

## **IDH 2930 (Un)Common Read: Amateur Hour is Over: Power, Policy, and the NCAA**

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FLG 250C

Office Hours: Wednesdays 10:30am-12:30pm and by appointment

### **Course Description**

Think you know college sports? Think again! In this discussion-driven Honors course, we'll uncover the real story behind the NCAA's "amateur" model: how it was built, why it endured for over a century, and how it's unraveling in the athlete compensation era. Using Ronald A. Smith's *The Myth of the Amateur: A History of College Athletic Scholarships* as our guide, we'll explore the power plays, landmark moments, and politics that shaped the commercialized industry of intercollegiate sports through the labor of college athletes. Along the way, we'll connect history to breaking news, from the *House v. NCAA* settlement to debates over athlete pay and governance reform. If you're curious about law, history, sport, or higher education—or you just want to see what really happens after the final buzzer—this is your front-row seat. Expect debates, keen analysis, and a final project that lets you investigate the past to make sense of today's changes in college sport. Continue on for more specifics!

### **Course Objectives**

1. Critically analyze the historical development of the NCAA's foundational principle, amateurism.
2. Evaluate how the NCAA's ideological foundations have shaped policy, governance, and athlete experiences from its inception in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century to present day.
3. Connect historical context to contemporary issues in college athletics by examining the relationships among the NCAA, institutions, athletic departments, and athletes in the athlete compensation era.
4. Develop and present evidence-based arguments that compare historical moments in college sport to current reform debates, using both primary and secondary sources.

### **Required Materials**

1. Smith, R. A. (2021). *The myth of the amateur: A history of college athletic scholarships*.
2. Other assigned readings, videos, etc. posted to the course Canvas page.

### **Grading**

A minimum grade of B is required to earn Academic points toward Honors Completion Requirements. Once you have earned your final grade in this course, please upload the course information and final grade from your Unofficial Transcript into your Honors Canvas Cohort: Honors Requirements module to earn Honors Milestone/Completion credit.

The course is out of **500 total points** and follows the University of Florida's grading policy. Grades will not be rounded up. For example, an 89.99 is still a B+. See current UF Grading Policies for further details:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>.

This course offers a variety of assignments to ensure students' success. Within the confines of this class all students are expected to abide by the UF Honor Code, which you can read here: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/>.

Additionally, AI is NOT to be used in the course beyond the following parameters.

1. Students may only use NaviGator for their AI platform. I reserve the right to inquire about your input and output on the platform to ensure the academic integrity of this course and students' work.
2. AI can be used to check grammar. However, students must note this at the bottom of their assignment after the references.
3. AI can be used to support with brainstorming ideas. However, students must note this at the bottom of their assignments after the references.
4. Students may NOT use AI to write complete sentences or sections of their assignments.
5. If I suspect a student has inappropriately used AI in my course I will request to meet with the student and there are potentially intense ramifications such as (1) failed assignment or (2) academic reporting.

### **Assignments**

Below are brief synopses of the assignments for this course and their point parameters. Students can see more in-depth provisions and information on Canvas or contact the instructor with questions.

### **Current Event Discussion (25 Points)**

Beginning January 26, each class will open with a student giving a 5-minute summary of a current event in college sport and connecting it to amateurism. Students must post a 1–2 paragraph summary with links and one cited course material on Canvas before class, then deliver a brief, casual in-class presentation that includes at least one discussion question.

### **Videos (50 Points)**

Early on in the semester, students will complete two short (90 second videos) to (1) introduce themselves and discuss their interest in the course, and (2) address a question related to a course chapter.

### **Policy Brief Assignment or New Carnegie Report (75 Points)**

**Policy Brief:** In this option, students will write a 2-3 page policy brief addressed to the University of Florida athletic director. Drawing on Smith (2021) and at least two additional course or outside sources, students will use historical insights to provide actionable recommendations on contemporary amateurism issues such as NIL, recruiting inducements, or athlete employment. The brief should follow a professional tone (i.e., clear, concise, and persuasive) aimed at informing real-world decision-making in college athletics. Students' work should demonstrate strong historical grounding, critical analysis of current challenges, and practical solutions for the department.

**New Carnegie Report:** In this option, students will create a modern version of the 1929 Carnegie Report by writing a 2-3 page reformist-style analysis of amateurism today. Using themes from Smith (2021) and other course materials, students will evaluate how NIL, athlete pay, collectives, and recruiting inducements have blurred or erased the amateur-professional divide. Reports should adopt the tone, structure, and moral urgency of the original Carnegie document while offering evidence-based findings and thoughtful critique. Students will conclude with clear recommendations for how the NCAA and its member schools should reform, reimagine, or even abandon current amateurism models.

### **Athletes-as-Employees Opinion Piece (75 Points)**

For this assignment, you will write an opinion editorial (op-ed) of 750–1,000 words aimed at a general audience. Your goal is to take a clear stance on the following question: Should college athletes be reclassified from “students” to “employees”? With this assignment, students will practice public scholarship while grappling with one of the core issue driving today’s amateurism debate: athlete employment.

### **Rhetorical Analysis of Congressional Testimonies (75 Points)**

In this assignment, students will analyze the rhetoric of a key individual who testified before Congress during an NIL hearing. The goal is to identify how the speaker frames amateurism through key phrases, silences, and framing devices such as conflict, morality, economics, or responsibility. After annotating the testimony, students will write a two-paragraph analytical summary connecting their rhetoric to course materials and historical debates from Smith (2021). This assignment helps students see how amateurism functions not only as policy but as a narrative that evolves over time.

### **Final Project: Historic Parallels of Amateurism in Podcasting or Documentary (100 Points)**

For their final project, students will create either a podcast episode (12-16 minutes) or a mini-documentary (8-10 minutes) analyzing how the myth of amateurism has persisted, evolved, or been challenged over time. Using one historical moment from Smith (2021) and one contemporary issue, students will examine how the two cases parallel or diverge and what this reveals about the ideological or structural evolution of amateurism. Both formats require historical and contemporary analysis, integration of at least six sources, and a clear comparison of continuity and change. Students must submit their media file, an APA reference list, and an outline or script.

### **Participation (100 Points)**

Participation is essential to the learning environment and students are expected to come prepared to discuss all assigned materials. Quality contributions, thoughtful engagement, and respectful dialogue will guide participation grading, and students should remain focused and present during class. Disrespectful, discriminatory, or disruptive behavior—including doing work for other classes or using devices for unrelated purposes—will result in lost participation points. Attendance also factors into participation, with unexcused absences earning a zero; students may use the course’s “Oh S\*&\$ Clause” once for full participation credit. See Canvas for more details.

## **Course Reading and Activity Schedule (Subject to Change Per Professor)**

### **1/12: Introduction to Amateurism**

- **Reading(s)**
  - Smith (2021) Chapter 1: Amateurism Then and Now
  - Smith (2021) Chapter 2: The Harvard Dilemma—Amateur or Professional
- **Assignment Due**
  - Introduction Video

### **1/19: Holiday No Class**

### **1/26: Scholarships and Other “Compensation”**

- **Reading(s)**
  - Smith (2021) Chapter 3: “Scholarships:” Eastern Authority and Early Payments
  - Smith (2021) Chapter 4: Training, Training Tables, and Athletic Dorms

### **2/2: Sport Professionalization**

- **Reading(s)**
  - Smith (2021) Chapter 5: The Amateur Challenge of Summer Baseball for Pay
  - Smith (2021) Chapter 6: The 1929 Carnegie Report: Condemnation of Professionalism
- **Assignment Due**
  - Policy Brief or New Carnegie Report

### **2/9: No Class**

- **Reading(s)**
  - Smith (2021) Chapter 7: The Southeastern Conference and Athletic Scholarships
  - Smith (2021) Chapter 8: National Athletic Scholarship Failure: The Sanity Code
- **Assignment Due**
  - Student Choice video

### **2/16: From the Ivies to the Big Ten**

- **Reading(s)**
  - Smith (2021) Chapter 9: The Cleansing of the Ivy League: No Athletic Scholarships?
  - Smith (2021) Chapter 10: Recruiting, Full Scholarships, and the Big Ten Succumbs

### **2/23: Academics in Athletics?**

- **Reading(s)**
  - Smith (2021) Chapter 11: Academic Standards, the 1.600 Rule, and Their Demise

### **3/2: The “Student”-Athlete**

- **Reading(s)**
  - Smith (2021) Chapter 12: Taxation, Workers’ Compensation, and the “Student-Athlete”
  - Abolish the Term Student Athlete
- **Assignment Due**
  - “Student-Athlete” Parody Video (in class)

### **3/9: Women’s College sport**

- **Reading(s)**
  - Smith (2021) Chapter 13: Women’s Athletics, Title IX, and the Kellmeyer Lawsuit

### **3/16: Spring Break No Class**

### **3/23: Athletes-as-Employees?**

- **Reading(s)**
  - Smith (2021) Chapter 14: Television, Unions, and the Collapse of Amateurism
- **Assignment Due**
  - Op-Ed: Are College Athletes Employees?

### **3/30: Amateur Challenges in the Courts**

- **Reading(s)**
  - Smith (2021) Chapter 15: Is “Amateurism” Alive?: The O’Bannon Lawsuit Impact
  - Smith (2021) Chapter 16: The Alston and Jenkins Lawsuits, and NCAA Fig-Leafed Professionalism

### **4/6: The Feds Get Involved**

- **Reading(s)**
  - Smith (2021) Chapter 17: State and Federal Legislative Pay-for-Play Action
  - Harry (2025) “You don’t want us to solve this”: Agenda setting in the federal hearings on Name, Image, and Likeness. *Communication & Sport* 13(4), 640-663.
  - Assigned testimony document
- **Assignment Due**
  - Amateurism Rhetoric Analysis

#### 4/13: The House v. NCAA Settlement

- **Reading(s)**

- Read: Thamel, P., & Murphy, M. (2024, April 29). College sports leaders in deep talks to settle NIL antitrust case vs. NCAA. *ESPN*.  
[https://www.espn.com/college-sports/story/\\_/id/40053021/college-sports-leaders-deep-talks-settle-nil-antitrust-case-vs-ncaa](https://www.espn.com/college-sports/story/_/id/40053021/college-sports-leaders-deep-talks-settle-nil-antitrust-case-vs-ncaa)
- Read: Bryant, A. (2025, January 30). The House settlement violates Title IX and athletes' rights. *Sportico*. <https://www.sportico.com/law/analysis/2025/house-settlement-cannot-stand-1234825730/>
- Read: McCann, M. (2025, April 7). Answering 20 questions about House settlement final hearing. *Sportico*.  
<https://www.sportico.com/law/analysis/2025/house-settlement-legal-implications-1234846593/>
- Read: Dellenger, R. (2025, June 7). NCAA's House settlement approved, ushering in new era where schools can directly pay athletes. *Yahoo Sports*.  
<https://sports.yahoo.com/college-football/article/ncaas-house-settlement-approved-ushering-in-new-era-where-schools-can-directly-pay-athletes-011814078.html>
- Listen: Feldman, G., House, G. (2025, July 2). The final House. NCAA podcast (for now) with... Grant House! *Sports Wise*.  
<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/sportswise-a-podcast-about-sports-and-the-law/id1525109223?i=1000715517076>

#### 4/20: Final Discussions

- Final Project: Historic Parallels of Amateurism

#### Classroom Policies

1. Students are not allowed to record lectures and discussions without accommodations.
2. Students are not allowed to take pictures of the slides without professor consent and must give an appropriate reason as to why they need photos rather than notes.
3. Athletes enrolled in the course should contact the professor, not the athlete's academic advisor.
4. Doctor's appointments during class that are not an emergency are UNEXCUSED absences.
5. AI use is LIMITED in this course and should only be used for learning support like brief brainstorming and checking grammar. Other uses are prohibited unless approved by the professor. AI use is limited to NaviGator and Copilot and students must be logged in using their ufl credentials. If the professor suspects inappropriate AI, they may ask for the recordings and output of your AI history (allowed per UF policy). Additionally, if students use AI outside of the aforementioned approved parameters, assignment grade may warrant failure at the professor's discretion.

**Honors Program Contact Information**

Honors Program, Honors Village Complex #4, 352-392-1519

Quick questions for an Honors advisor? Email [advisor@honors.ufl.edu](mailto:advisor@honors.ufl.edu)

Need an Honors advising appointment? Schedule via Microsoft Bookings:

<https://bit.ly/UFHonorsAdvising>

Honors Program Event Calendar: <https://www.honors.ufl.edu/news--events/calendar-of-events/>

**Other University of Florida Policies**

Please see link below provided by the University of Florida for additional academic policies and resources:

<https://syllabus.ufl.edu/syllabus-policy/uf-syllabus-policy-links/>