

JRN341/541: Sporting Culture Through Non-Fiction
SUMMER I 2021
Dr. Molly Yanity

SYLLABUS/READING LIST

TEXTS (Required Reading of Six Non-Fiction Books)

- 1.) [The Boys in the Boat](#), Daniel James Brown
- 2.) [The Soul of Baseball: A Road Trip Through Buck O'Neil's America](#), Joe Posnanski
or [We Will Win the Day](#), Louis Moore
- 3.) [Ball Four](#), Jim Bouton
- 4.) [Friday Night Lights](#), H.G. Bissinger -- PLEASE don't think you can watch the movie or TV show and "get it." Many have tried; many have failed
- 5.) [Outcasts United](#), Warren St. John
- 6.) [The National Team](#) (UPDATED & EXPANDED VERSION!), Caitlin Murray
or [One Life](#), Megan Rapinoe

PURPOSE OF THE COURSE

Sports is often a window through which to look at a society's culture. Sports can show us a society's priorities, what its people value and how people relate to each other. Sports can reveal the best in a society, or – as it turns out – the worst, too.

Sports can be triumphant, showcase the best in individuals and the pinnacle of teamwork. Yet, they can also be used for all the wrong reasons, as well.

This directed readings course will offer students for analysis the contemporary views of American culture through the 20th Century: The books begin in the era of the Great Depression and take us to the lead up to World War II (*Boys in the Boat*). We will look at sports through the Jim Crow-Segregation/Civil Rights era (*The Soul of Baseball or We Will Win The Day*) and the raucous 1960s/ 1970s and Vietnam (*Ball Four*), the economic collapse of the 1980s (*Friday Night Lights*), the post-September 11 attack era, as well as America's perspective on foreigners, immigration and refugees (*Outcasts United*), as well as how the U.S. perspective of sports shifted from exclusively men to women – and where that has stalled, or failed. (*The National Team or One Life*).

Essentially, the readings will provide an overview of American culture over the last 100 years through the sports frame. At the same time, those students interested in writing marketable non-fictional magazine features, or long-form essays and books will be introduced to new narrative devices as each of the authors brings a unique writing and reporting style.

WRITTEN COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

There will be no examinations. Students will write **six** 750- to 800-word essays in the reaction to the readings in this course. (**NOTE:** Graduate students enrolled in **JRN541** must write an additional 1,000-word essay that synthesizes – gives some interpretative order to – the six books they read.)

Each essay should describe what the reader has learned from each book about the events, philosophies and effects of the era in American culture and viewpoints. Additionally, each essay should discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each book from the reader's perspective and each essay should address the author's reporting in the book. In other words, you will describe what you learned about the era and about the style of reporting employed in each book. **NOTE: These papers must NOT rehash the book, or simply describe what happens.** It's not a book report – trust me, I've read them all.

HOW I GRADE

Each essay will be submitted in its corresponding module via Blackboard.

Readings and essays may be completed before the due date, but any essay arriving after the due date—without prior permission—will drop 10 percent for the first 24 hours and an additional 10 percent over the next 24 hours. *Essays submitted more than 48 hours after the due date will receive a zero.*

The final grade for undergrads will be an average grade on the six essays. For graduate students, the final grade will be an average of the seven essays.

Essays should demonstrate how carefully books are read and considered, be thoughtfully written and well edited. A copy of the best essay or essays on each book will be sent to all students each week.

GRADING SCALE

<u>Grade %</u>	<u>Grade</u>		
≥ 93	A	73-76	C
90-92	A-	70-72	C-
87-89	B+	67-69	D+
83-86	B	63-66	D
80-82	B-	60-62	D-
77-79	C+	<59	F