

COMM 387
Sports and Social Change
Course Syllabus
MW 12:00-1:50
Fall, 2015

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Course Objectives: Sports and athletes have often been agents of social change, many times challenging norms and assumptions concerning gender, race, sexuality, and fairness. Drawing on theories of rhetoric and social movements studies and critical approaches to discourse, this class critically assesses the use of sports and sporting events as a public stage to perform dramas of social change that have led to larger movement activities that impacted culture. Students will apply critical and rhetorical theories to mediated sports events to understand their impact and gain perspectives on how sports may be exploited to enact social change. **Specific Student Outcomes Include:** 1.) Become conversant in the language of diversity and social change in the sports world; 2.) Become conversant in the theories of social change developed in the fields of communication and sociology; 3.) Demonstrate proficiency in critically examining issues of social change in sports.

Required Reading:

Conyers, James L. (ed.) *Race in American Sports Essays*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland &Co. 2014.

Course Reader-Available at the Bookstore.

Assignments and Grade Breakdown:

Participation-----	10
Social Change Paper-----	15

Critical Analysis Paper-----	30
Midterm-----	20
Final Exam-----	<u>25</u>
Total Points-----	100

Readings and Lectures: This class demonstrates the continuing challenge of sports studies. Sports studies is perhaps the most interdisciplinary study in academe. By the same token, it is also a very young subject. Your course textbook illustrates this. It offers a selection of essays on issues of sports and social change from a wide variety of academic perspectives. We will supplement that with readings and discussion of many of the key theories in our field that focus on the rhetoric of social change. At times, we will use illustrations from your readings to discuss these concepts. At other times, we will use illustrations from my research or research conducted at USC to examine these issues. Hence, this class won't simply be a regurgitation of textbook outline. It will involve discussion that will (at times) run far afield from the book edited by Conyers---but, will still focus on the same issues and events.

Paper Assignments: Students will be assigned one five-page and one twelve-page term paper critically examining the communication strategies of a particular athlete, sports organization or media source in creating social change through sports or sports-based media. Students will draw on rhetorical and critical theories discussed in class to create a critical analysis of the activities sports figures or organizations engaged in to help foment social change.

Paper Grades: All written work is to be typed following the guidelines for research paper writing found in either the MLA or APA handbook. Papers will be graded on quality of organization, clarity and depth of analysis, and writing competence. Each error in spelling or grammar will result in a reduction in your paper grade. Papers with an excessive number of errors in grammar, spelling or MLA usage (fifteen or more) will be returned to the author for a rewrite. Failure to rewrite the paper will result in a zero for that assignment. Rewritten papers will be docked one letter grade for having been rewritten.

Should you have questions or concerns regarding the grade you got on a paper, the school identifies the appropriate procedure as follows. Take a forty-eight hour "cooling off" period as you review the comments on your paper. If you still have questions or concerns, contact the teaching assistant who graded your paper to set up an appointment to review the paper. Should a question or dispute remain after discussing the grade with the T.A. you should contact your professor who will discuss any potential next steps with you.

Participation and Absence Policy: Attendance in class cannot be counted as participation. Students will receive participation grades based on the quality and quantity of their participation in class throughout the semester. You will be allowed two unexcused absences during the semester. **Each** absence beyond three will result in an automatic 2% deduction from your final class grade. Also, remember that, when you are absent, you cannot participate in class. So, excessive absences will also impact your participation grade. Being tardy or leaving class early will be counted as half an absence. Also, please turn off cell phones while in class. Leaving class to answer a cell phone will be counted as an absence.

Technology: Note that computer laptops are not allowed during the discussion and lecture sessions of class. It is more important to participate than to take detailed notes and you will have the notes you need clearly outlined for you during class. So, handwritten notes will suffice. After each discussion and lecture session, you may want to take some time to reflect on the learning experience and type whatever notes may seem useful. However, all computers and tablets are to be turned off and stored during lectures. All cellphones and mp3 players must also be turned off and kept off throughout class. Receiving or sending communication or entertainment during class disrupts the learning environment and is rude to those around you.

Guest Speakers: Guest speakers take time out of their schedules to come speak with you on important topics related to this class. Many of these people are busy executives whose time is very valuable. They cannot be expected to take time to speak if students are online “facebooking” or text messaging on cell phones while they speak. Any time we have a guest speaker, you are also expected to turn off your computers and cell phones and focus on the speaker. Students found on their computers during guest speaker sessions will be docked one point off their participation grade (one percent off their total class grade). As we may have several guest speakers, this can add up fast.

Sports and Social Change Program: You may have the opportunity to attend several special sessions with guest speakers discussing key issues of sports and social change. I will notify you of these opportunities. Any guest speakers or class events will generate questions for exams.

Note: All papers for COMM 387 must be turned in to turnitin.com. Instructions on submission will follow from the T.A. There are no exceptions to this policy.

Late Work: All late papers will be docked one letter grade for each class period they are late. Any time after the **start** of the class in which the papers are due will be considered late.

Support Systems

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute*

<http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. *The Office of Disability Services and Programs* http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu/> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

Academic Conduct

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage sarc@usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

Tentative Class Schedule and Due Dates

Week One
8/24-8/26

Introduction, Critical and Theoretical Approaches

We will introduce the subject and identify some of the theories of rhetoric, public discourse, and social change that will ground our discussion throughout the semester.

Readings: Handout on Public Opinion.

Weeks Two and Three
8/31-9/9

Approaches toward Media and Propaganda

We will discuss two of the classic studies in public opinion, media and celebrity, and culture. We will focus on how celebrity in sport can (and has been) used to create a popular platform for expressions of social change.

Readings: Conyers, (pp. 21-34), Course Reader- Boorstin (pp. 7-76).

Weeks Four and Five
9/14-9/23
Approaches toward Social Movements

We will discuss the study of social movements and examine the tools available for understanding the use of athletes and celebrity to press for social change.

Readings: Conyers (pp. 71-113), Course Reader-Griffin (pp. 10-14), Burgess (pp. 61-73).

Week Six and Seven
9/28-10/7
Burkean Approaches

We will examine the concepts Kenneth Burke brought to our field that help us analyze social discourse, motivation, and the rhetoric of social change.

Readings: Conyers (pp. 224-253), Course Reader- Burke (pp. 3-24 and “Literature as Equipment for Living”).

Midterm Exam October 7.

Weeks Eight and Nine
10/12-10/21
Critical Approaches

We will discuss the rise of critical approaches to public discourse as means for examining sports and social change.

Readings: Conyers (pp. 254-266), Course Reader-Barthes (pp. 109-159).

Writing Assignment 1 Due October 14.

Week Ten
10/26-10/28
Questions of Ethics and Values

We will discuss how values-based discourse impacts the discussion of sports and social change.

Readings: Conyers (pp. 21-34), Course Reader-Weaver (pp. 201-226).

Weeks Eleven and Twelve

11/2-11/11

The Women's Movement and Sports: Issues, Changes, and Challenges

From horse races as a stage for protest to the 2015 Women's World Cup, discussions of gender and sports have driven much of the conversation on social change. We will explore the use of sports as a means to express these perspectives.

Readings: Conyers (pp. 5-20, 35-58, 71-83, 189-203). Handout on the *Feminine Mystique*.

Weeks Thirteen and Fourteen

11/16-11/25

Baseball and Race: A Case Study

We will discuss the slow evolution of social change through an examination of baseball history. We will discuss the Negro Leagues, Jackie Robinson, Frank Robinson, and the African-American Experience in Major League Baseball research project.

Week Fifteen

11/30-12/2

Conclusions on Sport and Transformative Rhetoric

We will finish the semester by drawing some conclusions concerning how sports and sports media can create a rhetorical discourse that builds a sense of cultural transformation and transcendence.

Writing Assignment 2 Due December 2.

Final Exam: December 11, 11-1.

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Writing Assignment #1
Defining Social Change
5-7 pages

Leland Griffin gave us much of the language we use to describe the work of social movements in seeking social change. Griffin's language is largely descriptive, identifying phases of a movement from inception to crisis to consummation.

You are to choose an attempt by some individual or group of individuals to create social change **in the last five years (your analysis must focus on a movement that was active in the last five years---failure to follow this rule will lead to an automatic zero on this assignment and the need to rewrite at the loss of one letter grade---there are no exceptions to this policy)**. The rhetoricians seeking change must have used sports, athletes, or sports organizations to facilitate that change. You are to write a brief analysis of their rhetorical activity, tracing their work from inception (when their rhetorical attempts/arguments/protests first gain public attention) to their exploitation of sports or athletes to push for social change to their eventual success or failure in creating change.

You are to identify the rhetorical actions they used (speeches, commercials, promotional events at sports venues or at sporting events, threats to bomb sporting events). You are to note whether these actions involved rhetoric, coercion or force. And you are to assess the success or failure of these actions in gaining public notice and creating change.

This paper will be a relatively brief historical analysis. Given that you are focusing on a concerted attempt to create change, the activists you examine will likely have produced a significant volume of content (numerous protests, papers, events, etc.). So, you will likely have to focus on some of the more significant or effective campaigns in order to develop this analysis.

Given the limited nature of this analysis, you will only need to cite seven sources for the paper. Be certain you choose the best sources available as you will be assessed on the quality of your sources as well as the effectiveness of your argument.

Papers will be graded on clarity and insightfulness of analysis, quality and depth of research, ability to synthesize material to create a cogent critical analysis, and writing quality. C papers will offer a basic historical review. B and A papers will closely examine the symbols used and explore how those symbols were meant to convince and change public opinion. All papers must employ MLA or APA writing guidelines. Each error in spelling or grammar and each failure to properly employ MLA or APA guidelines will result in a reduction in your grade. Over fifteen mistakes will be justification for returning your paper for a rewrite. Failure to rewrite will result in a zero for the assignment. All rewritten papers will be counted as one class period late. Good luck and bring me any questions.

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Writing Assignment #2
Creating Social Change
12-15 pages

Over the past half-century, scholars and theorists have offered a number of sophisticated approaches to the rhetoric of social change. For this paper, you are to employ the concepts of Kenneth Burke, in particular, his notion of the guilt-purification cycle for assessing the rhetorical strategies of a sports-based movement engaged in social change.

You are to write a twelve page critical analysis of the rhetorical strategies employed by an individual or group who sought (and/or seek) social change through the mediated communication of sports. As we have said numerous times in class, do remember that a single act (e.g. Carlos and Smith holding up the Black Power sign at the 1968 Olympics) is not a movement but a single act within a larger set of activities (in their case, activities largely led by Dr. Harry Edwards). You need to examine a set of strategies employed by a seeker or seekers of social change, not one famous act.

For your first paper, you have already chosen and researched an activist or an activist group. You may choose to write again on this activist or may choose a different movement.

As we have discussed in class, activists draw on the narrative power of sports and the cultural power of celebrity (among other rhetorical tools) to seek social change. You are to examine the narrative strategies employed by your subject, the symbolic acts they employ, the reconstruction of a sports narrative (or narratives) they create, the use of celebrity as social symbol, in order to achieve change.

In particular, you are to draw on Burke's guilt-purification cycle as a focus for your analysis. As we've noted Burke saw the guilt-purification cycle as a perpetual rhetorical form, one that appears over and over again as the rhetorical scheme of effective public discourse and human motivation.

Burke argued that we replicate the same fundamental drama in all our social discourse. This drama creates/identifies social pollution, a source for that pollution, a means for eliminating that pollution by symbolically killing (doing away with) the source of pollution, and creates a vision of a transcendent order that can arise from the purification of the old order. You are to analyze the rhetorical strategies employed by the activists you study, identifying the order the activists portray as polluted, the specific pollution they identify in the order, the guilty party they would have us symbolically kill, and the means of expiation (the symbolic killing) they propose. You should then identify the transcendent order they envision as arising out of this sacrifice.

To do this, you will have to make a deep study of their rhetorical strategies and their actions. You will find this pollution/purification drama recreated throughout their work. So you should be able to use any number of illustrations to demonstrate the dramatic cycle the movement creates.

This is a challenging analysis. But, it should prove enlightening as you pursue it. If you have any questions regarding your analysis or your subject, please bring them to me or to your Teaching Assistant. We will be happy to discuss them in detail with you and (hopefully) help you keep on the road to success.

Your paper should have a minimum of ten cited sources and a bare minimum of twelve pages. Fully examine the symbolic actions taken and draw conclusions regarding what this might tell us about successful (or unsuccessful) uses of sports as a stage for creating dramas of social change.

Papers will be graded on clarity and insightfulness of analysis, quality and depth of research, ability to synthesize material to create a cogent critical analysis, and writing quality. C papers will offer a basic historical review. B and A papers will closely examine the symbols used and explore how those symbols were meant to convince and change public opinion. All papers must employ MLA or APA writing guidelines. Each error in spelling or grammar and each failure to properly employ MLA or APA guidelines will result in a reduction in your grade. Over fifteen mistakes will be justification for returning your paper for a rewrite. Failure to rewrite will result in a zero for the assignment. All rewritten papers will be counted as one class period late. Good luck and bring me any questions.