The Culture of Sports and Sports Journalism in the UK

Instructor: James Pearce
Contact Hours: 40
Language of Instruction: English

REMOTE/LONDON, ENGLAND

ABOUT JAMES PEARCE

James is an award winning broadcaster, who spent two decades as a senior sports correspondent for BBC News, working across both television and radio. He was the BBC’s Olympics Correspondent for London 2012, leading the BBC’s coverage of the Games all the way from the start of the London bid in 2001. These days James combines freelance work as a presenter for BBC Sport with his role running a successful media training company. His media training clients include many of the UK’s most famous athletes and best known sports executives.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will give students a fascinating insight into a central part of British culture – Sport. The United Kingdom has just completed what has been called its ‘Decade of Sport’. After London’s successful hosting of the Olympics in 2012, the Glasgow Commonwealth Games in 2014, and the Rugby World Cup in 2015 and the 2017 London World Athletics Championships, the Cricket World Cup took place in England last summer.

During this course we will analyse the perceived benefits of hosting major sporting events, and look into the culture of sport. Why does sport matter so much to so many people? What are the issues around race and gender within sport?

Zoom is opening up opportunities on this year’s course which have not been available to previous years’ students. James Pearce is using his vast contacts book to bring together an array of speakers from all over the world. We will hear from a number of sports industry
leaders, and top sports journalists. Students will also have the opportunity to draw on their own experience of sport theory and practice in the United States.

Tutorials:

James is still in contact with a number of students from previous years’ courses, doing what he can to offer advice and guidance as they set off on their career paths. He will be very happy to run one-on-one tutorials during the summer, discussing any topics that the students select – either a more detailed chat about some of the topics being studied, or career advice.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The key objectives of the course:

- To familiarise students with the core skills and competencies involved in visual journalism
- To explore recent technical and stylistic developments in the production and delivery of visual journalism
- To explain the principles underpinning video news production
- To give students an insight into the rapid changes in the area both in the UK and worldwide

LEARNING OUTCOMES

On completion of the course, students will be able to demonstrate:

- An understanding of what makes attractive, compelling video
- An awareness of the differing styles and methods employed by traditional broadcasters and digital providers – and how they might converge more in future
- A basic ability to use their own mobile phone to create arresting visual material
- An understanding of which apps are most useful in aiding high quality production
- An elementary grasp of how to build an engaging linear programme running order
- An appetite for further investigation and experience

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODOLOGY

The course will be taught through a combination of online group work, guest speakers, practical and written exercises (both analytical and journalistic) and individual tutorials.

METHOD OF EVALUATION (GRADING)

20% Essay 1: Essay

20% Essay 2: Essay

20% Essay 3: Essay
25% Essay 4: Long essay
15% Participation in class and attendance

COURSE OUTLINE

Week One:

Class One - Introduction to Sports Journalism. A discussion around why sport matters. Who benefits from sport? Why has it become such an important part of our society? This lecture also includes an outline of expectations during the course

Class Two – The Grand Debate. A discussion about how much journalists should be influenced by factors such as race and gender when assessing which stories to cover. What makes an athlete ‘great’? Is it easier, or harder for a black athlete to be considered ‘great’?

Set essay 1 (800-900 words): “Does sport matter?” This essay will include reference to the content that has been discussed in class, in particular regarding race and gender

Week Two:

Class Three – An audience with a British sports journalism legend. Charles Sale has been a leading journalist for more than thirty years. This class focuses on women’s sport. Charles has been a passionate supporter of increasing the media coverage of women’s sport and encouraging more female journalists. We look at the rise in coverage of women’s sport in the media. We will also link up during the class with a senior British female sports journalist. Is women’s sport fairly reported by the media these days? Is the media inherently sexist?

Class Four – Investigative journalism. Some of the biggest journalistic investigations in recent years have been in sport. We will look at some examples, including the downfall of Lance Armstrong and the allegations of corruption in the awarding of the 2022 World Cup to Qatar. We will be joined by a leading sports investigative journalist. What are the secrets behind good investigative journalism? How important is investigative journalism?

Set essay 2 (1000 words): Discuss the rise in popularity of women's professional sport in recent years and look at the challenges that are still faced. Use last year’s Women’s Soccer World Cup in France as a case study.

The reading list for this topic will include the following, but there will be additional reading added in the week of the class

https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2019/may/09/i-thought-the-main-issue-in-womens-sports-was-equal-pay-i-was-wrong


LONDON The Culture of Sports and Sports Journalism in the UK (James Pearce) – Summer 2020
Week Three:

Class Five – Coronavirus. We look at the implications of coronavirus on international sport. How has it shaken business models? How many established sports clubs will go out of business? How is it going to change the way that we consume sport? Will it lead to a rise in Esports? We will be joined by a leading journalist and also a senior figure from a major British sports club.

Class Six – Sports Broadcasting and Communication. James Pearce runs regular training courses for BBC journalists, and also works with many of the UK’s most famous athletes. The England men’s and women’s soccer teams are his highest profile clients. In this class we study broadcasting and communications techniques. What makes a good broadcaster? What are the secrets in being able to deliver ‘breaking news’? What can we learn from broadcasters about communicating in everyday life? This is a very interactive session in which all students will do a short sport broadcast.

Set essay 3 (1000 words): Discuss the effects on coronavirus on the global sports industry. What lessons can sports learn from the past few months? How well placed are the major sports to cope with the disruption and the financial pain? Choose one international sport, and give some recommendations for its post-coronavirus future.

Week Four:

Class Seven – The unpredictability and the excitement of an Olympic city bidding process. We analyse how cities are selected and study the politics at the heart of the process. How corrupt is the politics of sport? We look at case studies, including some of the biggest scandals in international sport. Has the growth of sport into such a big business increased the temptations for those leading international sports organisations to act immorally? We will be joined by former Reuters and BBC sports journalist Adrian Warner.

Long Essay (1500 words): Students will be given the option of writing in more detail about a topic which has been raised during the course (agreement on the essay title will need to be given by James in advance), or writing about the following subject: The international sporting landscape in 2050 – A chance for students to get out their crystal balls, and, using analysis of past and current trends, to predict how the world of sport will look in 2050. The focus should be on results on the field of play, as well as the politics away from it. For example: Is the Qatar World Cup in 2022 just the start of a shift away from traditional Eastern and Western host venues? What is the likely advance in performance by African nations over the next thirty years?

Week Five:

Class Eight - How much influence does PR have in the world of sport? What is behind the most effective PR? We will be joined by Dan Connelly from Havas Sport and Entertainment, and at least one other leading figure from the world of sports PR.
Course summary and conclusions