



COMM 4120: Communication & Sport

Spring 2023

<i>Times</i>	<i>Day</i>	<i>Location</i>
9:30-10:50 a.m.	TTh	PHYS 115

“Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire, it has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope, where once there was only despair. It is more powerful than governments in breaking down racial barriers. It laughs in the face of all types of discrimination.” – Nelson Mandela, late South Africa president

“Sports teaches you character, it teaches you to play by the rules, it teaches you to know what it feels like to win and lose-it teaches you about life.” – Billie Jean King, former tennis great

“Just win baby.” – Al Davis, late owner of Oakland Raiders

Professor: Brian Richardson
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<p><u>Office Hours:</u> TTh 11 a.m. -Noon TTh 1:55-2:25 pm & by appt.</p>

* **Course communication:** We will use Canvas to communicate course-related messages. I also check my email regularly if you have question about non-course related items.

Your instructor’s bio: I am originally from Bridge City, Texas. My degrees are from Lamar University (B.S.), Louisiana Tech University (M.A.), and the University of Texas at Austin (Ph.D.). My research interests include organizational whistleblowing, disaster communication, and sport communication issues like parents’ decision-making about youth football. You can find my research in journals such as *Communication and Sport*, *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, *Management Communication Quarterly*, and *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, and others. I do some consulting, having worked with Texas Fire Chiefs Academy, UNT Health Science Center, Department of Family and Protective Services, and the Texas Association of County Auditors. As a first-generation college student, I did not know many of the things other students took for granted, like “office hours” or “APA style” or “internships.” Further, I did not know about the department and university resources available to assist and support me. I encourage you to ask me about any concerns or issues you are facing; I am happy to put you in touch with resources and departments on campus that can assist you. I am sure you have many of the same questions I had back when I was in college, so feel free to ask me anything.

Prerequisites: Communication Studies majors must complete COMM 3010 with a grade of C or higher prior to enrolling; minors and other majors must complete COMM 2020 with a grade of C or higher.

Course Rationale:

Sport directly or indirectly touches most facets of U.S. culture, communities, and families. Professional and amateur athletes kneeling during the national anthem generates controversy and interrupts political discourse; research into head injuries worries parents and challenges the long-term viability of American football; sexual assault scandals at Baylor University, Michigan State University, and Penn State raise questions about whether universities prioritize athletic department reputations over victims; streaming programs like *Drive to Survive* demonstrate the power of new media in promoting more obscure sports to global audiences; overzealous parents are often accused of “ruining” youth sports; collegiate athletes can now make (lots of) money from selling their name, image, and likeness to corporations which changes how they are recruited and stay at (or transfer from) universities; and, the banning of Russia from the 2018 Winter Olympics reminds us there is rampant cheating in sport against the backdrop of world politics. While all of these issues involve sport, at their core, they are created and sustained by *communication*. Indeed, this course was developed at a time when scholarly research into communication and sport phenomena was exploding.

Thus, the purpose of this course is to introduce students to the scholarly (and practical) domain of Communication and Sport. At the conclusion of this course, students should have a basic understanding of the dimensions of sport phenomena that are of interest to sport scholars and have a rudimentary knowledge of the theoretical and empirical approaches taken toward those phenomena.

Course Objectives;

1. To understand sport (communication) research from three perspectives: (1) a social scientific perspective for explaining large-scale data approaches to sport-related problems, (2) an interpretive perspective that addresses how sport participants make sense of their participation, and (3) a critical perspective that questions the problematic aspects of sport, including gender, race, and class imbalances.
2. To develop skills to research, interpret, and analyze communication and sport problems and issues.
3. To work in teams on a short documentary film that addresses a significant sport problem or issue.



This cartoon demonstrates the power the NCAA holds over college athletes though NIL and other recent changes are acting to balance power.

TEXTBOOK, READINGS, AND RESOURCES:

Billings, A. C., Butterworth, M. L., & Turman, P. D. (2022). *Communication and Sport: Surveying the Field (4th Ed.)*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Additional readings will be posted on Canvas or distributed in class. These are not “optional readings.” They are relevant to the lecture material, the course assignments, and to the exams. **You are responsible for ensuring that you access copies of all class handouts.**

Library resources page for this class: <https://guides.library.unt.edu/COMM4120>

Course Format and Canvas:

We will generally follow the course textbook as we proceed throughout the semester. For each chapter in the textbook, there will be assigned readings, lectures, and discussion, and sometimes we will also engage in activities, host guest speakers or watch documentary films. Since nearly all of you have played sports, watch sports, or are fans of sports, I hope you share your experiences.

The Canvas course site will include: syllabus, announcements, supplemental readings, exam reviews, and additional, important course information. Additionally, grades will be posted online during the course of the semester. Please check Canvas regularly. **If you cannot sign onto Canvas, it is your responsibility to contact Canvas and request help during the first week of the semester.**

Technical difficulties with Canvas Learn are the responsibility of the student. If you encounter technical difficulties during the semester, you need to contact the Canvas Technical Support Desk:

Email: Helpdesk@unt.edu

Phone: 940.565.2324

ASSIGNMENTS

- I. **Exams:** There will be three online exams given during the term. Each exam is worth 75 points toward your course grade. Exams may consist of any combination of matching, multiple-choice, true-and-false, fill-in-the-blank, or short-answer questions. The purpose of these exams is to ascertain that you understand the concepts presented. If you are keeping up with the readings and participating actively in the class, it should not be difficult to do well on these exams. See Course Schedule for Exam dates. You will have a 24-hour window for accessing the exam. You will have about 90 seconds for each question. Once you submit an answer for a question, you cannot go back and change it. You can use your notes, textbook, etc., when taking the exam.

Note 1: There are no makeup exams. If you miss an exam, you lose the points associated with it. The only exceptions are due to documented sickness, death in the family, or some other catastrophe. I am very unlikely to allow you to take an exam after the scheduled time if you do not contact me *prior to* the exam.

Note 2: I will only count your top two exam scores toward your grade.

- II. **Team documentary film:** Students will be assigned to groups and tasked with developing a 9-11 minute documentary on a sports-related issue. A description of this project is included in the Assignment Instruction's packet (200 points: 150 product, 50 – peer evaluations).
- III. **Pop quizzes or homework assignments:** On ten occasions this semester, you will have an opportunity to earn up to 15 points for successfully completing an assignment that will be introduced in class. Such an assignment could be a reading quiz or a homework assignment. These assignments will cover readings from the current day up to two class periods before, and may include information covered in the lecture. There will be NO makeup opportunities for these assignments and any reading quizzes MUST be completed during the first 5 minutes of class.

Note: I will give one additional pop quiz/homework assignment and let you drop your lowest score.

Total points breakdown

Exams – top two scores (2x75)	150 pts.
Team documentary	150 pts.
Peer evaluation	50 pts.
10 pop quizzes/homework assignments (10x15)	<u>150 pts.</u>
Total	500 pts.

Grade determination

The points in this class are based on the assignments discussed above. Your final grade is based entirely on the sum of those points assigned in the class, and I will adhere rigidly to those points. The points correspond to the following university guidelines: an A is reserved for excellent work; a B is for above average performance; a C is awarded for average work; a

D simply means passing, and an F indicates below average, non-passing work. Points-wise the grades will be categorized as follows: 500-450 = A; 400 – 449 = B; 350-399 = C; 300-349 = D; 0 – 299 = F

Extra Credit: During the semester, you will have opportunities to earn extra credit (XC) for (a) attending and documenting your experience at a sporting event, (b) participating in research projects by department faculty or graduate students, or (c) attending events/meetings related to COMM department organizations/events. Details for those opportunities will be announced as they arise and participation is strictly voluntary. Students who choose to not participate will not be penalized. Please note that extra credit opportunities are offered to all students in the course – I will not customize the number of extra credit opportunities to individual students. XC opportunities will be worth 5-10 points each and will be added to your final point total. The maximum number of XC points any students can receive is 20.

Course policies

ODA Policy: UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one’s specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the [ODA website \(https://disability.unt.edu/\)](https://disability.unt.edu/).

Attendance: Attendance is taken at the beginning of class using a seating chart. A student is expected to arrive on time and be present for the entire class period. To allow for illness or other unforeseen situations, students in the course are allotted three absences. Excused and unexcused absences count the same, with the one exception being university-related absences, e.g. debate team, college athletics, etc. Each absence beyond the limit will result in **your final course grade being lowered by 10 points per absence** (e.g. from 335 to 325 for one excessive absence). Excessive absences caused by **serious** health problems will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. You will be counted absent if you do not sign the attendance sheet. If you are too late, and miss the attendance sheet, you will be counted as absent. Cases where someone signs in for another student will be treated as academic misconduct cases.

Academic Dishonesty. According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University. Of particular concern in a course with written and oral assignments is the issue of plagiarism. Plagiarism is defined by Webster’s (1989) as “the appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one’s original work” (p. 1100). In other words, plagiarism is stealing. You must cite your sources accurately and consistently in both your oral and written assignments. Penalties for plagiarism will vary according to severity and will range from a failing grade to prosecution through the University System.

Acceptable Student Behavior: This course is designed to foster and maintain a positive learning environment. Your active participation during discussions will be encouraged and questions or comments at any time during lectures are welcomed. Importantly, all comments and responses should be friendly and respectful of the other students in the class. Diversity of perspectives is critical to a liberal arts education so you are free to share viewpoints which may differ from others in the class. Again, please do so in a respectful way and strive to support your responses with evidence and data. Finally, class will begin promptly at the scheduled time. If extraordinary circumstances exist that require some deviation from these policies (e.g., family emergency), please email/message me. I know many of our students work, are parents, or are caregivers to others so I am happy to work with you within reason on scheduling issues. Please feel free to share any further suggestions for maintaining a positive learning environment that you may have.

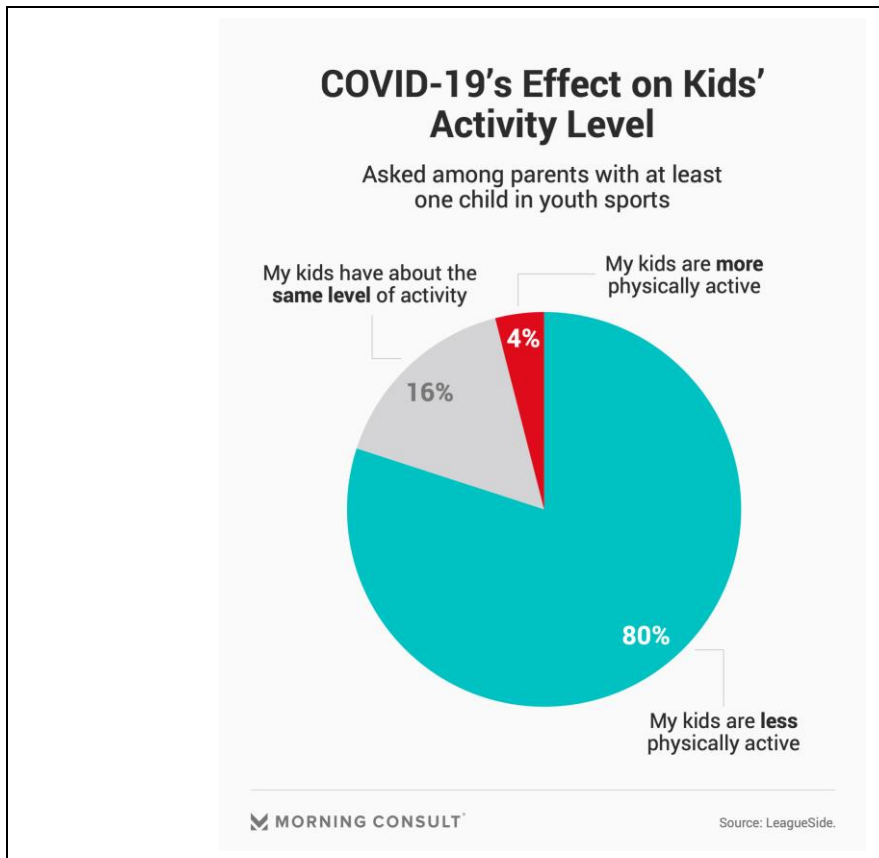
Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at www.unt.edu/csrr

Writing quality assumptions. Every assignment you turn in must be of quality, both in content and style. I will not accept papers with significant grammatical and typographical errors. I expect you to take advantage of the programs that guard against such errors; however, there is no substitute for good proofreading.

Completing the Course. Students are expected to complete all assignments for this course during the semester. Assigning a grade of "incomplete" is rare, and in order to request an "I," the student must meet these requirements: a) The student must have completed at least 75% of the course assignments; b) The student must be passing the course; c) There must be an unforeseen and compelling reason why the course cannot be completed on time (usually a medical or military reason); and d) The student must present a plan for completing the assignments within the time period specified in the catalog.

Crisis Contingency. In the event of the university closing for weather-related reasons or illness outbreak please refer to Canvas for instructions about how we will proceed.

Youth sports participation rates were dropping before the COVID-19 pandemic occurred; made thing worse. (see graphic below)



Using technology in class. You may use laptops or tablets in this class to consult online readings or to take notes. However, any other use of these devices and the use of cell phones is prohibited. Place your phone on mute before you come to class.

What does research tell us about technology and class participation?

- “For the most effective learning and remembering, it was better for students to write or draw by hand versus typing out notes.” (Askvik, 2020)
- “Electronics are a major distraction in class and disrupt class discussion. There is literature that supports this claim, one of which includes: Fried, C.B. (2008). In-class laptop use and its effects on student learning. *Computers & Education*, 50(3), 906-914.”
- “(The technology companies) knew tech was addictive from early on. The warning signs were pretty clear. (The social media companies) design their technology to have social validation loops — the whole use of ‘likes’ is designed from the ground up to be addictive. They know intermittent reinforcement is more likely to push people to use it over and over again.” – Bradshaw & Kuchler, 2018

The Communication Studies Library is a valuable resource for students taking COMM courses. The library is located in GAB 318 and is staffed by COMM majors who can assist students with their projects and papers. The library has a large, searchable collection of scholarly

books, e.g. *Defining Sport Communication*, which are especially helpful for writing assignments. You can work in the library and/or the library staff can copy chapters from books so that you can work on them at home.

Its **hours** are Monday-Thursday (10 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.). To make a reservation or request a scanned copy, email untcommlibrary@gmail.com. Our current catalog of books and handbooks is located on the communications Studies Website:

<https://communication.unt.edu/research/library>

First week drops: The instructor reserves the right to drop students who do not participate in first week activities if other students are attempting to add the course.



Did you know? UNT competes in the West Division of Conference USA.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

We will generally follow the order of the book, and I will keep you abreast of what to read prior to each week through class announcements and Canvas postings.

Class and individual introductions

Ch. 1: Introduction to Comm. and Sport/Review syllabus and assignments

Ch. 2: Community in Sport

Ch. 3: Sport Media: Navigating the Landscape

Ch. 4: Sport Fan Cultures

Ch. 5: Sport and Mythology

Ch. 6: Gender and Sport

Guest speaker: Jenna Reneau, NBA Referee

Ch. 7: Race and Ethnicity in Sport

Ch. 8: Politics and Nationality in Sport

Ch. 10: Interpersonal Communication in Sport

Ch. 11: Small Groups/Teams in Sport

Ch. 12: Crisis Communication in Sport

Ch. 13: The Commodification of Sport

Ch. 14: Sport Gaming

Ch. 9: Performing Identity in Sport

Key dates:

- **Feb. 7** - Team Formation for Term Projects
- **Feb. 21 at noon – Feb. 22 at noon** - online Exam I
- **March 13-18 – SPRING BREAK**
- **March 23** - Team project meeting
- **March 24** – Team project proposals due
- **March 28 at noon – March 29 at noon** – online Exam II
- **April 4** - Team project meeting
- **April 11** - Team project meeting
- **April 18** - Team project meeting
- **April 20** – COMM Day
- **April 27** - Term projects played for class
- **May 4** – Last class day – YEAH!
- **May 10 at noon – May 11 at noon** – online Exam III