Spring 2006  
WRTG 3020  
Sports and American Culture  
Section 055, T/R, 2:00-3:00: Econ 16  
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Important note: No unsolicited  
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  
accomplished 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 organic 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 of a piece"

(1) Attendance. Attendance is presumed and may affect your overall grade. I do not distinguish between "excused" and "unexcused" absences. For this twice-a-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)
4 absences (2 weeks): no change in overall grade
5 absences: one step subtracted from overall grade; overall course grade no higher than a B (3.0)
6 absences: one step subtracted from overall grade; overall course grade no higher than a C+ (2.3)
7 absences: two steps subtracted from overall grade; overall course grade no higher than a C (1.7)
8 absences: automatic failure in the course. Please discontinue attending the class altogether.

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 four. For instance, if you will miss five times on university-recognized occasions, then I shall allow you six 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 Gratium 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) 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 IT Services for 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 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
HONOR CODE. All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-725-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Other information on the Honor Code can be found at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html and at http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/

DISCRIMINATION AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT. The University of Colorado at Boulder policy on Discrimination and Harassment (http://www.colorado.edu/policies/discrimination.html), the University of Colorado policy on Sexual Harassment and the University of Colorado policy on Amorous Relationships applies to all students, staff, and faculty. Any student, staff, or faculty member who believes s/he has been the subject of discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. Information about the ODH and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at http://www.colorado.edu/odh

Preparation. Driven by the method of Sir Francis Bacon, who wrote that "Reading maketh a full man, 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."

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?").

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
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 (expository / argumentative modes): 0%
Exercise 3 (categorical polemic): 30%
Exercise 4 (deductive analysis): 30%
Exercise 5 (predictive 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

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.
* Unless otherwise noted, all readings from course packet.

UNIT #1: LANGUAGE
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
Date: Jan. 17
* Course introduction
* Occasion: academic, professional, and civic writing
* Ideology
* Literacy versus fluency
* Competence
Date: Jan. 19
* Rules and principles
* Denotation and connotation
* "Four Principles of Syntax" (handout)
* "Notes on Language" (handout)
* "Just Between You and I" (handout)
* "Genius is Perseverance in Disguise" (handout)

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)
Date: Feb. 7
* Exercise #2 due
* Unit introduction
* Deduction and induction in categorical logic
* Syllogisms / enthymemes
* Logical distribution ("distribution of ideas")
* Categories (and rivalries) in sports culture
Date: Feb. 9
* 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 FIVE
"To me, boxing is like a ballet, except there's no music, no choreography and the dancers hit each other."
- Jack Handey, "Deep Thoughts"
Date: Feb. 14
* "Jack Johnson"
* "The Fight of the Century" (Ali Frazier)
* Drafting document: identify category, delimiting terms, and exemplary cases
Date: Feb. 16
* "Larry Bird: 'NBA a Black Man's Game"
* "Sports" (on Jordan and Stockton)
* "Describing the Many Managerial Styles"
* Test #1 (practice)

WEEK SIX
"A hot dog at the ball park is better than steak at the Ritz."
- Humphrey Bogart
Date: Feb. 21
* "Sports" (on soccer)
* Drafting document: scratch outline (introduction and topic sentences only)
Date: Feb. 23
* Workshop: "Conference readings"
* Drafting document: annotated bibliography (no fewer than 5 sources).
Include photocopies of the first page of print materials from the library (at least 2 sources)
* Due: Any revising from previous unit

UNIT #4: DEDUCTIVE ANALYSIS
WEEK EIGHT
"Auto racing, bull fighting, and mountain climbing are the only real sports. All others are games."
- Ernest Hemingway
Date: Mar. 7
* Exercise #3 due
* Unit introduction
Date: Mar. 9
* "Tradition and the Individual Talent"
* "Top N. American athletes of the century"
* "All Underrated"
* "Who's No. 17? The debate begins"
* "100 Biggest Innovations"

WEEK NINE
"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
Date: Mar. 14
* "Most Overrated"
* "Calling all villains"
* "Worst Sports Scandals"
Date: Mar. 16
* "Ben Hogan Majored in Courage"
* "Secretariat Remains No. 1 in Racing"
* Drafting document: identify text

WEEK TEN
"I am the greatest; I said that even before I knew I was."
- Muhammad Ali
Date: Mar. 21
* Drafting document: scratch outline (introduction and topic sentences only)
Date: Mar. 23
* Drafting document: annotated bibliography (no fewer than 5 sources).
Include photocopies of the first page of print materials from the library (at least 2 sources)
* Due: Any revising from previous unit

WEEK ELEVEN: Spring Break (Mar. 28/30)
WEEK TWELVE
"DiMaggio was the greatest all-around player I ever saw. His career cannot be summed up in numbers and awards. It might sound corny, but he had a profound and lasting impact on the country."
- Ted Williams

Date: Apr. 4
* Workshop: "Conference readings"

Date: TBA

UNIT #5: THEMATIC RESPONSE
WEEK THIRTEEN
"Sports do not build character. They reveal it."
- John Wooden

Date: Apr. 11
* Exercise #4 due
* Unit introduction
* "Casey at the Bat"
* "CFP: Western Sports, Literature[,] & Culture"

Date: Apr. 13
* Review of Rocky
* Review of Breaking Away
* Reviews of Hoosiers
* Review of Field of Dreams
* Review of Cinderella Man

WEEK FOURTEEN
"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")

Date: Apr. 18
* London, "A Piece of Steak"

Date: Apr. 20
* "The Long Ride"
* Drafting document: identify definition (and source of that definition) as well as "text" at issue

WEEK FIFTEEN
"Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity."
- Darel Royal

Date: Apr. 25
* Drafting document: scratch outline (introduction and topic sentences)

Date: Apr. 27
* Test #2
* Drafting document: annotated bibliography (no fewer than 5 sources). Include photocopies of the first page of print materials from the library (at least 2 sources)
* Workshop: "Conference readings"
* Due: Any revisiting from previous unit

WEEK SIXTEEN
"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

Date: May 2
* "Bring Back the Pedestal" (Axthelm, handout)
* Workshop: "Conference readings"

Date: May 4
* 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, ethos (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
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 their 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"
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 (suggested): (1) reliance on technological edge, (2) nature of victories, (3) level of competition, (4) overall career.
Rationale for arrangement: levels of increasing importance.

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 is 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.