Fall Term 2005
WRTG 3020
Sports and American Culture
004 MWF: 9:00 (Hale 240) E501
013 MWF: 11:00 (Stad 135) M498
880 (Honors) MWF: 12:00-12:50 (Libr M498)
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Important note: No attachments (copy and paste texts; use double spacing between single-spaced paragraphs)

Foreword

Let us begin with the latest department discussion about the 3020 curriculum:

Open to Juniors and Seniors in the College of Arts and Sciences, WRTG-3020 (Topics in Writing) sharpens critical thinking and critical writing skills. The course focuses upon rhetorical forms students will use in academia, in the workplace, and in the civic domain, across a full spectrum of persuasive strategies, including analysis and argument. This course reinforces skills taught in first-year writing classes and builds upon them, with a greater emphasis upon the situational quality of writing or upon rhetorical context: the relationship between writer, reader, subject, and purpose in the formation of a text.

Topics in Writing courses focus upon specific subjects, but these courses are not intended to supplement one’s knowledge in a major. Rather, the topic serves as a means to an end—to create a knowledgeable audience and a context for discussion and writing: a discourse community. In a workshop setting, students engage in a dialogue with their audience, working out meaningful theses, testing rhetorical strategies, responding to objections and potential objections, and revising (and revising, and revising!) to meet the needs of their readers. Instructors of 3020 courses demand a high level of student participation and emphasize each student’s role as both writer and as audience: observant, inquisitive readers of the writings of others. Students should leave a 3020 class as more sophisticated writers who understand that the rhetorical situation—rather than a rule book—will invite unique responses based upon their particular goals. This experience should help them recognize writing as a form of personal engagement, demanding an awareness of the inherent power of language and its ability to bring about change.

To that end, WRTG 3020 has established goals within four key areas: Critical Thinking and Its Written Application; The Writing Process; Rhetorical Situation; and Mechanics and Style.

Critical Thinking and Its Written Application
* Pose and shape a question at issue.
* Locate and use resources when necessary to exploring a line of inquiry.
* Evaluate information sources for credibility, validity, timeliness, and relevance.
* Draw inferences from a body of evidence.
* Distinguish description from analysis and argument.
* Distinguish flawed from sound reasoning, and be able to respond to and challenge claims.
* Recognize a thesis, and understand the organized relationship between thesis and support in an essay.
* As writers, structure and develop points of argument in a coherent order to build a case; as readers, recognize this structure and development within texts.
* Critique one’s own works in progress and those of others.
* Recognize that academic and public writing is dialogic, addresses an audience, and anticipates the thinking, the questions, and the possible objections of readers.

The Writing Process
* Understand writing as an ongoing process that requires multiple drafts and various strategies for developing, revising, and editing texts.
* Understand that revision is informed by critical dialogue.
* See the critical analysis of others’ work as relevant to one’s own writing.
* Imitate strong models.

Rhetorical Situation
* Exercise rhetorical skills: frame issues, define and defend theses, invent and arrange appeals, answer counterarguments, and contextualize conclusion.
* Value writing as a collaborative dialogue between authors and audiences, critics, and colleagues.
* Make decisions about form, argumentation, and style from the expectations of different audiences.
* Recognize that a voice or style appropriate to one discipline or rhetorical context might be less appropriate for another.
* Develop "topic"-specific language that is appropriate for the defined audience while also intelligible to a non-expert audience.

Mechanics and Style
* Convey meaning through concise, precise, highly readable language.
* Apply the basics of grammar, sentence-structure, and other mechanics integral to analytical and persuasive writing.
* Develop skills in proofreading.
* Use voice, style and diction appropriate to the discipline or rhetorical context.
* Use paragraph structure and transitional devices to aid the reader in following even a complex train of thought.

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 facilities 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 Pierian 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
* Course packet
* 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: "Competence is a piece"

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

Perfect attendance (no absences, no late arrivals): raise overall course grade by one step (e.g., from 3.0 to 3.3)
1-6 absences (2 weeks): no change in overall grade
7 absences: overall course grade no higher than a B (3.0)
8 absences: overall course grade no higher than a C (2.3)
9 absences: overall course grade no higher than a C- (1.7)

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, than 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) Plan to get sick; do not “skip” arbitrarily. Overall, plan your absences and be on time.

(8) The upshot? Believe nothing else, but believe this universal, absolute truth: "Nullum Gratuum Prandium."

(2) 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 civil 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.
* 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.
* EMAIL. 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) each day. If you use a non-university e-mail account (e.g., hotmail, msn, etc.), 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.
* DISABILITIES. 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 (303-492-8671, Willard 322, www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices).

* ENGLISH AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE. 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.

* RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES. Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. See me in advance of such observances. Also, see full details at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html

* BEHAVIOR. Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Students who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Faculty have the professional responsibility to treat all students with understanding, dignity and respect, to guide classroom discussion and to set reasonable limits on the manner in which they and their students express opinions. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. See polices at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html and at http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html##student_code
deciding factor.

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

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

Here is a rough breakdown:

* "Academic Citizenship": attendance; preparation; informed and voluntary in-class participation: 5% or more--a very important, deciding factor
* Test (better of the two; over materials based on reading materials, and general materials from course): 5%
* Exercise 1 (language): 0%
* Exercise 2 (rhetorical / argumentative modes): 0%
* Exercise 3 (categorical polemic): 30%
* Exercise 4 (deductive analysis): 30%
* Exercise 5 (thematic response): 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: LANGUAGE
WEEK ONE: Aug. 22, 24, 26

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

* Course introduction
* Occasion: academic, professional, and civic writing
* Ideology
* Literacy versus fluency
* Competence
* Rules and principles
* Grammatical terminology
* Denotation and connotation

* "The English Lesson"
* "A Way of Writing"
* "Just Between You and I" (Dunne, handout)
* "Take Me Out to the Ball Game"
* "Baseball Versus Football"
UNIT #3: CATEGORICAL POLEMIC
WEEK FOUR: Sept. 12, 14, 16
"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)

* Exercise #2 due
* Unit introduction
* Deduction and Induction in categorical logic
  * Syllogisms / enthymemes
  * Logical distribution ("distribution of ideas")
  * Categories (and rivalries) in sports culture
  * Basic structure, from exordium to peroration
  * Organizational strategies ("patterns of development")
  * Grading criteria: "Grading Rubric," a.k.a. "Exercise Contract"
  * Style sheet: "Rules and Principles"

WEEK NINE: Oct. 17, 19, 21
"When a man wantonly destroys one of the works of man we call him a vandal. When he destroys one of the works of god we call him a sportsman."
- Joseph Wood Krutch

* "Most Overrated"
* "Calling all villains"
* "Worst Sports Scandals"
* "Top N. American athletes of the century"
* "Ben Hogan Majored in Courage"
* "Secretariat Remains No. 1 in Racing"

UNIT #4: DEDUCTIVE ANALYSIS
WEEK EIGHT: Oct. 10, 12 (Oct. 14 is Fall Break)
"Auto racing, bull fighting, and mountain climbing are the only real sports. All others are games."
- Ernest Hemingway

* Exercise #3 due
* Unit introduction
* "Tradition and the Individual Talent"
* "All Underrated"
* "Who's No. 1? The debate begins"
* "100 Biggest Innovations"

UNIT #5: THEMATIC RESPONSE
WEEK TWELVE: Nov. 7, 9, 11
"Sports do not build character. They reveal it."
- John Wooden

* Exercise #4 due
* Unit introduction
* "Casey at the Bat"
* "CFP: Western Sports, Literature[,] & Culture"
* Review of Rocky
* Review of Breaking Away
* Reviews of Hoosiers
* Review of Field of Dreams
* Review of Cinderella Man

WEEK THIRTEEN: Nov. 14, 16, 18
"They made hypocrite [sic] judgments after the fact! But the name of the game is be hit and hit back."
- Warren Zevon ("Boom Boom Mancini")

* London, "A Piece of Steak"
* "The Long Ride"

WEEK FOURTEEN: Nov. 21, 23 (Nov. 25 is Thanksgiving)
"Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity."
- Darrel Royal

* Workshop: Scratch Outline (introduction and topic sentences)
* Test #2
* Due: Any revisiting from previous unit
WEEK FIFTEEN: Nov. 28, 30, Dec. 2

"When you're riding, only the race in which you're riding is important."
- Bill Shoemaker

* Workshop: "Conference readings"

WEEK SIXTEEN: Dec. 5, 7

"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 determination."
- Grace Lichtenstein

* Workshop: "Conference readings"
* FCQs
* Exercise #5 due

ASSIGNMENT PROMPTS: MORE DETAILS TBA

UNIT #1: IDEOLOGY
Exercise #1. 2/3 page / 1 paragraph only.
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.
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 or ethics?), and logos (how does it involve rules or logic?). Caution: do not blur these rhetorical divisions: draw a line (or use the "horizontal line" feature in your word processing program) between your paragraphs--the principle here is not to create a line of thought or "mini essay" 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). 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 with each other 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]. 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 teammates/coaches; (4) relationships with fans.
Rationale for arrangement: concrete to abstract

Tips:
* In your introduction/thesis, do not list the topics from your line of thought.
* 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"). As well, note that delimiting terms should not be substantively connected to either your category or your exemplary cases.
* 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. Remember: you job is to distribute the category.
* Do not use statistics (or statistical comparisons) as a topic.
* Pay particular attention to transitional phrasing that reflect your rationale for arrangement.
* Use two pieces of documented evidence in each body paragraph. For this assignment, one paragraph one topic.
* Maintain order of presentation (which "side" goes first) throughout the body paragraphs/rhetorical sections.
* After first mention of full names (e.g., "George Washington"), use only last name ("Washington").

UNIT #4: DEDUCTIVE ANALYSIS
Exercise #4. 4-5 pages (no fewer than 4 body paragraphs). 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).

Given criteria of generic expectation, argue why a particular figure/event/institution/accomplishment
is overrated, underrated, or rated "just right." Two issues immediately confront you: the ethos of the rater and the logos of the rating. As an illustration of the former issue, consider the case of asking someone his favorite movie when that person has seen only ten movies in his whole life. For the second—and more important—issue—the "straw man" is the biggest problem (i.e., describing in general terms an item for evaluation and then turning those general terms back on the specifics of the item). In response to the latter issue, we shall devise a general list of criteria to be used by all students (you will use three from our list and one of your own devising).

Sample "Data Grid"
The thesis: Few popular polls even list Major Taylor among the best American cyclists of all time (the text and the ethos of the rater), but Taylor's career compares favorably to the likes of such American luminaries as Greg LeMond and Lance Armstrong (i.e., that Taylor is underrated).

Distributive term/question: What constitutes a great athlete?
Distributed topics: (1) reliance on technological edge, (2) nature of victories, (3) level of competition, (4) overall career.

Rationale for arrangement: levels of increasing importance

Tips:
* In your introduction/thesis, do not list the topics from your line of thought.
* Body paragraphs should have an even, nice balance between generic information (the general) and application of that information to the text (the specific). Probably, this principle will mean one piece of evidence regarding context and one piece of evidence regarding text.
* Remember: keep all paragraphs about 2/3 to 3/4 of a page in length. Punctuality is the key!

UNIT #5: THEMATIC RESPONSE
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 given 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's A-B-O-U-T. To recap, the general machinery to this "launching pad" for critical thinking comprises the following steps:

(1) Identify a text.
(2) Identify a general subject encompassing the text.
(3) Take a position (theme) on the subject given the text (ask, "What does one learn about the subject given the text?"). Typical sports-related subjects include courage, heroism, victory, defeat, perseverance, et al.
(4) Distribute the position (theme) and substantiate with textual evidence.

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"
The thesis: "Ben Hogan's 1950 U.S. Open Victory [the text] demonstrates the theme [requisite phrase for this assignment] that true gain entails pain [the theme]."

Distributive term/question: "What kinds of pains contribute to gains?"
Distributed topics: (1) intellectual recognition, (2) economic valuation, (3) social interaction, (4) spiritual affirmation.

Rationale for arrangement: process of redemption.

Tips:
* In your introduction/thesis, do not list the topics from your line of thought.
* 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. Again the "gut check" question: from where did you get the topic—the text or the theme? Keep your focus—and ALL phrasing—on the theme. Yes, a thematic response is about text, but it's truly A-B-O-U-T the subject—heroism, rivalries, courage, etc.