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# SPORTS REPORTING

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A fellow sports reporter, journalism instructor and friend of mine named [Justice Hill](#) introduced one of his sports reporting courses with the following words:

“The nation is made up of fans, many of them experts on the games they follow,’ journalism professor Melvin Mencher once said.

Those fans expect a lot. Yet, too often, these men and women who fill the arenas and stadiums, and who help TV ratings soar are disappointed in what the media provide. With increasing pressures on newsroom budgets and the rapid development of sports on the internet, readers are seeing too much sports journalism that is sloppy, cliché-ridden, incomplete and downright boring. *How can that be?*”

**I think I can answer that:** Because each of us in this room commits so much time watching and studying our favorite sports, we assume we are experts. And, as experts, we assume we can talk and write about these sports and the personalities within proficiently and in an entertaining manner.

However, it isn’t that easy.

Knowing a sport, its rules, its participants and its schemes may make you a sports bar superhero, but it doesn’t make you a journalist. Knowing a player’s statistics, tendencies and his or her backstory doesn’t make you a journalist, either.

**Sports journalism requires all of this knowledge, plus all of the basic journalism tenets. Namely, you better have a fundamentally good story to tell, where there's great research, interviewing, context and facts.**

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If you don’t have that, it doesn't matter how much insider color and how many fascinating stats you have.

This course is designed to help you be able to do all of the above.

This professional-style course is designed to teach sportswriting as, as Hill says, a *high art form*.

## OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this course, the assigned readings, class discussions and completed assignments should have helped you to:

- Develop and improve basic sports writing and reporting skills
- Identify story ideas and bring those ideas to the point of publication on different platforms

- Understand some of the basic issues involved in sports reporting, like beat writing, social media, cultural responsibilities, ethics, dealing with athletes, confidential sources and consumer demand
- Navigate a successful job search

## EXPECTATIONS

In this course, I expect students to know, understand and use AP style. I also expect you to think critically, attend class, ask questions, engage and complete assignments. I also expect you to be honest, accurate, respectful and on time.

You can expect me to be available to help you succeed in this class – and beyond – in every reasonable way. You can expect me to listen to your concerns and to be fair in assessing and/or acting upon them. You can expect me to act like an editor and try to help you improve.



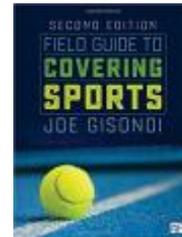
## REQUIRED MATERIALS

### TEXTBOOK

- “Field Guide to Covering Sports” [SECOND EDITION](#) by Joe Gisoni

### OTHER

- Current Associated Press stylebook that includes “Sports Guidelines and Style,” which is typically found at the back of the book
- A digital audio recorder (You can use a smartphone, or laptop)
- Readings will be posted to my website, [mollyyanity.com](http://mollyyanity.com)



## COURSE POLICIES

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** Familiarize yourself with Quinnipiac University's policy on Academic Integrity. ([Available in full here.](#)) Additionally, please note, made-up sources and made-up quotations will result in zero points for a writing assignment and fall under “Plagiarism.”

**ASSISTANCE:** If you have health and/or educational needs, please inform the professor within the first week of the semester. Even if you have already made arrangements with the Office of Academic Services, *please* make the professor aware within the first week of the semester.

Consistent with its responsibilities, Quinnipiac University provides [reasonable accommodations to promote equal educational opportunity](#). The University provides

staff members to ensure compliance with the ADA and Section 504. These staff members work directly with students, faculty and staff regarding reasonable accommodations and other assistance as needed. If you require assistance beyond what your professor can provide, please contact John Jarvis, Coordinator of Learning Services at 203-582-5390 or [John.Jarvis@Quinnipiac.edu](mailto:John.Jarvis@Quinnipiac.edu).

**ATTENDANCE:** Attendance is a priority. As noted previously, this is a professional style course. Thus, it is your job to show up. More than one absence will negatively impact your grade, as will chronic tardiness.

**CLASSROOM TECHNOLOGY & RESPECT:** When you are in class, phones, tablets and laptops must be stowed, unless otherwise instructed. Seriously, don't be rude to your professor and fellow classmates.

## ASSIGNMENTS

**DEADLINES:** Out-of-class assignments will have different deadlines depending on when students choose to cover an event, or when profile subjects can be interviewed. Still, each story will have an arranged, final due date. Game stories are due the night the game is played. So if the game is on Friday afternoon, the story is due by midnight that evening. Late assignments are not accepted. **There is a reason "DEAD" makes up half the word "deadline." Once again, late assignments will not be accepted.**



**READING:** All readings are to be read *before* class on the day they are listed on the syllabus. READ. READ. READ. Have I made this clear enough?

**SELF-EDITING:** In the real world, editors aren't fans of reporters that file sloppy copy and it kills your credibility with readers. So, learn now to check spelling, AP style, punctuation and flow. Double-check names and titles.

**How do you learn to write? You read great writing and you practice. There are no shortcuts.**

## GRADES

The following will comprise your final grade:

**Weekly reaction essays** **30 percent**

\* Prior to each class and no later than 2 p.m., you are to email the professor a 200-word essay about the day's readings. Write about what you liked about the story, what you didn't like, what you learned about the craft of sports writing from it, compare it to the other readings.

**Game Story No. 1** **15 percent**

**Game Story No. 2** **15 percent**

\* See [Game Story requirements here](#)

**Personality Feature** **15 percent**

**Enterprise** **25 percent**

\* Instead of a final exam, you will write an online feature or enterprise story using what you learned this semester. The story can be about a timely issue, an event, a trend, a particular interesting person or something similar. The goal is to make this the best piece of sports journalism you've produced (thus far) in your career. (More on this later in the course)

### GRADING RUBRIC:

Criteria for grading includes the following (all on a 7-point scale):

Accuracy	Significance of information
Completeness	Reader interest/Compelling story (readability)
Newsworthiness	Fairness
Organization	Clarity
Conciseness	Precision of language (active voice)
Grammar	Punctuation
Spelling	Proper use of AP style

### THE FOLLOWING WILL RESULT IN A ZERO ON A WRITING ASSIGNMENT:

- LATE ASSIGNMENTS
- MADE-UP SOURCES AND/OR QUOTATIONS
- MISSPELLED NAMES

**"If you're going in looking for the conclusion, then you've just short-circuited the whole journey. (You have to) trust what you find and trust the process to bring you somewhere, but not want to wrap it up prematurely at all. ... Welcome ambiguity and the complexity because it's a lot closer to the truth. ... There's a gold mine there if you don't try to skirt it."**

**- Gary Smith**

**GRADING SCALE****Grade %      Grade**

&gt; 93          A

90-92        A-

87-89        B+

83-86        B

80-82        B-

77-79        C+

73-76        C

70-72        C-

67-69        D+

63-66        D

60-62        D-

&lt;59          F