As I am sitting at my desk thinking of what it is that I want to divulge myself in this semester for my Rhet 105 class I look up at my wall and notice a poster for the movie “The Boondock Saints”. The byline on the poster reads “Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done.” As I read this, I start to think about God and religion and a thought pops into my head. Atheism. Walking through the quad on Quad Day, my friends and I passed a booth that had a large sign saying: “Atheist Club”. I thought nothing of it until now, and the fact that John said that the less you know about the subject you are studying; the better the project will turn out.

So the question is: “So what?” What am I going to do get involved with the Atheist club? Is the Atheist club too extreme? What if I actually agree with what they’re saying? These are all questions that I asked myself the moment I thought of the Atheists.

As a member of the Irish Catholic community, I have been brought up with the ideals that God is the almighty power, and that there is a heaven and a hell. From what I understand about Atheists is that they believe in nothing, and that there is no higher power, which goes against everything that I’ve been raised with.
Overall, I feel that getting involved in the Atheist community on campus would open my eyes, and possibly others, to a whole new world that many people do not understand.

**Initial Exercises:** September 20, 2008 - Joker vs. Batman

The group met at the front of the Union at 8:30 am. I was so tired, that I didn’t even put my contacts in. Glasses, sweatpants with shorts on underneath, and my cubs t-shirt. Most of the members of the actual team were dressed as either Batman or the Joker, in honor of the new "The Dark Knight" movie that has smashed the box office for the past month. Actually, most of the team was dressed as the Joker. None looked that good. The car ride to the complex was full of awkward silences, and me looking out the window at the many cornfields that populate this region of Illinois. I hate awkward silences. The car was full of mostly team members, except for me, and one other freshman that lived in the "six-pack".

We arrive to the complex and it’s a beautiful day. There is only sun in the sky, and everyone is excited to start the first game of the day. The team splits up into even teams of people who know what they’re doing, and the new people. Today, I’m just going to sit and watch. While watching the games, I start to notice the teamwork, and comradery it takes to actually be successful at paintball. I never knew there was strategy. This actually makes more sense to me now, the fast people run to the front, the slow in the back, and everyone else along the sides. This matter of strategy intrigued me very much.

The field is an open field that is filled with 40-50 inflatable "shields". Some are in the shape of pyramids, and some are just stand-ups that the players hide behind. The field is draped in a covering of mud, due to the fact that people play year-round, and the grass never has time to recover. So this is why they say bring extra clothes? Everything is making more sense. During the time I spent observing the games, I also got to talk to the players that weren’t on the field, and even some of the team members girlfriends who come along for every trip, just
because they "like paintball". Now that’s devotion. Actually one of the women is the fiancee of the captain, Willie. Who knew?

On my short day spent with the paintball club, I experienced many things. Many, if not all helped to break past thoughts about the sport. I used to think that it was just a "run to a spot, and shoot as much paint as you can" sport. But the strategy that I have learned has helped to make this fast paced game more interesting. I can’t wait to spend more time with these guys, and learn more about the sport of paintball.

**Question:** Josh Hartnett

"You’re gonna shoot what kind of balls out of your Tippmann?"

Throughout my life I’ve been given anything that I wanted if I was willing to do the work for it first. I was always the kid that everyone liked and never the tough guy in high school. The only fights or conflicts that I’ve ever gotten in have been in videogames. So, as anyone could see, I’m kind of a “softy”. Knowing this, it would only make sense for me to do my ethnography project on a sport that involves tough guys, “first-person-shooter” videogame players and people who yearn for the stinging pain that only a paintball whizzing by at 100 mph can give. The guns, the masks and the small pellets of paint flying through the air at random all compose what the sport of paintball is about. Throughout this semester I plan to place myself into this field site to learn a new sport, and kill many stereotypes while doing it.

Through talking to many paintballers, and asking them some random questions about myths they’ve heard I’ve come to find that many of the misconceptions about paintball are not true, but like everything, some of them actually agreed with what I thought. The first question I asked the group was “Do you guys enjoy pain or something, because those things hurt!” The answers I got most of the time was “actually they don’t hurt at all” or “they only hurt when you get shot from point blank range”. When I heard this I thought to myself that these guys had an extremely high tolerance for pain, or they were all just in on the same big lie to get me to try it.
with them. Another misconception about paintball is that they are all “nerdy kids who sit at home all day playing Halo 3”. Again I asked the guys, and most of them said that they did play Halo all the time, but they wouldn’t consider themselves “nerds”. And when I thought about it, neither would I. These were just a group of guys that loved to feel the rush of running through a course, and hiding behind obstacles and shooting at the other team. I started to look at it like it was the “adult laser tag”, and things started to make more sense. Since I was out of questions for the group, I decided to go back home and look up some myths online. The myth that I found to be the most interesting would have to be the one about paintball being “a sport only for spoiled kids who think they’re too good to help anyone, and they make fun of new players”. As with any sport, you’ll always run into kids like this, and you just have to take them with a grain of salt. But the fact that I found interesting was the part about how paintball completely accepts new players, and the motto of many paintball complexes is that “if the person you’re playing with hasn’t had one of the best times of their lives, then you’ve failed as a paintballer. This is the main reason that I wanted to get involved with the paintball club. I wanted to learn the ways of a club that embraces communication, teamwork, perseverance and courage.

Many of the guys in the paintball club were normal guys who are majoring in many different fields, and all enjoy the thrill of competition. I feel like I would fit in with the guys from the paintball club because they are all athletic, enjoy the rush of adrenaline and live for competition. The only part when I felt like I wouldn’t fit in with the club was when they would start talking about the different brands of paint, or even which gun is better for what course. I didn’t let this get to me too much though, because I figured that by the end of the semester, I’d be one of them, and some other kid trying to do an ethnography report won’t have any clue what we’re talking about.

Plan: Pellets of paint flying through the air at random, masked men and women running from bunker to bunker screaming out instructions to the team, metal from the guns blinding
spectators as the sun glares off the barrels, forcing the fans to squint as they attempt to watch the Illini Paintball team in action. The Illini paintballers, wearing their paint stained jerseys of the famous blue and orange that everyone across the nation knows and loves, are an eight "man" team, that all found their love for the extreme sport many years ago. Most of the team is men; men who don’t look like they’ve washed their jerseys since they got them. But in saying that, the lone girl on the team looks the exact same way, if not dirtier. It’s a rough game, paintball, not one for the weak at heart, or the shy. The games last for ten minutes, if that, and are full of a plethora of sounds from the "thud" of the paint hitting the giant inflated shapes that fill the field, to the war cries of the two teams shooting at each other from about 100 feet away. The field is nothing but mud from the days of rain that preceded this perfect fall day. Not a cloud in the sky, but one couldn’t tell that from the way the Illini come out looking after their first game of the day, with all their clothes ruined from sliding around in the muck that the complex is calling a paintball field. The giant inflated shapes are there to hide behind, and shield the teams from just being able to open fire at will. The shapes help to weed out the smart players from the rookies. The shapes are what the Illini paintballers center their entire game plan around; who goes to this bunker, who covers this person, when to move up from the back bunkers to the front.

The games start with every member of the teams touching the back fencing of the field, and when the referees say "go" everyone runs at top speed to their designated spot on the field, while raining paintballs down upon the other team in an attempt to block out the sun. Screaming commands to the troops, the captain runs down the center of the field in an attempt to take control of the field by splitting the other team in two. Everyone on the field, muddy and careless, looks like a character straight out of the video game Halo, in that their masks cover their entire face, and the visors over their eyes make it impossible to see either fear or aggression in any players eyes. Within the first minute of the game, almost half of the players are out. The game is so fast paced, I can’t tell if the paint has hit a player, or just ricocheted off one the inflated monsters and saved a player from the humiliating walk to the sidelines.
After the day full of games, the team retires back to their cars where they change from their paint splattered jerseys back into their "college student" clothes of sweatpants and bar t-shirts. And as the last of the team members piled into the cars, I realized what the one true artifact of a paintball player actually is, the uniform. The uniform, which I’m considering to be the mask and the jersey, is what gives an outsider the true feel of what kind of player the person actually is. If a spectator can’t even tell what number the player is due to the fact that the jersey is so full of mud, one would have to speculate that the player is a gamer, and will do whatever it takes to gain control of the field. He’ll dive, slide and might even just roll around in the mud, just to gain the advantage. These are the guys who often don’t have the greatest shots on the team, but are willing to shoot well over 500 paintballs as long as their team take control of the field. The gamers are the guys who have the mohawks, the bandanas and the crazy designs on their masks to make them look more "badass" to the other team.

With the hardcore members of the team, there have to be the members on the other end of the spectrum. The members who can shoot a can of soda from 50 yards with only ten paintballs in the hopper, the members who stay at the back of the field and act as the snipers who pick off the wanderers who think they are unseen, only to catch a paintball in the mask, and are forced to take the "walk of shame". These are the members of the team that rarely get dirty, and probably don’t need to change their clothes before getting in the car, but do it anyways to be a part of the team. The snipers have masks that look like they’ve just been pulled out of the box, and they wear goggles to protect their eyes instead of the one piece mask that the rest of the team has.

Many artifacts identify a paintballer from the average person. A paintballer is someone who puts his team first, and saves his complaints about his welts for the ride home. Every person on the team has bruises and welts, but the great times had during the day will last as a great memory had by all for quite some time.


This article will be very useful due to the fact that it was written
very recently, therefore it will have useful statistics. Also the article helps to point out that, though a newer extreme sport, paintball’s popularity has been on the rise since 1998, and doesn’t show any signs of slowing down. Throughout the article, the author uses many quotes and stats from some of the most influential people in the game. He talks with one of the organizers of the world’s largest paintball festival, and even a spokesman for the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association. I like this article because I believe that I will be able to use some of the facts, and probably all of the stats recited in this article.


This article helps to shed some light on the fact that paintball and many other of the extreme sports are, in fact, dangerous. The anecdote at the beginning of the article tells of a kid who got shot in the eye and later ended up having to lose his eye due the pain that he was being subjected to. Stories like this are heard for every sport, but since paintball involves guns, the sport seems to take the blunt of the attacks. I believe that paintball is unfairly subjected to this scrutiny, and when played correctly, with the proper equipment, the sport is just as safe as any other. I believe that I will use this article to help with the balance of pro and anti paintball. Since I only talk to people who love paintball, I believe that it will be tough to hear the other side of the story. I like the fact that this article points out cons, but at the very end gives ways for players to remain safe while playing this exciting, and sometimes dangerous sport.


This is an article from one of the most prestigious money magazines in the world, and all throughout the article the writer talks about how profitable Brass Eagle paintball is on the stock market. The article talks about how Brass Eagle "charged in" and made paintball accessible to the masses by marketing their products to the Wal-Marts and K-Marts of the world. With the cheaper guns and paint, the market soon flooded with interest,
and the stocks took off. I believe that I’m going to use this article for the fact that it brings to light the fact that paintball isn’t only for pleasure, but the people behind the scenes have an industry to run.


This is the article that I will be basing most of my research and facts off of. The article starts from when paintball was just starting to gain recognition, all the way until paintball gained its first major tv deal with WGN. Paintball started out as a cult sport, in that only the rich people and spoiled brats are the ones that could play. Once paintball became affordable kids and adults of all ages could play, and play they did. Nearly 6 million players adventured onto the war fields in 1996, and that number has risen ever since. With the World Championships of Paintball drawing over 1500 players and 2000 fans, WGN saw the opportunity, and pounced on it. With paintball gaining popularity, more people want to see the new sport that has their attention every waking minute of their lives; and now they can thanks to the Chicagoland’s superstation. This article helped to shed some light on the early stages of paintball, and how it has evolved through the years.


This is a great article as well. This article is basically the same as the one above, but it takes a group of writers, and puts them into the field of battle. I enjoyed the style of writing, and the way the new-comers thought throughout their whole experience. The article also told the story of young pizza delivery boy, who started playing paintball in high school, and is now the owner of one of the most profitable paintball companies in America. The National Paintball Supply does over $100 million in sales in one year alone, and publishes two of the top nine paintball magazines in the world. I enjoyed the true to life story about the store owner, and all of the success that an entrepreneur like him can have. I am most likely to use
this article over the one above just due to the fact that it goes more in depth with the history, and the traditions that is and are paintball.

**Discuss:** Interview uploaded at bottom of page

**EUI Links:** Annotated Bibliography

http://www.college-paintball.com/

This site is the main website for all things collegiate paintball. It has the rankings of all the teams from across the country, and the final tournament bracket and scores from the 2008 national tournament. The website also has places to register for upcoming tournaments, and forums for players to communicate with other players. This website will be extremely useful to me, due to the fact that it shows all the tournaments that the Fighting Illini have been in throughout the year, and their records and scores of each match.

http://sports.webshots.com/album/563185483XEOOddn

This website has hundreds of pictures from the 2008 national tournament. I think that these could be very useful in my presentation at the end of the semester. There are many pictures of the Illini as they make their way to a fourth place finish. There are also links to other paintball sites on the page.

http://www.illinipaintball.com/index.php

This website is the main website for the Illini paintball team. This is where they place all their information on where to meet for the games, and forums to communicate with each other through. The forum has everything from links that only the team can see to the links that the team answers questions on. This is the website I used to first contact the team, and throughout I have been watching the message boards for anything of interest. Some of the things that are written on the message board though will be of completely no use.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paintball

Wikipedia is one of the best websites for general knowledge, and facts, and that is what I’m going to use it for. There are sections on the history of paintball, the rules and even the equipment that is used in play. I like to use Wikipedia because of the organization, and the ease of information that it gives. The bad thing about Wikipedia though, is that anyone can write on it. I believe that I will be able to see what is true, and what isn’t though.

http://www.vintagerex.com/cgi-bin/index.cgi

This website is dedicated to the preservation of paintball history. I like this site because it has pictures from some of the earliest tournaments, and has records for almost every recorded tournament. I don’t think that I will use this site much though due to the fact that it is very new, and on the home page it even says that it is "a work in progress". The idea of the site is brilliant, but there appears to be too much information to get this site up and running by the end of the project.

http://www.modern-us-history.suite101.com/article.cfm/the_history_of_paintball

This is more of the site that I was looking for the history of the game and the guns. I like to read up on history, and the start of the sport intrigued me. I plan on using this site as a side-story in my final ethnographic piece. It will fit in nicely, and I like the way the site is set up.
http://www.paintballguns.net/paintball.php

This site is very similar to the Wikipedia site. It talks of the history, and most of the different games that can be played. Some of the games are: woodsball, speedball and scenario. The games that the team play are speedball games, so I will focus most of my attention on that section. I also like the piece at the end of the section where it has a "frequently asked questions" section. I used some of these questions in my interview. This site will be very useful in the final piece.

http://wiki.answers.com/Q/Is_paintball_dangerous_in_any_way

I used the Wiki Answers site because there were actually a lot of questions concerning the dangers of paintball. Most of the answers basically centered around people not wearing masks or freezing their paint, and that’s when injuries happen. Most of the team has also said that when people don’t wear their masks, that’s when people get their eyes hit, or their jaws broken. Most of the paintball team has also said that most of their injuries have come from sliding to get behind a bunker than anything related to the paintball itself.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NeOo0tGyTZs

This is a clip from Youtube with highlights from the 2008 national tournament. There are clips from the championship game featuring Illinois State and UC Irvine. The game is very intense, and the announcers get really into it. I would like to use this clip in my final presentation, and it would show how exciting and intense the game is. I really think people would enjoy the clip.
This is the site with all things paintball. It has everything for high school, college and professional paintballers. The site has a forum, and even a pro shop where guns, paint, and equipment can be purchased. The site also has a field locator, and blogs. I also like the picture gallery. I am going to use this site to its full potential, in that it looks like it has everything that I need for gathering information.