

Communication 387: Sports and Social Change

Spring 2017
T/Th 12:30 - 1:50 PM
ASC 231

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Course Description:

Sports and sports cultures, despite claims to the contrary, have a long history of connectedness to social issues and social change: sometimes as the challenger to static and/or biased cultural norms and assumptions and sometimes as the promoter. Through the use of cultural studies and sociological inquiry, and with a strong focus on both historical events and theoretical engagements, this class critically assesses the use of sports, sporting events, and sports culture as a public forum to discuss issues such as class, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality to name a few.

Students will apply critical and cultural theories to sports events and sports culture in general in order to understand their impact and gain perspective as to how sports may be utilized to engage with social issues and social change. We will approach the idea of “social change” in a broad sense to think about social activism, social issues, and social relationships. Within each unit we will think about theoretical, historical, contemporary, and mediated approaches.

Ultimately, students should leave this class with a better understanding of the theoretical underpinnings and history of sports studies as it relates to social issues, the diversity of approaches within cultural and sociological sports studies research, and the various ways that sports culture has shifted based on its relation to prominent social issues.

Specific Student Outcomes Include:

1. Become conversant in the language(s) of diversity and social change in the sports world.
2. Become conversant in theories of social inquiry developed in the fields of cultural studies, communication, and sociology & their subsequent application to the field of sports studies.
3. Become aware of the interconnectedness of sports culture to other, seemingly disparate, arenas of cultural, social, political, and economic change.

4. Demonstrate proficiency in critically examining social issues and social change within sports culture.
5. Become aware of the historical precedent for discussions of sports and social change.

Required Texts

1. *The Sport and Society Reader*. Edited by David Karen and Robert E. Washington. Routledge 2010
2. *What's My Name, Fool?: Sports and Resistance in the United States*. Dave Zirin

All additional readings will be posted to Blackboard.

COURSE RESPONSIBILITIES

Course Requirements:

Class participation (10%):

Students are expected to come to class on time and prepared to discuss the assigned readings each week. This includes being able to respond to questions about the assigned readings and to offer opinions and insight into the topics addressed. Your final grade will reflect the degree to which you fulfill these requirements throughout the semester.

Attendance in lecture is important: there is significant material covered in lecture that is not in the reading which means you cannot pass the course if you do not attend most of the lectures. In addition, there will be frequent screenings in lecture for which you will be responsible.

Students who miss more than **four (4) classes** will have their grades reduced and risk failing the course. There is no distinction between excused and/or unexcused absences (except in cases of severe illness, religious holidays or university sanctioned activities) – so please be judicious in how you manage this requirement. *Keep in mind that you are responsible for the material covered during classes you miss (so make sure to get notes from a classmate and/or come to office hours).*

Introduction Blog Post (5%)

This first assignment will ask you to think about your own relationship to sports and social change. The assignment will be handed out in class and posted to blackboard.

Sports, Culture, and Media Pen Pals (SCaMPP) 6%:

In this project, you will be assigned to a small group of peers consisting of students from a sports media course at the University of Wisconsin. More details of this assignment will be given in a separate prompt, but very broadly, you will be asked to correspond with each other about topics related to sports, sports culture, and sports

media, and your job will be to apply your course skills/content to the conversation while interacting with your fellow group members. You must post 4 emails (not including an introductory email) throughout the semester and the posts must be spaced evenly across the semester.

Media and Theory Papers (24%):

Students will be asked to produce 4 concise response papers (approximately 1-2 pages) over the course of the semester. Papers will be graded based on the level of effort, clarity, and depth of engagement with course subject matter. All posts should be checked for grammar and spelling, demonstrate a clear writing plan and structure, focus on specific and pertinent arguments, and use a consistent style manual with proper citation practices.

These papers are designed to have you think theoretically about the issues discussed in class; while they call on you to utilize readings, they are not intended to be summaries of arguments presented in the course, but rather are an opportunity for you to think critically and academically and to combine theory and practice.

Each of the media response posts asks students to make a connection with either a theoretical concept or historical moment related to sports and social change and a contemporary moment as located in a media artifact.

Papers are due in accordance with their due date and there are **significant** penalties for late papers. If you have an emergency that impacts your ability to turn your paper in on time, you need to contact your TA or Instructor **before** the post is due.

For the response posts you should include **TWO Components (reading and current event):**

1. Reading: You should comment on, analyze, or offer a balanced critique of at least **one academic** reading for that section. Here, you must demonstrate that you have done the reading and thought about it. This should NOT be a summary but should bring new insight to the material. You may choose to write on one assigned reading or more.
2. Current Event: You should describe and analyze a current sports event and connect it to that reading(s) you have chosen to analyze. Each current event should be located in a piece of media. For example, if you were to discuss a political protest made by an athlete you may either unpack the act itself *or* the way in which the act is reported on, discussed, etc. You have freedom in how you would like to approach this aspect of the assignment so feel free to comment on whatever you find interesting, engaging, hopeful, puzzling, disturbing, etc. But make sure to connect it to the theoretical and/or methodological part of your post. **Additionally, the current event you choose should NOT be one we have discussed in class and should have occurred in the last calendar year.**

Midterm (25%):

The midterm exam will take place during class. The midterm will test students on definitions of key concepts and connections between different concepts. The exam will include short definitions and essays.

Final Exam (30%):

The final exam will require you to demonstrate an understanding of the readings and topics covered throughout the semester (including class discussions), and to synthesize ideas from across the course. Keeping up with the readings (and taking notes on them) throughout the semester will be *very* beneficial to you on this exam. The final exam will be based around short answers and essays.

Students who wish to pursue a career in research or another profession that necessitates focused study and/or a strong and significant writing sample may write a research paper in lieu of the final exam. This undertaking should not be taken lightly and should be discussed with the instructor within the first month of class. Students who wish to pursue this option will have a modified “make the case” paper in which they set out the theoretical and methodological thrust of their research project in more detail.

Class Discussion:

In order to ensure that our discussions are both helpful and enjoyable for all involved there are a few expectations to keep in mind:

1. Please come to class on time and prepared to participate. While it is assumed that you will do all the readings assigned each week, it will be most helpful for you to approach the material as an engaged reader. Even though this is a lecture there will be opportunities for student’s to answer questions and offer insights that will contribute to their participation grade. I highly encourage everyone to raise their hands when given the opportunity (whether it be to ask a question or to offer up an answer).
2. Not only does this class ask you to grapple with a lot of nuanced cultural theory, but it also expects you to engage with issues of race, sexuality, gender, ability, and class (to name a few). These can often times be polarizing and uncomfortable subject matters. While you should always feel free to express yourself and your opinions, they should be communicated in an articulate and non-hostile manner. We should interrogate ideas *not* individuals. Please remember to show respect and encouragement towards your fellow classmates, even when you disagree.
3. I expect you to devote your attention to the course material for the full class period. This expectation should be taken very seriously. Violating this policy will result in a decreased participation grade. Furthermore:

- **Name Plates:** In order to help facilitate the learning of names please bring a name plate to each class.
- **Cellphone Policy:** All cellphones must be turned to vibrate or silent during class meetings and you should not be checking your phone during class.
- **Laptop Policy:** Personal computers and wireless Internet are a key part of today's technological culture, but they can also distract you from the class discussion and dampen participation. Recent studies suggest that students who bring laptops to class perform worse (on average) than their non-laptop using peers, and are much less likely to pay attention in class. Laptops can also be a distraction for other [students](#).
 - Therefore, students are **not** encouraged to use laptops to take notes during class. If you feel that your learning will be hampered by not having access to your laptop for note taking or other legitimate purposes, please speak to the instructor. Otherwise, keep your laptop turned off and stowed away during class unless otherwise instructed.
 - **If you decide to use a personal computer for note taking you are required to email your notes to the instructor and the TA immediately after class. Failure to do so will result in an absence.** Remember, this class is a chance to further your understanding of the material, develop your critical reasoning skills, and increase your knowledge about theories of sports & social change – therefore I am not interested in your ability to google information.
- If at any time during the semester you are struggling with the material or the course load ***please seek assistance from either your TA or the instructor***. It's a great idea to be proactive and come to office hours.
- **On a personal note:** I want this to be a positive experience and will do my best to help in any way possible; however, this can only be accomplished if you come and speak with me before things get overwhelming. If you wait too long to seek out help it will be much more difficult, if not impossible, for me to help. I can't stress this enough – your instructor and TA are here to help you. Seek us out, ask us questions – it's not only our job, but we actually enjoy talking

Grading:

It should go without stating that you are responsible for the material covered in class and in assigned readings. Broadly, you will be evaluated on your engagement level with the class materials, as demonstrated in your written work and class participation, your capacity to explain your ideas and analysis in both articulate and well-written forms, and your ability to creatively explore the theories, methodologies and ideas presented during the semester. All of your work will be graded on how well it demonstrates an understanding of the theories and methodologies of the class and how well it articulates and structures its argument. Further requirements and expectations will be distributed with each assignment; however, it is up to you to make sure you are not confused about any of these parameters.

The final course grade will be based on the following distribution:

Class participation	10%
Intro Post	5%
SCaMPP Assignment	6%
Response Posts	24%
Midterm	25%
Final Exam	30%

You must complete ALL of these assignments in order to pass the class. **Failure to complete ONE OR MORE of them will result in an F in the class.**

Course Grading Policy:

Grades will be assigned as follows:

A	outstanding, thoughtful and enthusiastic work
B+/B	above average work, demonstrating good insight
B-/C+/C	needs improvement on ideas, argument and follow-through
C- and below	fulfilling the bare minimum and showing little understanding of the material

Each assignment will be worth 100 points and will be converted to a percentage score depending upon the weight assigned to each. Your percentage scores on the assignments will be totaled and translated to a letter grade per the scale shown below:

A	= 100-93	C	= 76-73
A-	= 92-90	C-	= 72-70
B+	= 89-87	D+	= 69-67
B	= 86-83	D	= 66-63
B-	= 82-80	D-	= 62-60
C+	= 79-77	F	= 59-0

If you have concerns regarding a grade on a given assignment, you must appeal it to your TA in writing, stating the reasons why you feel the grade is inaccurate, within one week of receiving the graded assignment. However, we ask that you wait 24 hours before appealing any grade. No late appeals will be accepted for review.

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. Website and contact information for DSP:

http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html, (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) ability@usc.edu.

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, (www.usc.edu/scampus or <http://scampus.usc.edu>) contains the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00), while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A.

Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies.

Key Due Dates:

1. Introduction Post – Due 1/24
2. Media and Theory Paper #1 – Class and Sports – Due 2/7
3. Media and Theory Paper #2 – Race, Sports, and Activism – Due 2/23
4. Midterm – 3/2
5. Media and Theory Paper #3 – Masculinity, Gender, and Sports – Due 4/4
6. Media and Theory Paper #4 – Sexuality and Sports – Due 4/18
7. SCaMPP Assignment – Due 4/26
8. Final Exam – Due 5/9

Course Schedule

Please note that this course schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor

Week 1

Tuesday, 1/10: Introduction to the Course

Thursday, 1/12: Why Study Sports?

- Dave Zirin: Introduction: “Sports: an offer we can’t refuse” - **WMNF**
- Jarvie: “Sport, Social Change, and the Public Intellectual” - **BB**

Week 2:

Tuesday, 1/17: Sports, Cultural Studies and The Benefits of Critical Thinking

- Hargreaves and McDonald - “Cultural Studies and the Sociology of Sport” - **BB**
- Defining Critical Thinking –
 - <http://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/defining-critical-thinking/766>
 - <http://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/critical-thinking-the-art-of-close-reading-part-three/511>

Thursday, 1/19: Why Study Sports? - revisited

- Donnelly – “Sport as a Site for “Popular” Resistance – **BB**
- Eligon, John & Cacciola, Scott. “As Colin Kaepernick’s Gesture Spreads, a Spirit Long Dormant Is Revived.”

Week 3:

Tuesday, 1/24: Sports and Social Class

- Loïc Wacquant – “Body and Soul: The boys who beat the street” – **SSR**
- ❖ **Introduction Paper Due**

Thursday, 1/26: Sports and Social Class

- Pierre Bourdieu: “Distinction: A social critique of the judgment of taste” - **SSR**
- Syed – Higher, Faster, Yes. More Meritocratic? No” - **SSR**

Week 4:

Tuesday, 1/31: Sports and Social Class continued

- Mark Dyreson - The Emergence of Consumer Culture and the Transformation of Physical Culture: American Sport in the 1920s - **BB**

Thursday, 2/2:

- José Sergio Leite Lopes: “Class, Ethnicity, and color in the making of Brazilian football” – **SSR**

Week 5: Sports and Race

Tuesday, 2/7:

- Douglas Hartmann: “Sport as Contested Terrain” - **SSR**
- Selections from C.L.R James’s “Beyond the Boundary”
- ❖ **Paper #1 Due – Class & Sports (Academic Readings from 1/26-2/2)**

Thursday, 2/9: Guest Lecture – Prof. Chris Bolsmann, Cal State University – Northridge

- Dave Zirin: Chapter 1 and 2: “It All Starts with Lester Rodney” and “Jackie Robinson and the Politics of Stealing Home” - **WMNF**

Week 6: Sports and Race continued

Tuesday, 2/14:

- Gail Bederman: “Manliness and Civilization” - **SSR**

Thursday, 2/16: Guest Lecture – Courtney Cox - Doctoral Student, USC Annenberg

- Zirin: Chapter 3 and 4 – **WMNF**
- Modiano, Charles. “The NFL, Activism, and #BlackLivesMatter.” In *Football, Culture, and Power*. - **BB**

Week 7: Unpacking Fan and Athlete Activism

Tuesday, 2/21: Athlete Activism

- Sanderson, et. al. “When Athlete Activism Clashes With Group Values: Social Identity Threat Management via Social Media” - **BB**
- Adam Epstein, Adam & Kisska-Schulze, Kathryn. “Northwestern University, The University of Missouri, and the “Student-Athlete”: Mobilization Efforts and the Future.” – **BB**
- Gill Jr., Emmett L. “Hands up, don’t shoot” or shut up and play ball? Fan-generated media views of the Ferguson Five.” – **BB**

Thursday, 2/23: Fan Activism – Guest Lecture. Prof. Jason Lopez, University of Wisconsin

- Lopez and Lopez “Activating Oppositional Fandoms.”
- ❖ **Paper #2 Due – Sports, Race, & Activism (Academic Readings from 2/7-2/23)**

Week 8:

Tuesday, 2/28: Midterm Exam Review – Come to Class Prepared with Questions

Thursday, 3/2: **Midterm Exam**

Week 9: Sports and Masculinity

Tuesday, 3/7:

- R.W. Connell: “Masculinities” - **SSR**

Thursday, 3/9:

- Michael A. Messner: “Barbie Girls versus Sea Monsters: children constructing gender” - **SSR**

SPRING BREAK (3/13-3/17)

Week 10:

Tuesday, 3/21: Sports and Gender

- Hargreaves – “Olympic Women: A Struggle for Recognition.” From *Women and Sports in the United States*. Edited by O’Reilly and Cahn – **BB**

Thursday, 3/23:

- Readings TBD

Week 11:

Tuesday, 3/28: Sports and Gender Continued

- Cooky, et. al. “It’s Dude Time.” – **BB**
- Leslie Heywood and Shari Dworkin: “Chapter 2: Sport as the Stealth Feminism of the Third Wave” from *Built to Win* - **BB**

Thursday, 3/30:

- Bruce, Toni. “Reflections on Communication and Sport.” – **BB**

Week 12: Sports and Sexuality

Tuesday, 4/4:

- Susan Cahn: “From the ‘Muscle Moll’ to the ‘butch’ ballplayer: mannishness, lesbianism, and homophobia in US women’s sport” – **SSR**
- ❖ **Paper #3 Due – Sports & Gender (Academic Readings from 3/9-3/30)**

Thursday, 4/6:

- Eric Anderson: “The Link between sport and homophobia” – **BB**
- Kian, Edward. “Media Framing of Gay Male Athletes.” – **BB**

Week 13:

Tuesday, 4/11: Sports and Sexuality Continued

- Dave Zirin - Chapter 8 – “Taking Care of T.C.B.: Sports, Sexism & Gay Bashing”
WMNF

Thursday, 4/13:

- Readings TBD

Week 14:

Tuesday, 4/18: Sports and Violence

- Morison, Daniel & Casper, Monica. “Gender Violence, and Brain Injury in and out of the NFL: What Counts As Harm?” – **BB**
- Luther, Jessica. “A Societal Mirror and a Force for Change: The NFL and its Response to Domestic Violence.” – **BB**
- ❖ **Paper #4 Due – Sports & Sexuality (Readings from 4/4-4/13)**

Thursday, 4/20:

- Ward Jr., Russell E. “Fan violence Social problem or moral panic?” - **BB**

Week 15:

Tuesday, 4/25: Sports and Social Change – Progressive and Regressive Revisited

- Kaufman and Wolff. “Playing and Protesting.” – **BB**
- ❖ **SCaMPP Assignment Due Wednesday, 4/26 by 9:00 PM PDT**

Thursday, 4/27: Class Recap and Final Review

- ❖ **Take Home Final Assigned – Due Tuesday, 5/9 by Midnight**