

COMM 499, Critical Theories of Sport

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 mediated communication in which the meaning of sport in our culture is expressed will be our central concern. We will thus critically examine sport both as it is actually played on the field and as it is interpreted and reconstructed across various broadcast media platforms. In this regard, we will analyze contemporary liberal and leftist-based critical theories of sport, which draw their theoretical inspiration from liberal theorists such as Kant and Darwell, critical theories of sport by Rigauer and company, which reflect the various influences of Adorno, Foucault, Gramsci, and Habermas, and utopian theories of sport developed by Suits, which builds in part on Moore's classic work on utopia. 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.

Texts

T. Adorno. The Culture Industry. New York: Routledge, 1991.

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

H. Dreyfus, S. Kelly. All Things Shining. New York: Free Press, 2011.

A. Guttmann. From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sport. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998.

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.

Bernard Suits. The Grasshopper: Games, Life and Utopia. Broadview Press, 2005.

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.

P. Trifonas. Umberto Eco and Football. Totem Books, 2001.

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 Requirements

1. Class Participation. Since the course will emphasize vigorous 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 critically in class. This is especially important since we will break down into smaller groups from time to time to discuss issues related to the class readings. Hence, it will not be possible to earn an A in this course unless you are fully engaged in the class discussions. To encourage everyone to keep on top of the assigned readings, I may occasionally give pop quizzes, especially if I sense that discussions are lagging because folks are not doing the required reading, which will count as part of your overall class participation grade. This requirement will be worth 25 percent of the final grade.
2. Three 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 6-8 pages. 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 (45 percent in total).
3. An extended critical essay that further develops one or more of the arguments raised in one of the 3 shorter critical essays. The length of the paper should be 15-18 pages, and follow a regular format. These papers will be due on the day scheduled for the final exam, and students will be required to provide a brief oral summary of their main arguments to the class and respond to their critical questions during the time allotted for the final. This requirement will be worth 30 percent of the final grade.

4. 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

Weeks 1-2	Introduction, Adorno, Culture Industry and Sport, Chaps. 2, 3, 4; Chaps. 5, 6, 7, 8.
Week 3, 4	Rigauer, Sport and Work. Chaps. 1-5; Chaps. 6-10
Week 5, 6	Gruneau, Class, Sports and Social Development: A Gramscian Take on Sport, Chaps. 1-3; 4-6.
Week 7,8	Walsh, Sport and the Logic of the Market: Adam Smith vs. Marx, Chaps. 1-3; 4-6
Week 9	Shogan and Trifanos, Foucault and Eco on Sport. Shogan, Chaps. 1-3, Trifanos, entire book.
Weeks 10	Dreyfus and Kelly, Sport, Contemporary Nihilism, and Modern Secularism. Chaps. 1-5.
Week 11	Guttmann, From Ritual to Record, A Classical Liberal Theory of Sport. Chaps. 1-3.
Weeks 12-13	LaVaquer-Manty, Sport, Doping, and the Tension Between Equality and Excellence. Chaps. 1-3; 4-5.
Weeks 14, 15	Suits, Sport and Utopia: Utopian Tropes and their Critical Import; Chaps. 1-7; 8-13
Final Exam	Oral presentations of students' final papers (see course requirement 3 above)

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/>.