This is your syllabus—read it completely and carefully!

The Rhetoric of Sports in Film examines the way filmmakers use sports as fundamental rhetorical elements to communicate their vision of culture and values. Students will learn to deconstruct a film using basic rhetorical and film theory to analyze the message elements attached to cinematic sports.

Please read carefully: my on-line courses are like independent studies. Students are expected to take the initiative to do the readings, write the essays and submit them in a timely manner. If you are not a self-starter with the self-discipline to work on the course consistently during the semester, then you’d best find another class.

Grading: the semester will be graded with four equally weighted units consisting of four 2,000 to 3,000 word essays.

A word of caution! Some students do not read the assignments carefully—hard to believe, I know, but true—and thus some students start out at a huge disadvantage. An “A” essay does not leave out any element of the assignment. Slow down and read each assignment very carefully, make a list of the essay requirements, and then check them off as you proof read your essay.

Understanding Movies by Louis Giannetti (available online in "Resources")

Obtain the texts ASAP--do not delay--as you will need them all. Please note, the single most expensive book is online in "Resources" -- it is an older but still viable edition.

Assignments:
Four essays of approximately 2000-3000 words in length each are to be completed. Each essay includes readings from one, two or all three of the texts and screenings of one or more films. A separate Sakai listing of the assignments is online in "Assignments" but they can be viewed below, too.

The essays are to be written as formal essays that quote directly from and cite liberally and frequently from the readings and include specific descriptive examples from the various films. Avoid paraphrasing. All essays must be submitted as Microsoft Word files (.doc or .docx files or as RTF files) as attachments on Sakai "Assignments." Also, avoid PDF and .pages files. Remember, titles of films and books are italicized. Remember to spell the names of authors and actors/characters correctly.

A correct citation will look something like this: (Reel Baseball, Billmeyer, 90), or (Stars, Stripes and Diamonds, Rudd & Most, 89), or (Understanding Movies, Giannetti, 129). If you are quoting from Reel Baseball from a section written by Wood & Pincus the citation would look like this: (Reel Baseball, Wood & Pincus, 132).

Back up your assignments by saving them to the Drop Box in Sakai. This is not a request, but a requirement for an "A" or "B" grade.
All essays must have a word count (in the header)—many forget this—don't. Also, include an introduction, body, conclusion, and bibliography and filmography in each of your essays to be eligible for an A or B grade. Some students forget to include the bibliography and or filmography—don't. You can use Chapter 1 of Reel Baseball as a model for bibliography and filmography. In general, pay attention to formatting used in Reel Baseball and let it be a guide. Save a backup copy of each essay to your Sakai "Drop Box" in addition to submitting it to "Assignments." Do not submit your essays to my regular email—submit only to Sakai.

Essays must be submitted as a .docx or a .rtf file—do not submit a PDF version, do not submit a .pages file. If you do, I'm simply going to return the essay to you for proper submission.

Essay Assignments:

Please note: other than the first assignment, you may submit the essays in any order you wish. So, naming the essay in the subject line and in your filename is important! No matter how many essays are listed, you only need complete the one required essay and three others selected from the list of assignments.

All essays must have a word count on page one right after your header. The header must contain your name, the date, the name of the assignment and a word count. For example:

John Doe
June 28, 2018
Essay 1: Baseball Interviews
Word count: 2,438

A note on filenames—use the following format: yourlastname—essayname. So if I was saving a file to submit, then the filename would be Wood—Baseball Interviews.

Required readings: each essay has specific reading assignments. Additionally, I strongly recommend that you read through all the texts to gain a larger perspective on the topic. I would recommend particular attention to Chapter 2 in Reel Baseball. Also, the perspectives developed by Rudd and Most has application to many of the essays. "Post Game Analysis" (beginning on pg. 292 of Reel Baseball) may help construct a larger picture of the role of film and sports. Giannetti elucidates film theory in great detail.

Use headings and sub-headings as appropriate, pay close attention to paragraphing (and avoiding overly long paragraphs), spelling, and punctuation. Some students seem to love overly long paragraphs—try to keep that temptation under control. Some students think the computer program will correct their spelling and punctuation for them. To a degree this is true, but only to a degree. You must take personal responsibility for spelling, including author's names and film titles, and all aspects of good writing. Blue, green and red squiggles mean something needs your human input. Correct any and all mistakes before turning in the essay. All film titles should be italicized as well as all book titles (not underlined and not in bold).

Be liberal in the use of direct quotations from the texts or other sources you use. For example, "Directors also rely on non-traditional baseball environments for comedic effects" (Reel Baseball, Wood & Pincus, 168). Then in a bibliography you would include a full citation for Reel Baseball. Also, you must include a complete filmography (use samples from the end of the chapters in Reel Baseball as a sample).

If you are quoting from a chapter in Reel Baseball not written by Wood & Pincus, then cite the name of the book (Reel Baseball), the authors last name (i.e., Trimble), and page number (122); hence, (Reel Baseball, Trimble, 122). Film titles, like book titles, should be set off in italics (i.e., The Natural). Check the spelling on all the author's names and make sure you spell them
Where to get the films needed: you should not have any problems finding these films, but if you run into trouble, then let me know. Currently, the average rental cost of most of the films is $2.99.

While everyone must do Essay 1, the other three assignments may be selected by you in any order you wish. If you write about one essay every two weeks will keep you on schedule, but all essays must be handed in on the following schedule. Late essays are not eligible for a "A" grade.

Completed first essay turned in on or before June 4th.
Completed second essay turned in on or before June 25th.
Completed third essay turned in on or before July 9th.
Completed fourth essay turned in on or before July 25th.

**Essay 1. REQUIRED of EVERYONE--Reel Baseball Interviews:**

*Reel Baseball* has interviews from thirteen professionals involved in the movie business. They are grouped in three categories: Chapter 15--The Directors and Producers, Chapter 16--The Actors and Critics, and Chapter 17--Behind the Scenes. Read all of them, then summarize the highlights of the interviews paying particular attention to similarities and/or differences between and among those within in each grouping.

**Use headers:** "Directors and Producers," "Actors and Critics," and "Behind the Scenes" -- use sub-headers, for example under the header for Actors and Critics you would have the following sub-headers: Kevin Costner, James Earl Jones, James Belushi, Robert Osborne, and Jeffrey Lyons).

In the introduction to each chapter, note your personal favorite interview and why it is your favorite. In the introduction to the essay, identify the one person not included in the interviews, who you think should be interviewed. Explain why.

Be sure to include an introduction and conclusion to your essay. Further, remember to quote frequently and directly from the interviews and footnote directly after the quotation: for example, (Costner 259) or (*Reel Baseball*, Costner, 259). Due: June 4th. Essays turned in after June 4 are not eligible for an "A" grade.

**From the remaining essays select and complete any three (but keep the due dates in mind!).**

**Essay 2: Director's Point of View**

Writers and directors Ron Shelton (*Bull Durham*), Phil Alden Robinson (*Field of Dreams*), and Barry Levinson (*The Natural*) have very different points of view that are clearly expressed in their film making. This essay prompts you to examine the difference the writer/director has on the films point of view.

For this essay, you need to screen the three films mentioned above and write an essay that relates the one theoretical perspective from Giannetti, Chapter 11 to each film. Use one theory for *Bull Durham*, one theory for *Field of Dreams*, and one theory for *The Natural*. Select from among the following theories discussed by Giannetti: 1. Realism, 2. Formalism, 3. Eclectic & Synthetic, and 4. Structuralism & Semiotic. You may NOT use the same theory for more than one film.
Include a brief, but verbatim, definition of each theory from Giannetti and use a different heading for each film. The header should simply be the title of film, hyphen, the theoretical perspective, such as: "Bull Durham-Structuralism & Semiotic. Remember, a theory is a prism through which one may analyze and understand a phenomenon (in this case a film).

Preparation for this essay includes: reading Chapter 1, 3, and 6 in Reel Baseball; and Chapter 11 from Understanding Movies; Chapter 1 from Stars, Stripes and Diamonds. Screen Bull Durham, Field of Dreams and The Natural; write your first draft of the essay; edit and proof read your essay and submit it to me via Sakai’s “Assignments” under “Point of View.” As always, a bibliography and filmography are required.

Essay 3. The Ideology of Film: The Portrayal of Minorities in Baseball Films
After screening A League of Their Own (1993), The Perfect Game (2010), 42 (the Jackie Robinson story, 2013), write an essay that compares and contrasts how these films reveal the treatment of minorities (women, Mexicans, blacks) in our culture.

Chapter 10 of Understanding Movies discusses ideology in detail and you are to apply that discussion to your analysis—do not simply define ideology (which you should quoting directly from Giannetti), but also examine and apply the elements of ideology as they relate to these films. Use Giannetti on ideology directly and often as his discussion is well developed and detailed. In the opening paragraph include your favorite quotation from The Perfect Game.

In preparation for this assignment: study chapter 10 (Understanding Movies), and the appropriate interviews (Reel Baseball—Penny Marshall, James Earl Jones); and chapters 8 & 9, Stars, Stripes and Diamonds. Screen the movies mentioned above; draft your analysis; edit your draft, submit finalized essay to me via Sakai’s “Assignments” under “Ideology.” As always, a bibliography and filmography are required.

Essay 4. Sport Films/Editing Style
View these three films: Cannery Row (Nick Nolte), The Rookie (Dennis Quaid), and Hook (Robin Williams). The first part of the essay should describe when baseball is used in the film and how it is used (dialog, setting, character, etc.). Secondly, comment on the editing style of some of the specific scenes that condense time or speed up events: specifically use the scene from Cannery Row towards the end of the film where Doc is pitching into the sand, the scene from The Rookie where Jim is pitching at the speed sign, and the scene from Hook when the Pirates play the Pirates.

Use screen shots to illustrate and support your analysis. Chapter 4, Understanding Movies is very informative concerning editing and should be used to define the editing points you are making in the essay.

You should balance your essay 50/50 (approximately). No more than fifty percent description, fifty percent or maybe a bit more on the analysis of editing. Use headers as appropriate.

In preparation for this assignment: read Reel 3 of Reel Baseball; read chapter 4 of Understanding Movies; chapter 10 of Stars, Stripes and Diamonds; screen the films listed above; draft your essay; edit your essay, submit your essay via Sakai’s “Assignments” under “Editing.” As always, a bibliography and filmography are expected. This is an essay you will want to illustrate some of your points with screen shots from the films.

Essay 5. Mise en Scene: The Visual Elements the Raging Bull and Rocky
After screening the boxing movies *Raging Bull* (1980) and *Rocky* (1976), write an essay that systematically and directly applies chapter 2 of *Understanding Movies*.

Your analysis should be based on still frames from both films. You should include a still or stills from each movie for each of the *Mise en Scene* concepts. Your introduction should refer to the importance of these two films.

In preparation for this assignment: read Chapter 2, *Understanding Movies*; screen *Raging Bull* and *Rocky*, draft your essay, edit your essay, and submit your essay to me via Sakai’s “Assignments” under “MiseEnScene”. The essay should consist of an introduction (which may include a very brief summary of the films), five sections with headers (1. The Frame, 2. Composition and Design, 3. Territorial Space, 4. Proxemic Patterns, and 5. Open and Closed Forms), each concept clearly defined (using Giannetti's exact words), and a conclusion. As always, a bibliography and filmography are required.