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# Critical Issues in Sports:

## Sports, Media & Capitalism

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*Photo by Neil Leifer*

**For those of us who love sport**, we almost set our watches by the sporting schedule and the deluge of information that surrounds it. Let's take football, example. High school football on Friday, college on Saturday (and those Tuesdays & Wednesdays!), NFL all day Sunday, Monday (and Thursday!) night and a steady stream of fantasy updates, NFL Live, SportsCenter, podcasts and tweets in between. Oh, and looking into those odds!

For those in the sports communication business, that schedule easily sweeps us away into a busy oblivion. In between games and practices, there are news conferences, interviews, articles and scripts to write, statistics and rankings to process, tweets and multimedia content to disseminate, bags to pack and planes to catch.

It's no wonder we don't have much time to look away from our laptop, or phone and really examine the environment around us.

By "environment," I don't necessarily mean the faint smell of hot dogs and popcorn that waft up from the concourses and into the press box, or the beauty of Lake Washington that stretches out from the east end zone at Husky Stadium at the University of Washington in Seattle – the very scene I took in many Saturdays when I covered college football for the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*.

Rather, I mean the dirty, semi-hidden "environment" - at that same gorgeous college football stadium – where 70,000 mostly white/mostly well-off fans fill that stadium to watch young people of color bash heads for their entertainment. I mean the environment in which billionaire owners of sport franchises use the tax dollars of everyday Americans to pay for stadiums and arenas that those same spectators can hardly afford to enter. I mean the environment that demands the same banks that taxpayers bailed out in 2008 are still giving those same billionaire owners millions of dollars to put their names on those same stadiums and arenas. I mean the environment that insists we don't mix politics with our sport, that we believe in a level playing field for all and that conveniently ignores racism, sexism, classism and anything that might get in the way of our entertainment.

In this class, we will be turn our eyes from the games and will immerse ourselves into the latter environment – one that deals exclusively in power, money and influence.

## **OBJECTIVES**

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

- \* Develop and improve critical-thinking skills, specifically in the sport media arena
- \* Gain a cultural and economic sensitivity surrounding such issues
- \* Navigate the complex, capitalist landscape to identify story ideas, as well as responsible and complete ways to tell those stories.

## **EXPECTATIONS**

I expect you to be honest, to come to class, to be prepared by doing the readings (etc.) before class, to engage and to be respectful. I also expect you to think critically.

You can expect me to listen to your concerns, to be fair, to provide you with feedback in timely manners and to help you succeed in this class and beyond.

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Familiarize yourself with Quinnipiac University's policy on Academic Integrity. ([Available in full here.](#))

**ChatGPT/AI:** Beyond what the university policy states, I want to be crystal clear in my expectations surrounding the use of artificial intelligence when it comes to the papers you will be required to write this semester: I expect your work to be your own and original to you.

This is literally a course designed to make you think, to articulate *your* thoughts, opinions, lines of thought, questions, etc. AI can't do the things I will ask of you and, if you try to circumvent that intention, you will receive a zero on the assignment.



### **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. Staff members work directly with students, faculty and staff to provide reasonable accommodations and other assistance as needed. If you require assistance beyond what your professor can provide, please contact the Learning Commons at [learning.center@qu.edu](mailto:learning.center@qu.edu).

### **ATTENDANCE**

Given that this is a graduate-level seminar course, attendance is required. *Missing more than one class will negatively impact your grade.* Course withdrawal will be recommended if a student misses two or more classes regardless the reason.

### **CLASSROOM TECHNOLOGY & POLICY**

\* You are expected to follow the course on [mollyyanity.com](http://mollyyanity.com).

\* You may use Blackboard to turn in your assignments. I will conversely use it to record your grades, as well as to send group emails.

\* When you are in class, phones, tablets and laptops must be stowed, unless otherwise instructed. I advise you take notes via pen and paper and transport them to your computer later. However, if you are used to keeping notes on the laptop, that is fine. But if you are using your laptop or phone for *non-class reasons*, I reserve the right to count the day as a missed class. I'm serious about this.

## BOOKS NEEDED FOR THIS CLASS

All students are required to read for this class. The majority of the readings will be available to download for free on the course website. However, ALL students need to purchase, or borrow the following books for their use in this course:

- \* [Capitalism: A Very Short Introduction](#) by James Fulcher
- \* [Fair Play: How Sports Shape the Gender Debates](#) by Katie Barnes
- \* Other readings are available on the course site

*I don't care if you buy the physical book, the ebook or listen to it; just have it for reference.*

## ASSIGNMENTS

**DEADLINES:** Late assignments are not accepted. You will receive a ZERO for a late assignment. **There is a reason "DEAD" makes up half the word "deadline." Once again, late assignments will not be accepted.**

Reasonable requests for an extension beyond a deadline will be considered only if they are levied at least 24 hours prior to the deadline.

**READINGS:** All readings are to be read *before* class on the day they are listed on the syllabus. Read them. Take notes. Prepare questions and discussion points. READ. READ. READ. Have I made this clear enough?

### Your final grade will be made up of the following:

- \* **Three papers. 20 points each = 60 points.** You will be required to write 6- to 8-page, double-spaced academic style papers based on readings and discussions.
- \* **Engagement/Attendance. 30 points.** This grade is determined by your critical and respectful engagement, as well as your preparation for and participation in class.
- \* **Presentation. 10 points.** Students will deliver one presentation per semester.

## GRADING SCALE\*

Grade %/Point Range	Grade		
> 93	A	77-79	C+
90-92	A-	73-76	C
87-89	B+	70-72	C-
83-86	B	60-69	D
80-82	B-	<59	F

\* See Rubric on course website