Spring Term 2005
WRTG 3020
Sports and American Culture
Sections
038 (8:00-9:15, HUMN 370)
041 (9:30-10:45, DUAN G1835)
043 (11:00-12:15, HUMN 370)
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Important note: No attachments (copy and paste texts, using double spacing between single-spaced paragraphs)

Foreword
Let us begin with an old departmental description:

"3020 is designed to foster not only clear and graceful writing but also critical thinking. Thus, in individual sections of the course, all of which are topic-oriented, instructors assign readings that serve as models of analysis and argumentation. Through these readings as well as through class discussion of written assignments, instructors teach students how to draw inferences from factual information, how to analyze and evaluate concepts and proposals, how to arrive at informed opinions on controversial subjects, and how to argue persuasively in defense of those opinions. Courses that substitute for 3020 should place an equivalent emphasis on critical thinking. Ideally, their readings assignments should consist of pairs of substantial, sophisticated essays--models of style as well as reasoning--that express conflicting opinions on the subjects under discussion and thus oblige students to make reasoned responses.

*Students should be required to write weekly and to produce three finished papers (minimum length: five pages each), at least one of them analytical and one argumentative. Each paper should be revised at least three times in response to class critiques and the instructor's written comments.

Grading should be based solely on the finished papers, and it should be rigorous, as befits an upper-division course. These writing assignments should teach students to formulate a thesis, maintain a consistent point of view, establish a coherent flow of ideas with attention to transitions, use relevant examples (anecdotes, data, quotations, etc.), organize clearly, observe correct grammar and spelling, focus upon issues (specific to the discipline), and at the fast achieve a readable style.*

Now then: this section of WRTG 3020 will examine how sports not only define but, sometimes, even transcend their competitive boundaries. That they do is easy to spot. In 1971 people everywhere were mesmerized by a chess match--a chess match--between Bobby Fischer and Boris Spassky; in 1980, folks far from the frozen ponds of the upper Midwest pulled over in their cars, honking their horns to the US Hockey Team's "Miracle on Ice." This term, we'll examine why such moments register and ripple in our collective conscious and, so, have both reflected and informed American cultural history.

In keeping with the course's role in CU's curriculum, our topic will provide only the occasion for students to continue developing their writing skills; assignments will include succinct essays and three sustained arguments. In the process, the engine running this course is defined in the Liberal Arts core tradition of critical thinking and literacy. Through hearing, speaking, reading, and writing, students will have the opportunity to develop these two faculties that define, I would argue, nothing less than one's personal and cultural identities. In all, students should approach the course in the spirit of Alexander Pope, whose words are the truer ever inked on education:

"A little learning is a dangerous thing; Drink deep, or taste not the Pisan spring, There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain, And drinking largely sobers us again."

In the spirit of Pope, I demand only three overriding, sequential qualities in students whenever they enter my classroom: curiosity, hard work, and honesty. Only through these qualities, I believe, might one ever achieve true enthusiasm.

Required Texts
* Printed copies of all readings.
* A dictionary (your choice--but do not neglect!)
* A handbook (your choice--but do not neglect!)

Supplies
* Fine-point pens (blue ink)
* A folder with two horizontal pockets
* Notebook paper

RULES, PRINCIPLES, AND PROCEDURES

(1) Attendance. Attendance is presumed and may affect your overall grade. I do not distinguish between "excused" and "unexcused" absences. For this twice-weekly course, here's a breakdown of the barren policy. However, note that to be absent means you cannot participate (see grading breakdown).

0-4 absences (2 weeks): no change in overall grade
5 absences (3 weeks): automatic failure in course

Notes:
(1) Prearranged, university-recognized absences will count toward your overall allotment of absences. One proviso: I will allow one "grace" absence if your allotment exceeds X. For instance, if you will miss six times on university-recognized occasions, then I shall allow you seven absences total.
(2) If you cannot stay the entire class session, please advise me before class; note that your early departure will count as an absence.
(3) Two late entries to class equal one absence. If your absence total is thereby accounted between increments, your total will be rounded up (for instance, from 2.5 to 3 absences).
(4) An entry to class more than 10 minutes late will be counted as a full absence; likewise, leaving class early will be counted as a full absence.
(5) Regardless of your attendance, you are responsible for all material covered in class. Practice the "buddy system"!
(6) Unless arranged prior to class, no make-up work will be allowed.
(7) I shall have you initial the attendance chart for each absence (or for every other tardy, the sum equaling one absence).
(8) Plan to get sick; do not "skip" arbitrarily. Overall, plan your absences and be on time.
(9) The upset?: Believe nothing else, but believe this universal, absolute truth: "Nullum Gratiaut Prandum."
Complaints. Before you do anything, please consult with me should you have a question, comment, or other consideration about the class content or my conduct/teaching. If we can reach no amicable solution, then I shall work for you in discussing the matter with the appropriate authorities.

(3) Plagiarism. Consult with me or the appropriate bibliographic guides should you have any questions about the procedures of documentation or the penalties for infractions of academic dishonesty. Any infractions will result in sanctions that include (but are not limited to) peremptory failure for the course. See, as well, honor code information at http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/

(4) Institutional.

* A writing class offers a special opportunity to discuss work in progress in a supportive yet critically demanding "workshop" environment. As you develop drafts, you should bear in mind that you are "going public" with your work. This act carries with it an obligation for critical discussion and for understanding the concerns of your audience and their interests in your point of view.

* Unless you prefer otherwise, I might use your writing for classroom discussion.

* Do not neglect the Information Literacy and Writing Center (Library E303) for extra help with writing skills.

* This class will use e-mail communication for messages from me, for general discussion, and at times for the circulation of drafts. Please check your university e-mail account (Colorado edu) several times each week, as well as on those dates when drafts might be circulated. If you use a non-university e-mail account (e.g., hotmail, man, et al.), be sure to link it to the university e-mail account. Access to on-line library materials requires that you be identified as a university user. For assistance on technical computing matters, contact 735-HELP for the Information Technology Help-Line.

* If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities (303-492-8871, Willard 322, www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices).

* If you speak English as a second language, then you need to contact me before the third class meeting so that I can better assist you in the course, advise you about special ESL courses, and/or refer you to appropriate services on campus.

* Last day to drop. Should the occasion arise, students are responsible for dropping themselves from the course and verifying the process.

* I may not report or discuss grades by phone or e-mail. Should, at any time during the semester, you want to know how you are doing in the course, please see me during office hours.

(5) Preparation, Comportment, Honor Code, and Discipline. Driven by the method of Sir Francis Bacon, who wrote that "Reading maketh a full man, a conference a ready man, writing an exact man," you should prepare to discuss, extemporaneously, the who, what, where, and when of any assigned text (the full measure of the how and why are the job of the class). Be certain to look up any word that you do not know. As a result, writing in the margins ("glossing") of your texts is essential (much less required). Beyond glossing the readings, be prepared to answer the following questions for each assigned text:

(1) Why does/does not the text "fit" the syllabus?
(2) What is the implicit or explicit thesis?
(3) What is the organizational strategy?
(4) How does style complement substance?

For each class session, your preparation and voluntary, informed participation include having your own copy of any texts (no sharing) and the entire reading assignment prepared (not almost all of it). Be ready with notebook paper and pen, and be attentive. Remember: Proper Preparation Prevents Poor Performance (PPPPP). Put another way, "When you fail to plan, you should plan to fail."

(6) Grading. Grades are not so complicated as they might seem. Should you have any questions--at any time--please consult with me in my office (you might ask, "Should the course end today, what would be my grade?"). Note, as well, that preparation and attitude may be a deciding factor.

On a philosophical basis, I evaluate (both for exercises and overall grades) in the spirit of William F. Irmscher's Teaching Expository Writing, here adapted:

Demonstrates unusual competence--A
Demonstrates competence--B
Suggests unusual incompetence--D
Suggests unusual incompetence--F

Here is a rough breakdown:

* "Academic Citizenship": attendance; preparation; informed and voluntary in-class participation; group presentation: 5% or more--a very important, deciding factor.
* Test (better of the two; over materials based on oral presentations, reading materials, and general materials from course): 5%
* Exercise 1 (ideology): 0%
* Exercise 2 (rhetoric / argumentative modes): 0%
* Exercise 3 (categorical logic): 30%
* Exercise 4 (causal analysis): 30%
* Exercise 5 (critical reading): 30%

To qualify for an overall grade higher than a 0.0, you must complete all assignments. For all grades (including longer exercise grades and overall grades in the course), here is a breakdown on a scale of 100:

4.0 (A): 95
3.7: 90
3.3: 85
3.0 (B): 80
2.7: 75
2.3: 70
2.0 (C): 65
1.7: 60
1.3: 55
1.0 (D): 50
0.7: 45
0.0 (F): 40 and below
(7) Assignments

* All exercise prompts will be developed in class.

* Exercises are due at the beginning of the class period for each due date.

* Only those exercises that have been drafted according to the syllabus schedule and through our workshops will be accepted.

* When requested, be prepared to submit all written assignments in a folder with two horizontal pockets. The left side will contain all previously graded or requested work (and nothing else), the right side only those materials to be graded. This portfolio is designed to reflect the progress of your semester.

* Keep Xerox copies of all assignments you submit--just in case. I am not responsible should one get misplaced or lost. Also, I may ask that you supply clean copies for program assessment.

* Unless otherwise requested, all drafts should be in Courier font. Here is a template of font, spacing, and margin:

This font is Courier.

This line is double spaced. Use one-inch margins (the left margin of this syllabus is one inch).

* You may “revisit” all but the last assignment for an improved grade. More details TBA.

(8) A Tentative Schedule

* Subject to change--especially the assignment prompts--so watch for announcements.

* For all workshops, bring a printed copy of draft/requested materials to class.

UNIT #1: IDEOLOGY

WEEK ONE

"Perhaps the single most important element in mastering the techniques and tactics of racing is experience. But once you have the fundamentals, acquiring the experience is a matter of time."

- Greg LeMond

Jan 11

* Course introduction

* Occasion: academic, professional, and civic writing

* Ideology

* Literacy versus fluency

* Competence

Jan 13

* Rules and principles

* Grammatical terminology

* Denotation and connotation

* Four Principles of Syntax” (handout)

* "Just Between You and I" (Dunne, handout)

* "Take Me Out to the Ball Game"

http://espn.go.com/sportscentury/featur es/00014275.html

* "Baseball Versus Football"

http://home.earthlink.net/~sscutchen/b aseball/Quotes/baseball_vs_football.ht ml

UNIT #2: RHETORIC / ARGUMENTATIVE MODES

WEEK TWO

"The spirit, the will to win, and the will to excel are the things that endure. These qualities are so much more important than the events that occur."

- Vince Lombardi

Jan 18

* Unit introduction

* Cultural “texts”

* Inference

* Exercise #1 due

Jan 20

* “Genius is Perseverance in Disguise” (Looney, handout)

* “Bring Back the Pedestal” (Axthelm, handout)

* “Analyze, Don’t Summarize” (Berube, handout)

* "The War Against Grammar"

http://www.ateg.org/monographs/mulro y.htm

UNIT #3: CATEGORICAL POLEMIC

WEEK FOUR

"I was told over and over again that I would never be successful, that I was not going to be competitive and the technique was simply not going to work. All I could do was shrug and say, ‘We’ll just have to see.’"

- Dick Fosbury (gold medal in high jump, 1968 Mexico City Games)

Feb 1

* Unit introduction

* Deduction and induction in categorical logic

* Syllogisms / enthymemes

* Logical distribution (“distribution of ideas”)

* Categories (and rivalries) in sports culture

* Exercise #2 due

Feb 3

* Basic structure, from exordium to peroration

* Organizational strategies (“patterns of development”)


* Style sheet: “Rules and Principles”

* “Bad Comma”

http://www.newyorker.com/critics/book s/?040628cro _

WEEK FIVE

"To me, boxing is like a ballet, except there’s no music, no choreography and the dancers hit each other."

- Jack Handy, “Deep Thoughts”

Feb 8

* “Jack Johnson”

http://espn.go.com/sportscentury/featur es/00014275.html

* “The Fight of the Century” (Ali Frazier)

http://www.libs.com/libfury1.htm
Feb 10
* All students must bring their handbooks to class.
* Oral Presentations
  Group #1: Intriguing
  Grammatical Problems
  Group #2: The Form and Function of MLA Documentation
  Group #3: Intriguing Semantical Problems
  Group #4: Fitting Style to Occasion

WEEK SIX
"A hot dog at the ball park is better than steak at the Ritz."
- Humphrey Bogart

Feb 15
* Workshop. Scratch Outline
  (introduction and topic sentences)
  "Larry Bird: 'NBA a Black Man's Game"
  http://tradermike.net/moveethecrowd/archives/2004/08/larry_bird_nba_a_bla ck_mans_game_php
  "Millbrett Won't Look Back"
  http://www.usatoday.com/sports/olympics/athens/soccer/2004-08-05-millbrett 
  - quitting-team_x.htm

Feb 17
* (Practice) Test #1
* Workshop.

WEEK SEVEN
"It is almost impossible to remember how fragile a place the world is when one is playing golf."
- Robert Lynd

Feb 22
* Workshop
Feb 24
* Workshop

UNIT #4: CASUAL ANALYSIS
WEEK EIGHT
"Sports do not build character. They reveal it."
- John Wooden

Mar 1
* Unit introduction
* Exercise #3 due

Mar 3
* "Black Sox Scandal: Chicago Throws 1919 World Series"
  http://www.sptimes.com/News/122296/Sports/Black_Sox_scandal__Ch.shtml
* "Recognizing 'I'm 14 years late,' Rose admits he bet on baseball."
  http://www.usatoday.com/sports/baseball/2004-01-30-rose_x.htm

WEEK NINE
"The sports page records people's accomplishments; the front page nothing but their failures."
- Justice Earl Warren

Mar 8
* "1968: The Year of the Fist"
* "NHL fistscuffs bring out fury"
  http://www.usatoday.com/sports/2004-09-02-number-five-change_x.htm

Mar 10
* "The List: Basketball Shockers"
  http://espn.go.com/page2/s/list/basketballshock.html

WEEK TEN
"Slump? I ain't in no slump. I just ain't hitin."
- Yogi Berra

Mar 15
* Workshop
  * Due: Any revisiting from previous unit
  * "College athletes want cut of action"
    http://www.usatoday.com/sports/olympics/athens/soccer/2004-08-31-top-ten-number-7_x.htm

SPRING BREAK Mar 22-24

WEEK ELEVEN
"You have to expect things of yourself before you can do them."
- Michael Jordan

Mar 29
* Workshop
Mar 31
* Workshop

UNIT #5: CRITICAL READING
WEEK TWELVE
"When you're riding, only the race in which you're riding is important."
- Bill Shoemaker

Apr 5
* Unit introduction
  * Exercise #4 due
  * "Casey at the Bat"

Apr 7
* "Top N. American athletes of the century"
  http://espn.go.com/sportscentury/athletes.html
* "Ben Hogan Majored in Courage"
  http://espn.go.com/sportscentury/feature/00014232.html
  * "Secretariat Remains No. 1 in Racing"
    http://espn.go.com/sportscentury/feature/00014232.html

WEEK THIRTEEN
"They made hypocrite [sic] judgments after the fact
But the name of the game is hit and hit back."
- Warren Zevon ("Boom Boom Manicini")

Apr 12
* London, "A Piece of Steak"
  http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/London/Writ ings/GodLaugh/steak.html
* "Remembering Duk Koo Kim"
  http://www.michaelshapiro.us/articles/s i.html

WEEK FOURTEEN
"Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity."
- Daniel Royal

Apr 19
* Workshop. Scratch Outline
  (introduction and topic sentences)
  "Rocky vs. Sylvester Stallone (Who Owns the Rights to Your Life Story?)"
  http://www.legalzoom.com/articles/article_11108.html
* "Review of Breaking Away"
* Reviews of Hoosiers
  http://www.suntimes.com/ebert/ebert_r eviews/1987/02/219621.html
  http://www.washingt onpost.com/wp-srv 
  /style/longterm/movies/videos/hoosiers 
  pgattanasi_aq909d.htm
* "Review of Field of Dreams"
  http://www.moria.co.nz/fantas y/fieldofdreams.htm

WEEK FIFTEEN
"Your opponent, in the end, is never really the player on the other side of the net, or 
the swimmer in the next lane, or the team on the other side of the field, or even the 
bar you must high-jump. Your opponent is yourself, your negative internal voices, your 
level of determinion."
- Grace Lichtenstein

Apr 26
* Workshop
Apr 298
* FCQs
  * Exercise #5 due
ASSIGNMENT PROMPTS:
MORE DETAILS TBA

ORAL PRESENTATIONS
Each group will give a 15-minute oral presentation on a given subject. Each group will also prepare five potential questions for our test. Note: I will "twist" the questions as necessary.

UNIT #1: IDEOLOGY
Exercise #1. 2/3 page / 1 paragraph only. Audience: academic. Discuss/describe how the language associated with a particular sport defines some overall aspect of that sport. Use at least two examples.

Tips:
* Words cited as words (as well as foreign words and phrases) are underlined (no italics in MLA).
* Use MLA header.

UNIT #2: RHETORIC / ARGUMENTATIVE MODES
Exercise #2. 2 pages. Audience: academic. Identify a "text" in the American sports (whether a particular moment in history, a moment typical of a given sport, a person's position within sport, or a particular person, etc., the point is that you identify a specific "text") and consider it through paragraphs that center on, in order, pathos (how does it involve emotions?), ethos (how does it involve community/ethics?), and logos (how does it involve rules or logic?). Caution: do not blur these rhetorical divisions: draw a line between your paragraphs--the principle here is not to create a line of thought but to see a "text" from a variety of angles. For each section, use two pieces of evidence (whether primary or secondary).

UNIT #3: CATEGORICAL POLEMIC
Exercise #3. 4-5 pages (no fewer than 4 body paragraphs). Audience: academic. At least 4 sources, at least 2 of which must be print publications (i.e., not web-generated, as with web sites or web reprints).

Identify a true polemic (i.e., a category with a full range of possibilities) pertaining to sports or, perhaps, sports and your academic discipline. Use concrete, public people who did/do not interact to exemplify (substantiate) delimiting terms to the category. Distribute aspects of the category through your line of thought, and use topic-by-topic arrangement (not side-after-side). In identifying your topics, ask yourself, "Does the aspect of the category necessarily distinguish between the sides (delimiting terms)?" In your conclusion, you might consider the range within the category because, after all, there should indeed be a range.

Sample "Data Grid"
Thesis: "In the category of NBA basketball players [the category], Jerry West and Jason Williams [the exemplifying cases] exemplify the difference between the fundamental and the intuitive [the delimiting terms], a difference that one may trace in a progression from concrete skills to abstract feelings." [the strategy for the line of thought].

Distributive term/question: What elements are essential to defining the world of NBA basketball players? Distributed topics: (1) work ethic; (2) playing style; (3) relationships--with (3A) teammates/coaches, and (3B) fans (sub-topics). Strategy for the line of thought: concrete to abstract

Tips:
* Beware the "either/ or" fallacy (i.e., false polemic)
* Use adjectives (not nouns) for delimiting terms. Steer clear of adjectives that have chronological implications (e.g., "old school" versus "new school")
* Biography and chronology=plot
  summary. The "gut check" question for a topic: Does the topic necessarily separate the two sides?
* Keep topics (which you should be able to identify in a word or phrase) focused solely on distributing the category, so do not mention delimiting terms or exemplary cases in topic sentences.
* Topic sentences should not have a sense of issue.
* Pay particular attention to transitional phrasing that reflect your strategy for the line of thought.
* Use two pieces of documented evidence in each body paragraph (one for each "side," unless you will be sub-distributing in each body paragraph).
* Maintain order of presentation (which "side" goes first) throughout the body paragraphs/rhetorical sections.

UNIT #4: CAUSAL ANALYSIS
Exercise #4. 4-5 pages (no fewer than 4 body paragraphs). Audience: academic. At least 4 sources, at least 2 of which must be print publications (i.e., not web-generated, as with web sites or web reprints).

Choose an occurrence in sports history and explore why it was "amazing [or whatever response, ranging from the tragic to the comic], also not surprising." In your line of thought, distribute a general context given whatever topics ("points") compose that context.

Sample "Data Grid"
Thesis: "Tommy Simpson's death on Mont Ventoux in the 1967 Tour de France [the text] was shocking, but the incident was also not surprising given the ethos of professional cycling [the context to be distributed], an ethos that pervades the everyday world of the bike racer [the strategy for the line of thought]."

Distributive term/question: What constitutes "the ethos of professional cycling"?

Distributed topics: (1) history of drug abuse in professional cycling; (2) spirit of "manliness;" (3) physical demands to professional cycling; (4) medical technology in a game of "cat-and-mouse.

Strategy for the line of thought: mirroring a typical day for a bike racer (a creative strategy).

Tips:
* Beware cause-and-effect (plot summary without a sense of the contextual). Remember: causal analysis is effect-and-cause
* Body paragraphs should have a nice balance between contextual information and application of text to context. Probably, this principle will mean one piece of evidence regarding context and one piece of evidence regarding text.
* Do not arrange contextual points (topics) in chronological order--a sure sign of plot summary.
* Use two pieces of documented evidence in each body paragraph.
UNIT #5: CRITICAL READING
Exercise #5. 4-5 pages (no fewer than 4 body paragraphs). Audience: academic. At least 4 sources, at least 2 of which must be print publications (i.e., not web-generated, as with web sites or web reprints).

Argue how a particular "text" (however you wish to identify such--event, person, etc.) in sports culture reflects a given theme. To define: a theme is a critical response to a text--i.e., it is neither a subject (e.g., "women") nor an antithesis (e.g., man versus man, man versus nature, or man versus God). Rather, a theme takes a position on a subject or antithesis. A theme answers the question, "What do you wish to teach your reader about the subject/antithesis in light of the text?" In phrasing, theme answers the following criteria:

(1) it is rendered in general terms
(2) it encompasses the given text
(3) it has an opinion (i.e., is arguable)

Possible synonyms for theme are meaning, moral, upshot, lesson, or message. A theme, to explain the concept in colloquial terms, is not what a narrative or other type text is about--that's its story or sequence of actions--but what it is A-B-O-U-T. For our purposes here, we'll use a theme from a defined source of general themes such as Poor Richard's Almanac, Proverbs, et al.

As an example here, should we be writing the exercise on the MGM musical The Wizard of Oz, a thesis (i.e., position) might be, "A key theme, in Dorothy's own words, is "There's no place like home." Note that Dorothy does not click her heels together and identify the subject of "House," much less "Auntie Em's House." Rather, she takes a position: "There's no place[...]" Likewise, in the movie Wall Street, Gordon Gecko considers the subject of greed and comes immediately to a thematic thesis: "Greed is good." He then proceeds to distribute all the ways in which greed is, in his opinion, good.

Sample "Data Grid"

Thesis: "As a case of redemption [the strategy for the line of thought] Ben Hogan's 1950 U.S. Open Victory [the text] demonstrates the theme [requisite phrase for this assignment] that, in the words of Benjamin Franklin, "There are no Gains, without Pains" [the theme] (Poor Richard's 1296).

Distributed topics: (1) intellectual, (2) social, (3) economic, (4) spiritual.

Strategy for the line of thought: process of redemption.

Tips:
- Beware the "straw man" fallacy (i.e., using generalized description to define theme)
- Do not arrange topics in chronological order--such is a sure sign of "plot summary."
- Do not mention your "text" in topic sentences.