10C Travis R. Bell, University of South Florida
“Fantasy Journalism: How Technical Creation of Information Simulates Football Reality”

This research investigates the dialectics involved with the language used by news sources to bridge the gap between the virtual and real which drives the computer-mediate creation of information for fantasy sports players. First, pre-draft rankings and projections combine human information with data analysis to formulate rank-and-file lists to educate fantasy players about trends and possibilities involving the real players. Second, fantasy players research algorithmic projections to organize lineups that are customizable and interactive (Dwyer & Drayer, 2010). Finally, robot journalists produce weekly recaps and season reviews based on real-world journalism and statistics (Clerwall, 2014), thus producing an additional layer of computer-mediated content for analysis and forecasting. This amalgamation of information parallels the NFL season with the weekly highs and lows associated with wins and losses. A textual analysis of one season of league recaps in a CBS Sports’ fantasy football league situates the realism of the information produced each week by robot journalists and explains how it both simulates and diverts from traditional sports journalism.

10C Alex Huebner, Florida State University
“Political Economy of Daily Fantasy Football”

The current academic debate surrounding daily fantasy football (DFF) takes place largely in the legal literature and revolves around whether daily fantasy football is a game of chance or game of skill (Sanchez, 2016). What is lost in this debate, however, is an examination of the political economy of DFF, particularly how a professional sports league like the NFL benefits from daily fantasy leagues while publicly downplaying the role played by data-driven gambling in the rise in popularity of the sport. As television networks such as ESPN and NFL Network present daily fantasy data in-season to help managers create winning teams, the real winners are the television networks, the NFL, and cable and satellite providers. Fantasy sports participants are much more likely to consume sports media during the season, even more so for daily fantasy participants. This increase in live viewership allows television networks and cable companies to generate more advertising revenue, contributing to the current “hyper-commercialized” (McChesney, 2004) state of professional football. Therefore, this research investigates the political economy of DFF and asserts that the data-driven nature of DFF overwhelmingly benefits the NFL and its media partners at the expense of the consumer.

10C Alex Morales, University of South Florida
“Fantasy Football: A Technology of Discipline and Power”

In an age where information is in abundance, the task at hand has shifted from simply having access to information to a state of information anxiety. How do we navigate through the overwhelming amount of information that surges through online databases, growing exponentially? This question is not one of content, but rather curation. This essay treats the Yahoo Fantasy Football Application to demonstrate that information curation is characteristic of two key theoretical concepts: the panopticon (Foucault, 1979) and synopticon (Mathiesen, 1997). This thesis is developed by examining how the application’s interface acts as a “coming to know” (Foucault, 1995) fantasy sports through the surveillance practices of information curation. This criticism argues that the key function facing fantasy sports becomes a matter of attention and accessibility, and that the social order of this particular digitally-mediated space is contingent upon how participants navigate through such spaces that create conditions that are conducive to the needs of the user. Treating this space as a mechanism of surveillance will demonstrate the applications
“permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (Foucault, 1979) through the watchful, all-seeing eye that fantasy football users so desperately seek.

10C Jaime Robb, University of South Florida
“Constructed Spaces: How Fantasy Football Consummates Community and Participation”

The evolution of fan engagement over the past two decades has seen an increasing turn towards the Internet as a site for communal gathering. This shift can be taken as a welcomed addition to how fans all across the globe can engage in a shared sense of competition. The way participation functions in the fantasy sports universe creates a sense of togetherness that Lave and Wenger’s (1991) locate as “communities of practice.” This research looks to investigates how the online fantasy space functions through a mediated form of interaction that situates patterns for engagement, which allow each user to feel in control of the way s/he performs as a member of a particular fantasy group. A question of how participants’ sense of control becomes reliant on gathering information derived from news sources competing for an audience is central to this study. Too often, the same media outlets that provide fantasy-related information are also responsible for hosting the fantasy site itself. As such, this paper illuminates an implicit structuring between fantasy participation and the media outlets that offer the blueprint for how meaning making occurs among participants.