

Comm 444

Critical Theories of Sport

M W 10:00-11:50

ANN 210

Office Hours, Mon. 12:00-1:00 or by appt.

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Course Description

This course will focus on select critical theories of sport that examine the historical, social, cultural, and political role sport plays in society and larger culture. How that role is played out in the various media and broadcast platforms will be one of our central concerns. We will analyze contemporary liberal and leftist-based critical theories of sport. We will read, discuss and carefully reflect on the main claims they make and then read and think some more about the critical import of what they have to say.

Required Texts

B. Carrington, I. McDonald. Marxism, Cultural Studies and Sport. New York: Routledge, 2009.

R. Gruneau. Class, Sports, and Social Development. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1999. *

M. LaVaque-Manty. The Playing Fields of Eton: Equality and Excellence in Modern Meritocracy. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009.

B. Rigauer. Sport and Work. New York: Columbia University Press, 1981.

M. Sandel. What Money Can't Buy. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012

D. Shogan. The Making of High-Performance Athletes: Discipline, Diversity, and Ethics. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999.

Adrian Walsh and Richard Giulianotti. Ethics, Money, and Sport. New York: Routledge, 2007.

Gruneau book and essays with an asterisk * next to them are on electronic reserve. To access the reserve log into ARES (the library's electronic reserve site), look up my name under instructor, and then the course number and name for this class.

Recommended Text (Won't have readings drawn from this text, but it's a good background work)

B. Suits. The Grasshopper: Games, Life, and Utopia. Broadview Press. Third Edition, 2014.

Course Objectives

1. Students will acquire a basic understanding of the research methodologies of cultural theory and cultural criticism and learn how to apply them to the analysis of sport and sports media.
2. Students will develop basic competence in critical reasoning skills that are necessary to do cultural criticism in sport.
3. Students will learn how to examine sport in an interdisciplinary way, so that they will be able to see and appreciate how cultural issues shade into social and political ones.

Course Format

The class will be run as a seminar, which means that it will be devoted to critical dialogue based on **reading questions** (questions having to do with clarifying the author's main points) and **discussion questions** (critical questions having to do with issues triggered by the author's arguments) raised by the class readings. A typical class will go as follows. First, each of us will take a turn and discuss what we have learned from the readings for that day, and then pose questions based on the readings. The first part of class will be devoted to reading questions, in which any questions you have regarding the main arguments raised by the author will be discussed. The second part of class will be devoted to discussion questions, in which critical issues raised by the readings will be discussed. The final 15 minutes or so of class, I will summarize the discussion to that point and introduce the next set of readings.

Course Requirements

1. Class Participation. Since the course will not be based on formal lectures but class discussion, it is crucial that you come to class fully prepared, which means, of course, having read the assignments before class in sufficient depth to be prepared to discuss them in class. Hence, it will not be possible to earn an A in this course unless you are fully engaged in the class discussions. In order to encourage such participation, you will

be required to turn in a minimum of four questions (two reading and two critical discussion questions) for the readings assigned for each class (**typed, double-spaced**). This requirement will be worth 25 percent of the final grade.

2. Special Assignment Critical Reaction Paper. The week of Sept. 19 and 21, I'll be away at an international conference. Your assignment that week will be to review the Documentary "League of Denial: The NFL's Concussion Crisis," and write a critical reaction to the video examining the political response of the NFL to this public crisis. It should be two typed pages long (double-spaced), and turned in our next Monday class, Sept. 26. Be prepared to discuss your critical response in class. We will reserve around 50 minutes of class that day for discussion. The assignment will be worth 5 percent of the final grade.

3. Two short critical essays. The essays will focus on critical issues provoked by the class readings and discussions. They must touch on the various critical theories we consider in class and should run between 5-7 pages (these limits will be strictly enforced). As noted, these are to be critically based papers, and we will discuss in detail how you go about writing such papers. Each essay will be worth 15 percent of the final grade (30 percent in total). The due dates for the essays are Oct. 12th and Dec. 14th. I will not accept late papers, so these dates are firm ones.

4. Four Short Quizzes that will cover the readings we discuss in class. Each quiz covers only the material we've read and discussed for the dates listed in the course plan. The quizzes will be given promptly at the beginning of class, and will consist of two or three essay questions. The quizzes will be given on Sept. 26, Oct. 17, Nov. 7, and Nov. 30. You will have 25 minutes from the start of class to complete these questions. No extra time will be given to latecomers. Hence, it behooves you to come to class on time. Each quiz will be worth 10 percent of your final grade, which means all four quizzes will be cumulatively worth 40 percent of your final grade.

5. You are allowed two unexcused class absences. Of course, if you have a good reason to miss class, I will count it as an excused absence, but only if you have a justifiable reason for missing class and inform me in advance that you will be missing class. If you have more than two unexcused absences your final grade will be lowered accordingly (e.g. , a B+ to B).

6. All requirements must be completed in order to pass the class.

Grading Scale

A	94-100%	C	74-76%
A-	90-93%	C-	70-73%
B+	87-89%	D+	67-69%
B	84-86%	D	64-66%
B-	80-83%	E	63% and below
C+	77-79%		

Course Plan

August	22	Introduction
	24	Walzer, "The Practice of Social Criticism." *
	29	Suits, "The Elements of Sport." *
	31	Simon, "Internalism and Internal Values in Sport." *
Sept.	5	Labor Day, Holiday, No Class
	7	Russell, "Broad Internalism and the Moral Foundations of Sport." *
	12	Rigauer, Sport and Work, Chaps, 1-12
	14	Rigauer, Sport and Work, Chaps. 13-22, Conclusion, Afterword
	19-21	League of Denial: The NFL's Concussion Crisis, Special Assignment
	26	Gruneau, Class, Sports, and Social Development, Intro., Chap. 1 1st Quiz, NFL Critical Reaction Paper Due
	28	Gruneau, Class, Sports, and Social Development, Chap. 2
Oct.	3	Gruneau, Class, Sports, and Social Development, Chap. 4, Postscript
Oct.	5	Shogan, High-Performance Athletes, Preface, Chaps. 1, 2, 3(stop at p. 50), 4, 5
	10	Shogan, High-Performance Athletes, Chaps. 3 (start on p. 50), 4, 5
	12	Sandel, What Money Can't Buy, Introduction, Chap. 3 First Paper Due
	17	Sandel, What Money Can't Buy, Chap. 5 2nd Quiz
	19	Walsh, Sporting Mammon, Chaps. 1, 2
	24	Walsh, Sporting Mammon, Chaps. 3,4
	26	Walsh, Sporting Mammon, Chaps. 5,6,7
	31	B. Carrington, I. McDonald, Marxism, Cultural Studies and Sport: Mapping the Field; R. Beamish, Marxism, Alienation and Coubertin's Olympic Project.
Nov.	2	B. Carrington, Sport Without Final Guarantees: Cultural Studies/Marxism Sport.
	7	A. Bairner, Re-appropriating Gramsci: Marxism, Hegemony and Sport 3rd Quiz
	9	G. Whannel, Between Culture and Economy: Understanding the Politics

		Media Sport.
14		Manty, The Playing Fields, Preface, Chap. 1, Chap. 2 (stop at p. 59)
16		Manty, The Playing Fields, Chaps. 2 (start on p. 59), 3
21		Manty, The Playing Fields, Chaps. 4, 5
23		Thanksgiving holiday
28		Manty, The Playing Fields, Chap. 6, Conclusion
30		Summary, Conclusions 4th Quiz
Dec. 14		Final Papers Due (noon, no exceptions). I will accept final papers before that date as well.

Statement for Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

Statement on Academic Integrity

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. *Scampus*, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/>. Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>.