

**Sports/Writing**  
**English 1160: Themes in English**  
**Prof. Samuel Cohen**  
**University of Missouri**  
**Spring 2018**  
**MWF 12:00-12:50, Strickland 210**  
**Office hours: T 1-3, F 2-3**  
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**TA: Steven Watts**

### **The Course**

The object of study in this course is sports in American culture and American writing. The overarching questions we will ask: What roles does sports play in the way we live and think about ourselves and the world? How do American writers represent sports? What do they see in sports, and how do they use sports to tell us about ourselves? Topics covered will include sports and money, sports and politics, sports on campus, sports and race, and sports and gender and sexuality, and of course, first and throughout, writing about sports.

### **Policies & Procedures**

#### Attendance & Punctuality

Attendance and punctuality are mandatory. Much of the material will be covered through discussion; we will also cover additional material, including videos, during class meetings. I don't post lecture notes or slides online and I don't provide them for students who are absent. You will be allowed five unpenalized absences; on the sixth absence, I will drop your final grade a step (B becomes B-, B- becomes C+, etc.). Every additional absence will result in another step drop.

#### In Class

You will come to class having read the work assigned for that day. If we are reading a purchased text, you must bring that text. If we are reading something from Canvas, you must either bring a hard copy of the text or have it available to read on your laptop or a tablet (phones are not acceptable and should not come out of your pocket during class). If I see that you are surfing the web or using your laptop or tablet for something other than work for the class, you will be marked down as absent.

#### Reading +

You will have to read a fair amount of material in this class, and it is important that you keep up. If you do not think you will be able to do so, consider another class. Also, the material we cover will sometimes be of a sensitive nature; if you have a problem with this sort of thing, you should not take this class, as you may not be excused from reading, listening to, and talking about this material.

### Tests

Tests will cover both the reading you do before class and what we cover in class (reading, videos, lectures, discussion). Please pay attention to the days tests and exams are scheduled and avoid being absent from class on those days. Make up opportunities are limited and entirely at my discretion. You are required to write your tests in an exam blue book. Please take one (or two) blank ones with you to class on test days; I will never have blank blue books with me. I recommend purchasing at least eight of these at the beginning of the semester for this course.

### Grade

Each of the four tests will be worth 25% of your final grade. There are no extra credit opportunities in this course. I will be using the grading scale below:

Letter Grade	Percentage
A	94 – 100%
A-	90 – 93%
B+	87 – 89%
B	84 – 86%
B-	80 – 83%
C+	77 – 79%
C	74 – 76%
C-	70 – 72%
D+	67 – 79%
D	64 – 66%
D-	60 – 63%
F	0 – 59%

### Office Hours

I am available for one-on-one meetings with students during my office hours (T 1-3, F 2-3) and by appointment. If you have any questions concerning the reading or what we cover in class, please do not hesitate to come and talk with me. The door to my office (Tate 333) is open during office hours and you should feel free to come by (though appointments are suggested, as I'm so very popular.)\_If you can't make my office hours, email me to arrange an appointment at another time. As a last resort, try email, but I can't guarantee instant or after-hours replies.

### Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is fundamental to the activities and principles of a university. All members of the academic community must be confident that each person's work has been responsibly and honorably acquired, developed, and presented. Any effort to gain an advantage not given to all students is dishonest whether or not the effort is successful. The academic community regards breaches of the academic integrity rules as extremely serious matters. Sanctions for such a breach may include academic sanctions from the instructor, including failing the course for any violation, to disciplinary sanctions ranging from probation to expulsion. When in doubt about plagiarism, paraphrasing, quoting, collaboration, or any other form of cheating, consult the course instructor.

### Students with Disabilities

If you anticipate barriers related to the format or requirements of this course, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need to make arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please let me know as soon as possible.

If disability related accommodations are necessary (for example, a note taker, extended time on exams, captioning), please establish an accommodation plan with the MU Disability Center, S5 Memorial Union, 573-882-4696, and then notify me of your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. For other MU resources for persons with disabilities, click on "Disability Resources" on the MU homepage.

### Intellectual Diversity

The University welcomes intellectual diversity and respects student rights. Students who have questions or concerns regarding the atmosphere in this class (including respect for diverse opinions) may contact the departmental chair or divisional director; the director of the Office of Students Rights and Responsibilities; the MU Equity Office, or [equity@missouri.edu](mailto:equity@missouri.edu). All students will have the opportunity to submit an anonymous evaluation of the instructor at the end of the course.

### Executive Order No. 38

University of Missouri System Executive Order No. 38 lays out principles regarding the sanctity of classroom discussions at the university. The policy is described fully in section 200.015 of the Collected Rules and Regulations. In this class, students may not make audio or video recordings of course activity, except students permitted to record as an accommodation under section 240.040 of the Collected Rules. All other students who record and/or distribute audio or video recordings of class activity are subject to discipline in accordance with provisions of section 200.020 of the Collected Rules and Regulations of the University of Missouri pertaining to student conduct matters. Those students who are permitted to record are not permitted to redistribute audio or video recordings of statements or comments from the course to individuals who are not students in the course without the express permission of the faculty member and of any students who are recorded. Students found to have violated this policy are subject to discipline in accordance with provisions of section 200.020 of the Collected Rules and Regulations of the University of Missouri pertaining to student conduct matters.

### **The Texts**

#### To Purchase

Ben Fountain, *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk*

Claudia Rankine, *Citizen*

August Wilson, *Fences*

(all three have been ordered through the university bookstore)

All other reading will be available on Canvas.

## **The Schedule**

### Week 1, Introduction

- Jan 17 Introductory lecture  
19 Dave Zirin, "Until the Twentieth Century," *A People's History of Sports in the United States*

### Week 2, Shorts: Sports in Short Fiction

- Jan 22 Ernest Hemingway, "My Old Man"  
24 Ellen Gilchrist, "Revenge"  
26 Toni Cade Bambara, "Raymond's Run"

### Week 3, Longs: Sports in Longform Journalism

- Jan 29 John Updike, "Hub Fans Bid Kid Adieu," *The New Yorker*  
31 Hunter S. Thompson, "The Kentucky Derby Is Decadent and Depraved," *Scanlan's Monthly*  
Feb 2 David Foster Wallace, "The String Theory," *Esquire*

### Week 4, In Rhythm: Sports in Verse

- Feb 5 A. E. Housman, "To an Athlete Dying Young"  
7 Edward Hirsch, "Fast Break"; John Updike, "Ex-Basketball Player"; Terrance Hayes, "Talk"  
9 Elizabeth Bishop, "The Fish"; James Wright, "Autumn Begins in Martins Ferry, Ohio"

### Week 5, The Shot Heard Round the World: Sports and History

- Feb 12 Don DeLillo, "Pafko at the Wall," *Harper's*, pp. 35-50  
14 DeLillo, pp. 50-70  
16 Test #1

### Weeks 6 & 7, Fences: Sports and Segregation

- Feb 19 August Wilson, *Fences*, Act One, Scenes One-Three  
21 Wilson, Act One, Scene Four; Act Two, Scene One  
23 Wilson, Act Two, Scenes Two-Four  
  
Feb 26 Bonnie Lyons and George Plimpton, "August Wilson: The Art of Theater XIV," *Paris Review*  
28 Jonathan Blitzer, "Satchel Paige and the Championship for the Reelection of the General," *The Atavist*  
Mar 2 Michael S. Harper, "Archives"; Lawrence Ferlinghetti, "Baseball Canto"

### Week 8, Mens Sana in Corpore Sano: Sports and Health

- Mar 5 John Branch, "ESPN Football Analyst Walks Away, Disturbed by Brain Trauma on Field," *The New York Times*; Adam Kilgore, "Aaron Hernandez Suffered from Most Severe CTE Ever Found in a Person His Age," *The Washington Post*  
7 S. C. Gwyne, "The Road Goes on Forever and the Story Never Ends," *Outside*  
9 Test #2

Week 9, Big Time: Sports and the University

- Mar 12 *Big Time Losers*  
14 Dave Zirin, "The NCAA's 'Whiff of the Plantation,'" *Game Over*; "Black Mizzou Football Players Are Going on Strike Over Campus Racism" and "Plantation Politics': Racist Legislation Stalks the Mizzou Football Team," *The Nation*  
16 *Concerned Student 1950*

Week 10, Crossing Lines: Sports, Gender, and Sexuality

- Mar 19 Diana Nyad, "My Life After Sexual Assault," *The New York Times*; Louisa Thomas, "Together We Make Football," *Grantland*  
21 Caleb Hannan, "Dr. V's Magical Putter," *Grantland*; Christina Kahrl, "What Grantland Got Wrong," *Grantland*; Bill Simmons, "The Dr. V Story: A Letter from the Editor," *Grantland*  
23 Test #3

Spring Break

Mar 26-30

Weeks 11 & 12, End Zone: Sports, War, and Sex in America

- Apr 2 Ben Fountain, *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk*, pp. 1-49  
4 Fountain, pp. 50-107  
6 Fountain, pp. 108-156  
  
Apr 9 Fountain, pp. 157-216  
11 Fountain, pp. 217-257  
13 Fountain, pp. 258-307

Weeks 13 & 14, Citizens: Sports and Race

- Apr 16 Claudia Rankine, *Citizen*, Ch. I (pp. 3-20)  
18 Rankine, Ch. II (pp. 21-38)  
20 Rankine, Ch. III (pp. 39-56)  
  
Apr 23 Rankine, Ch. IV & V (pp. 57-80)  
25 Rankine, Ch. VI (pp. 81-136)  
27 Rankine, Ch. VII (pp. 137-161)  
  
Apr 30 Review/wrap-up  
May 2 Test #4