

COM410: Special Problems: Understanding Sports Audiences and Fandom

MOLLY YANITY, Ph.D.

Spring 2026

Tue/Thu 11 a.m.-12:15 p.m. Ranger 208

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COURSE SITE: <http://mollyyanity.com/> and Brightspace

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The University of Rhode Island occupies the traditional stomping ground of the Narragansett Nation and the Niantic People. We honor and respect the enduring and continuing relationship between the Indigenous people and this land by teaching and learning more about their history and present-day communities, and by becoming stewards of the land we, too, inhabit.

COURSE OVERVIEW

What does it mean to be a fan? This course explores the psychological and sociological theories behind sports fandom, while paying special attention to how strategic communicators and media professionals target and reach fans. Since this class also fulfills a senior capstone requirement, a research component will also be assessed.

PURPOSE/OUTCOMES

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

- formulate an understanding of the role of fandom in society;
- comprehend psychological and sociological theories of fandom;
- apply theories to critique and understand your relationship to sports and other social entities;
- understand and conceptualize effective strategies to reach sports audiences.

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS

- All readings will be posted to the course website at mollyyanity.com.
- Brightspace will be used to post rubrics, submit assignments and to communicate with students.

GRADING

Your grade will be comprised of the total score of the following:

Attendance	10%
Effective engagement/participation	25%
Presentation	15%
Paper 1	20%
Paper 2 (final)	30%

GRADING SCALE

A = 100-93	C+ = 79-77	F = <60
A- = 92-90	C = 76-73	
B+ = 89-87	C- = 72-70	
B = 86-83	D+ = 69-67	
B- = 82-80	D = 66-60	

COURSE POLICIES

***Attendance:** I see the classroom as your “workplace” while you are in college. Thus, you should treat both your on-campus work the same way you would treat work attendance. Show up. Further, you’re paying to be in these classes. So, again, show up.

Those with perfect attendance will earn bonus points. Those missing one or two classes will not receive a penalty and can still earn 100 percent of the attendance points. Those missing more than two class sessions will receive a reduction in those points, up to 10 percent per absence beyond two.

Here is a list of [university-sanctioned absences](#).

- **IF YOU MISS CLASS, it is YOUR responsibility to make up work. Do not ask the professor what you missed; ask a classmate, consult the schedule, etc.**

***Engagement/participation points:** The effectiveness and success of this course are dependent on a robust and *prepared* discussion. As such, you are required to be present, engaged and prepared by having done the reading and prepared notes on the discussion questions.

Other engagement notes:

- You will regularly present your ideas, your opinions. You may be challenged. Respectfulness and civility are expected -- so are your voice and uniqueness.
- While in class, I expect you to be on task. If you are working on other materials, devices or engaged in activities beyond the course, you may be asked to leave the room, which will count as an absence.

CONTACTING PROFESSOR YANITY

Reach me via email (molly.yanity@uri.edu) or via [Starfish](#) or Brightspace.

I’ll respond within 24 hours on normal weekdays and weekends, although I’ll usually get back to you sooner. I routinely send out emails and may post announcements via Brightspace, so be sure to check your URI email and/or Brightspace regularly.

OFFICE HOURS IN DAVIS 206*

Tuesdays 1-3 p.m., Wednesdays 10-11 a.m. or by appointment

Zoom options are available.

Please make an appointment through Starfish or contact me by email.

**-Davis Hall is not ADA-compliant and does not have a working elevator. If this affects you, please just let me know; I'm happy to meet you elsewhere.*

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Familiarize yourself with URI's on [academic honesty](#) as outlined in the [University Manual](#).

In addition to the university's policy, my stance on the use of **artificial intelligence tools** is this: Your work is expected to be original and produced by you – which is the standard in the sport media and communication industries.

That said, we will discuss how AI may serve as a tool for your use, given that the product is fully original, vetted, fact-checked and accurate and you provide evidence as such. For certain assignments, you can choose to utilize AI tools to assist you. When you do, it is crucial to clearly document which tool you used, the prompts or questions you provided, and how you used the AI-generated output. However, you must also critically review and refine the AI's output to ensure the final work accurately reflects your own understanding and meets the academic standards expected by the university. Failure to properly document or cite use of AI will be considered a violation of the university's [Academic Requirements in the University Manual](#) (see 8.27.10 – 8.27.22).

SYLLABUS REVISION DISCLAIMER

I reserve the right to revise the syllabus, class schedule or assignment guidelines at any point during the semester if I deem changes are necessary. I will inform you of any changes in class, via email and on the course website in a timely fashion.

OTHER RESOURCES

- [Writing Center](#) Room 009, basement, Roosevelt Hall
- [Academic Enhancement Center](#) Fourth floor, Roosevelt Hall
- [Disability, Access & Inclusion](#) Room 302, Memorial Union
- [Hardship Assistance/Rhody Outpost](#) (food insecurity, housing insecurity – there is help)

INFORMATION REQUIRED BY THE UNIVERSITY:

Students' legal rights and the university's legal and procedural obligations:



[COURSE SCHEDULE AVAILABLE HERE.](#)