The Politics of College Sports
POLI 3290 301
Spring 2017

Instructor: Dr. Jeffrey N. Gerson

Instructor Availability:
Tuesday and Thursday, 10:45am – 11:45am, 1:45 – 3:45.
Wednesday 12-2pm Digital Services O’Leary 220
Monday and Friday by appointment

Office Location, Telephone and Email:
Dugan 201-C # 978 - 934 - 4255
Jeffrey_Gerson@uml.edu
You can find me after class at Media Services.
For an emergency you can reach me on the cell: 617 - 435 - 1138.

Course Meeting Time and Place:
O’Leary Library, Room 300A
Wednesday 9:00 – 11:50am

Prerequisites for the course:
Students should have some background in social science and enjoy reading and talking about sports.

Students for whom the course is intended:
Social Science, Humanities, Fine Arts, Health, Education and Business Majors and Minors, Sports Fans and Athletes.

Course Purpose and Objectives:
This course will explore the key issues facing college athletics today, such as the concussion crisis and the growing professionalization of sports. The class will feature live and Skyped guest authors and figures from the world of college athletics, including university sports leaders, NCAA critics, and sports journalists covering the beat. Students will write a short research paper and script for a 4-5 minute radio documentary. You may work with a partner or alone. Sports radio journalist Ken Shulman will assist students in the interview process and creating the radio documentary script.

Course Requirements:
Students will be required to do the following things in order for this to be a successful course:

Attend and participate in all class sessions. Attendance will be taken daily. Students may be excused from class with permission of the
instructor in advance of the class date. One unexcused absence reduces your grade for Attendance and Participation to C. Two unexcused absences reduces it to an F.

In order to be excused from class, it is your responsibility to write a legible note asking to be excused and you must bring it with you to the class immediately following your absence. The note should include your printed name, the current date, and the date you were absent. You can be excused from absences but not from participation. Participation includes such things as your verbal contributions to class discussion, ability to listen to other students, civility in the classroom, assisting of students in the class, questions for the guest speakers, meetings with the instructor, coming to class on time and extra credit assignments. Late attendance and leaving class early will be noted. Whenever possible, class events will be recorded. The audio recordings will be available two to three days after the event via Ensemble.

Chronic late attendance and leaving class early will harm your grade for attendance and participation.

Participation includes such things as your verbal contributions to class discussion, questions for guest speakers ability to listen to other students, civility in the classroom, assisting of students in the class, meetings with the instructor, coming to class on time and extra credit assignments.

Please take note that we may have a class session or two off campus. As a result, these classes will run longer than our official class time. Some class dates will be held on days other than official class days. Plan ahead to clear your school and work schedule. If you have a legitimate reason for not attending, your absence will be excused, however you are still responsible for the material covered.

Read the required material in a timely manner. All books can be purchased at the South Campus bookstore. In addition there are articles available on the course web page, as indicated in the course schedule. Films will be available online via Ensemble.

Radio Documentary

You are required to either work alone or with another student to write a:

a) 1 page abstract that includes a brief bibliography, topic and choice of interviewee: due Feb. 8
b) Conduct at least one interview, record and transcribe it, obtain a release form from the interviewee: due Feb. 22
c) Write a short research paper – 3 pages per student: due March 1
d) 2 page script: first draft due March 29 in class

e) 2 page script: second draft due April 26 after comments from outside filmmakers is received.

ELO
This course meets the UML Essential Learning Outcome of Written and Oral Communication. Students must produce the following written and oral presentations:

- One 3 page book review
- A 6-page review of four essays (1.5 pages per essay) in *The Best American Sports Writing 2015*. For extra credit you can review additional essays.
- A radio documentary, presented in class (includes a one page abstract -- topic, brief bibliography and summary, choice of interviewee --; 3 page research paper; 2 page script, first draft and final draft and presentation in class.

**Required Reading and Viewing:**

**Required Books**


*or*


**Required Viewing:**

*Schooled: The Price of College Sports

Pony Excess

Head Games

League of Denial

Concussion

Happy Valley

Required Articles

See the course web page for a complete list.
Recommended

Read the sports pages daily.

Present the following evaluations:

1. Attendance and participation will count as a total of 10% of the final grade.

See the Calendar for a week-by-week description and due dates for writing assignments

2. 3 page book review of *Billion-dollar ball* or *Indentured* 10%

- 6 page review of four essays (1.5 pages per essay) in *The Best American Sports Writing 2015*. It is worth 20% of the final grade. For extra credit you can review additional essays (three essays are selected by former UML coaches; one by you)

- Three to four minute radio documentary, presented in class. It is worth 60% of the final grade (includes 5% for one-two page abstract -- topic, brief bibliography and summary, choice of interviewee --; 5% for recorded interview, transcribed with release form signed by due date; 10% for 3 page paper; 10% for 2 page script; 30% for radio doc draft, final and presentation).

Pick one of these topics for your research paper:

- Penn State University Sexual Abuse Scandal
- Concussion Crisis in College Sports
- Should Division I Athletes Be Compensated?
- Should Division I Athletes Unionize?
- Legal Challenges to the NCAA: O’Bannon and Jenkins
- The Changing Landscape of College Sports Media
- Hazing in College Sports
- Gender Equity in College Sports (Title IX, the declining number of women coaches...)
Late Paper Policy:

Papers will be penalized two grades for every calendar day late. That means if it is two days late, the grade will be an F.

The book review and research paper must be submitted to turnitin.com

How to turn in your written assignments:

The written assignments for this course must be turned in through a plagiarism-checking site called Turn It In. I am sorry to make you do this but I’ve had some bad experiences in recent semesters and this saves me a lot of time.

Here’s how to do it:

Go to Turnitin.com and create an account for yourself. The Class ID number is:

14283311

and the Enrollment Password is: Billion

Do this as soon as possible. Don’t wait until the book review is due to sort this out.

That’s it! The website will guide you through the process of uploading your book review.

Written assignments that do not include a References page with the sources that are listed in the paper or have spelling errors will not be accepted. APA format is preferable. Papers with these mistakes will be sent back to you with points deducted. Be sure to spell check carefully.

Grading Scale: On all assignments the grading scale is as follows: A 4.0 (94 and above), A- 3.7 (90 to 93), B+ 3.3 (87 to 89), B 3.0 (83 to 86), B- 2.7 (80 to 82), C+ 2.3 (77 to 79), C 2.0 (73 to 76), C- 1.7 (70 to 72) D+ 1.3 (67 to 69), D 1.0 (63 to 66) and F (62 and below).

Final course grade:
I will set aside time on a date after the final assignment during finals’ week to meet with students who wish to review the final writing assignment and final course grade. If you cannot attend, you are urged to call or email on or before this date and I will return the call and email with the information you request. After this date, I will not discuss the final assignment grade or the final course grade. It is your responsibility to make an appointment with me before or on this date if you wish to go over your course grade.

Classroom/Course Accommodations: If you have any special learning needs please let me know and I will see about making the course and/or classroom more accommodating (typically you must have documentation from Disability Services). Also notify me if your religious observances conflict at some point with assignment due dates or examinations and we will make different arrangements if necessary).

Professor Gerson’s Policy Regarding Academic Dishonesty, Cheating and Plagiarism.

The definitions of cheating and plagiarism are clearly spelled out in the U. Mass Undergraduate Catalogue under 'Academic Integrity'.

http://www.uml.edu/Catalog/Undergraduate/Policies/Academic-Policies/Academic-Integrity.aspx

Please consult these pages if you haven’t done so already.

If you are guilty of cheating or “substantial plagiarism” in this class the penalty is course failure or F and I will recommend to the Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences that the student be suspended from the University.

If you are guilty of “incidental plagiarism”, (as defined below), you will be assigned a failing grade for that assignment, lowering your final course grade.

All of your work for this course should be done independently, and be free of plagiarism, meaning it is fully original research and writing with total acknowledgement of all ideas, quotations, cited evidence, and sources. If you are not familiar with a style manual for bibliography and notes see the course web page for the APA Format and Style Guide.

Two Types of Plagiarism:

a. Substantial plagiarism: widespread or considerable borrowing of material, passing off borrowed passages as original, failure to indicate quoted evidence or give bibliographical sources or other appropriate credit.
b. Incidental plagiarism: very small-scale borrowing, copying, downloading, or insertion without appropriate quotation, credit, or acknowledgement.

This policy will be strictly enforced.

If you plagiarize an extra credit assignment, all extra credit will be discounted.

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SPECIAL NOTE:

We will be viewing and reading material that may disturb you. Some readings, films and guest speakers may have explicit sexual and violent content, some may use profanity, and some may be racist, homophobic and sexist. These readings, speakers and films do not necessarily represent my views or beliefs and I ask you to read and view them for educational purposes only.

Access the course web page for announcements, downloading articles and class emails. See handout: Blackboard Access Information for Students

Last minute changes in the course schedule will be sent via email through the course web page so check email the morning of every class.

Electronic Device Policy
Laptops, cell phones and other electronic devices can remain on as long as they do not disturb the class. Hopefully you can use these devices to enhance class discussion.

Extra credit
Extra credit is available for students who wish to improve their grade. For all extra credit opportunities, please see me.

If I am late to class please wait for me to arrive. If class is cancelled, I will send an email and UML Honors will be alerted and the class will be notified.

COURSE CALENDAR

Week I. Wednesday January 18
Gerson introduction to the course
Skype with Jay Bilas of ESPN “Possible Research Topics”
Assignment for Week II.
Next week you will present your “About Me” Power Point.
Tell us something about yourself in 6 minutes.
Send PPT slides to me by **Tuesday Jan. 24, 8pm.**
The file should include your FirstName_LastName_ClassName (e.g., PCS) Date (e.g., 01_00_2017)

Answer these six questions by presenting one slide per question. You have one minute to narrate each slide.

Where were you born and raised?
What is your family background (ethnicity, religion...)?
What are your hobbies or favorite sports activities?
What is your dream job?
Why did you pick U. Mass Lowell?
Why are you taking this class and what do you hope to learn?

Start reading *Billion-dollar ball* or *The System*

Begin to explore a topic for the radio documentary

**Week II. Wed. Jan. 25**
About Me Presentations

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Ken Shulman, long time NPR radio and WBUR’s Only a Game documentary radio journalist will share his work with us and also teach us how to conduct an interview and create a radio documentary script.

View Shulman’s web page: [http://awaygames.org/greetings/](http://awaygames.org/greetings/)

Take a look at this web page since it has a step-by-step guide to doing an oral history interview:
[http://dohistory.org/on_your_own/toolkit/oralHistory.html#DOIT](http://dohistory.org/on_your_own/toolkit/oralHistory.html#DOIT)

Assignment for Week III.
View via Ensemble - *Schooled: The Price of College Sports* 85 min.

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Complete *Billion-Dollar Ball* or *The System*

Book review of Billion-dollar ball or The System due Wed. Feb. 8 by 1am via Turnitin.com
Present a chapter from *Billion-dollar ball* or *The System*. Discuss the authors’ approach to the topic. Is it fair? Thoughtful? What are its weaknesses or failings?


Listen to conference call with Armen Keteyian

**Week III. Wed. Feb. 1**
Discussion of *Billion-dollar ball* and *The System*
Skype with Neal Pilson, former President of CBS Sports 10-10:45am
Skype with Jeff Benedict, co-author *The System* 11 – 11:45am

Assignment for Week IV
View *Pony Excess*
Questions: Was the “death penalty” warranted for SMU? When is “the death penalty” in college sports necessary?
Also watch the Skype with *Pony Excess* director Thaddeus Matula (from 2015).
Write 1 page Abstract

**Week IV. Feb. 8**
Students present 1 page Abstract of research topic, including question or hypothesis, name of interviewee, and brief bibliography.
Skype with Joseph Littman, attorney representing Jenkins in *Jenkins v. NCAA*
Discussion of *Pony Excess*, Skype with Pilson and Benedict, final comments on *Billion Dollar Ball* and *The System*

**Assignments for Week V.**
View documentary films *Head Games* and *League of Denial*

Visit Concussion Legacy Foundation online and review its web page carefully for information about concussion policy, education and research.
[http://concussionfoundation.org](http://concussionfoundation.org)

**Week V. Feb. 15**
The Concussion Crisis in College Sports
Gerson Lecture and class discussion of *Head Games*
Guest speaker: Cliff Robbins, Concussion Legacy Foundation

Assignment for Week VI.
Reading: D1 Ticker
**Week VI. Feb. 22**
Boston College AD Brad Bates 10:30am
Changing Role of the Athletic Director in College Sports

Assignment for Week VII.
Thee page research paper due March 1

**Week VII. March 1**
Discussion of Research Papers

Health Issues Facing College Sports
Skype with Dr. Douglas Casa, Prof. Dept. of Kinesiology, Director of Athletic Training Education, Executive Director of the Korey Stringer Foundation, University of Connecticut
&
Skype with Dr. Kimberly Harmon, University of Washington Sports Medicine

**Week VIII. March 8**
Turning research papers into scripts for radio documentary
Ken Shulman return to help.

**Week IX. March 14 – 18 SPRING BREAK**

**Week X. March 22**
The Role of the Athletic Director, with Ryan Bamford, UMass Amherst AD - Skype
The Role of the College President, Mark Heckler, President of Valparaiso University - Skype

For Week XI. View documentary films The Hunting Ground and It Happened Here

**Week XI. March 29**
First Draft of Script Due
Gender and College Sports: Rape and Sexual Assault on College Campuses
Skype with Jessica Luther, author of Unsportsmanlike Conduct: College Football and the Politics of Rape

**Week XII. April 5**
The Changing Role of the College Head Coach
A Conversation with Jack Parker, former HC at BU Men’s Ice Hockey

**Assignment for Week XII**
Read Malcolm Gladwell’s essay, *In Plain Sight*
View documentary *Happy Valley*
**Week XIII. April 12**
Penn State Sandusky Child Sex Abuse Scandal  
Some questions to think about:  
Did Penn State deserve the “death penalty”?  
Are colleges (and the NCAA and sport governing bodies) doing everything they can to protect their athletes from sexual abuse?  
How do abusers go undetected for years?  
Talk by Danielle Day, former UML PT professor, now with diabetes bio tech company Fractyl of Lexington, MA.

*First draft of radio documentary script due today. They will be sent out for review to our guest filmmakers.*

**Week XIV. April 19**
Skype with Penn State University President Dr. Eric. J. Barron 9-10am

The Best American Sports Writing 2016  
Read and review four essays, three selected by coaches, one is your choice  
*Assignment is due April 18 by 11:59pm via Blackboard.*

**Week XV. April 26**  
Radio Documentary Script Presentations

**Tuesday May 2**  
*Our final exam is attending a college sports conversation in Boston: Can College Sports Be Reformed?*  
Conference Commissioners offer reform ideas: Amy Hutchthausen, Commissioner of America East Conference, Patrick Summers, NEWMAC, and Julie Ruppert, NE 10.

*Our class is invited to join Intro to Politics and Sports class for two conversations, one on Jeff Passan’s book, The Arm, and MLB umpires, 2-4:30pm, followed by the Red Sox v. Baltimore game 7pm.*