demonstrate sufficient analysis and engagement with the assigned material.

Toward the Class Presentation

Each undergraduate will do an instructor-approved, 15-minute class presentation that relates to at least one of our course objectives, honors our assigned readings and includes your research beyond the course material. Each graduate student will do an instructor-approved, 30-minute class presentation.

- **Abstract (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.
- **Essay (100 points)**
 - Each undergraduate will offer an essay of 1,000 words (four pages, double-spaced, with references) relating to one or more of our course objectives, the assigned reading and/or research beyond the offered 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.
- **Annotated Bibliography (100 points)**
 - An annotated bibliography shall help gird 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.
- **Class Presentation (150 points)**
 - The presentation must abide instruction offered during class and via Canvas.
 - Each student 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 and/or Slack announcements are unforeseen and should be expected.

MODULE 0: ORIENTATION JAN. 13-19

In this module, you will learn the course objectives and assignments and how what's taught in this course in the spring shall differ what's been taught each fall since spring 2018; about the concepts of not only race, sports, and media, but also gender and culture; about a website devoted to these concepts; how they (and female athletes, particularly) are conveyed across movies, documentaries, podcasts, books, etc. You will also reveal why you decided to take this course and who you root for.

Readings and/or Viewing Memo

- TBA

MODULE 1: ACCIDENTAL ACTIVISTS JAN. 20-26 (No class on Jan. 20: MLK Day)

In this module, you will learn how women (and particularly women of color) in the U.S. and abroad have participated (or not participated) in sports as far back as slavery, through the earliest days of baseball, basketball, track, etc., through the Jim Crow and World Wars eras, and to present day. You will also learn how groundbreaking female athletes have 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 and/or desire to compete.

Readings and/or Viewing Memo

- TBA

MODULE 2: "PLAYING WHILE WHITE" (PART 1) JAN. 27-FEB. 2

In this module, you will learn how whiteness matters within sports, why it is central to the commodification of athletes and the sports they play, and what that tells us about race in the U.S. You will also consider how, more than 50 years after Title IX, women athletes remain subjected to the logics of sexism, including how to be legible as a female athletes requires fulfilling hegemonic beauty standards wrapped in discourses of race, sexuality, body and gender.

Readings and/or Viewing Memo

- TBA

MODULE 3: GENDER EQUITY FEB. 3-9

In this module, you will continue learning how Title IX has impacted society and sports in particular, and how women have used sports to further their generations-long quest for equal pay and opportunity. You will examine how the U.S. Women's National Soccer Team and its lawsuit helps reveal how governing sports organizations address pay issues to their stakeholders, and how the WNBA and its players negotiate when it comes to salaries, charter flights, etc.

Readings and/or Viewing Memo

- TBA

Your abstract proposing your class presentation idea is due at 11:59 a.m., Monday, Feb. 3.

MODULE 4: IDENTITY AND PHYSICALITY FEB. 10-16

In this module, you will learn what Brittany Griner's saga as a prisoner in a Russian jail, Caster Semenya's controversy over sex verification, Lia Thomas' battle to compete against female swimmers, Naomi Osaka's decision as to which country to represent, Megan Rapinoe's social justice efforts (and the lens of mind-body performance), the Norwegian women's beach handball team's uniform code protest, etc., all reveal about identity, physicality, stature, politics and more when it comes to women's sports in the U.S. and internationally.

Readings and/or Viewing Memo

- TBA

MODULE 5: REPUTATION MANAGEMENT FEB. 17-23

In this module, you will examine the considerations and strategies employed by management and female sports personalities at ESPN (Maria Taylor, Rachel Nichols, Sage Steele, etc.) and other companies (Jayne Kennedy, Erin Andrews, Charissa Thompson, Pam Oliver, etc.), with an added focus on how they fit into decades of racial inequities in sports broadcasting.

Readings and/or Viewing Memo

- TBA

MODULE 6: LEAGUES, MEDIA AND INTIMATE PERSONAL VIOLENCE FEB. 24-MARCH 2

In this module, you will learn how sports organizations (NFL, MLB, etc.) and sports news media not only framed, negotiated and contextualized how certain athletes and organization leaders accused of intimate personal violence should be understood within their respective situations but also how the organizations used the athletes' cultural capital to justify their interpretations of the athletes, the events and the resulting punishments (or lack thereof).

Readings and/or Viewing Memo

- TBA

Your essay is due at 11:59 a.m., Monday, Feb. 24.

MODULE 7: WHEN RACE, RELIGION AND SPORT COLLIDE MARCH 3-9

In this module, you will learn about religious expressions in sports, the social connections of religions and sports, the mirroring of sport and religious devotion, and the discourse between religious ideas and leaders and professional athletes. You will also be introduced to female athletes who have sacrificed their careers because of religion, and learn about the Bible's role in the lives and careers of some of the greatest women's athletes and coaches.

Readings and/or Viewing Memo

- TBA

MODULE 8: BRANDING AND MARKETING: "... LIKE A GIRL" MARCH 10-16

In this module, you will learn about the history of female runners, the founding and corporate culture of Nike, the arguments of mother-athletes, and applicable public relations and broader communications concepts to the cases of Alysia Montano, Allyson Felix, etc. You will also consider how sports media and advertising have portrayed female athletes over the years.

Readings and/or Viewing Memo

- TBA

Your annotated bibliography is due at 11:59 a.m., Friday March 14.

SPRING BREAK**MODULE 9: CONTROLLING THE NARRATIVE MARCH 24-30**

In this module, you will learn how the media discourses surrounding Marion Jones pleading guilty to charges of lying to federal investigators in 2003 over using performance-enhancing drugs, Simone Biles' withdrawal from the 2020 Olympics, and Naomi Osaka's decision to not to speak to the media after her tennis matches each led to complex media spectacles that highlight concerns about competition, celebrity and the push for success at all costs.

Readings and/or Viewing Memo

- TBA

MODULE 10: BLACK FEMINISM IN SPORTS MARCH 31-APRIL 6 (No class on March 31)

In this module, you will learn about women as athletes, activists, and everyday people through a Black feminist lens. Delving deeply into issues of gender, the politics of punishment, athlete activism, the politics of Black hair, fingernails and fashion, and the representation and commodification of girls and women in sport and society. Focal points include Biles, Florence Griffith Joyner, Sha'Carri Richardson, Venus and Serena Williams, Gabby Douglas, etc.

Readings and/or Viewing Memo

- TBA

MODULE 11: "PLAYING WHILE WHITE" (PART 2) APRIL 7-13

In this module, you will consider again the macro questions, including what drives the popularity of certain female athletes; what we should make of media coverage of white female athletes versus those of color; why obstacles of race, sexuality, sexism, hypocrisy and stereotypes require so much of women athletes and those in media – and what it all means for the future of women's sports and society at large.

Readings and/or Viewing Memo

- TBA

CLASS PRESENTATIONS APRIL 21 Scheduling of class presentations will depend on the class size. They likely won't all happen on this date – much more they likely will be spread out in the weeks prior, with the timing based on and according to topic groupings and other circumstances.