The Sociology of Sports

SOC 3061.090  Fall 2010

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Office hours:

Course Description. This course explores the ways in which sports are entangled in social, cultural, political, and economic forces operating at many different levels, from the social psychological levels to the global level. On one hand the course deals with the multiples was in which individuals can participate in sports, including our participation in sport for purposes of recreation and leisure, sports participation as self-expression and personal fulfillment, participation as spectators of sports and consumers of sports as entertainment commodities. On the other hand, the course deals with the organization of sports and sports organizations as particular representations of social organizations in general that can be analyzed in terms of goals and norms, social roles, manifest and latent functions, and replete with all the complex social dynamics that characterize other social organizations, such as stratification (e.g., by race, class, and gender). The course will also deal with the political economy of big time sports, including major university and professional sports and their contradictory relationships to they are institutional settings (e.g., in institutions of higher learning and in communities).

Objectives. Students will become familiar with basic information on the sociology of sports, and the course will provide the conceptual and theoretical tools to understand and analyze major social issues in relation to sports. They will also learn to apply general principles of sociology to the analysis and understanding of particular types of sports (e.g., leisure sports vs. organized sports), and they will be able to critically evaluate the different types of sports in terms of their social uses. They will learn to apply social science theories and knowledge sport-society issues, to locate social science scholarship on sports, to synthesize different sources of such scholarship, and to communicate as both amateur social scientists and as educated members of the public. In depth reading, group discussions, expert guest speakers, in-class exercises, individual presentations and traditional lectures will be used to achieve these learning objectives. The course will culminate with student presentations to the class on some important sports issue on which they have researched and developed a position or policy paper.

Evaluation. Students will be evaluated on the basis of three examinations, a written research project and presentation, any special assignments that might be made (e.g., group work, etc.), and class participation. The examinations and paper each count for 20% of the final grade, class participation, including paper-based presentations and other possible special assignments will count for an additional 20% of your grade. (Thus the paper and presentation together count for about 35% of the final grade.) No extra credit work is available. Reading should be completed by the time of class on the day that it has been assigned. Most of the information in class will deal with general principles of the sociology of sports, and most of the reading assignments cover specific examples of how sociological principles can be used to gain critical insight into various issues in sports. Exams will cover both reading and in-class activities such as lectures. Since the material presented in class does not duplicate the content of the reading, it is important that students both complete all the reading and attend class. Exams will require students to integrate diverse materials from class and reading in answering general questions, and it is extremely doubtful that satisfactory examination scores can be obtained without good understanding of both.
**WebCT:** The syllabus, assignments, announcements, etc. will be posted to WebCT. Students are advised to check WebCT frequently for any changes or announcements pertinent to this class. Additionally, newspaper articles, journal articles or other media corresponding to course material will be periodically posted to WebCT. Though not specifically assigned in the reading assignment list below, students will find useful and relevant information in these articles and are encouraged to read them. Class Links on WebCT will provide useful information when writing your short paper and preparing your class presentations.

**Accommodations for Disabled Students.** If you have any condition, such as a physical or learning disability, which will make it difficult for you to carry out the work as I have outlined it or which will require academic accommodations, please notify me in the first two weeks of the course. To do so, you may make an appointment to speak with me in my office, or come by during office hours. Written documentation of the disability should be submitted along with the request for special accommodation. Contact the Center for Disabled Student Services (160 Union, 581-5020) to facilitate requests.

**Academic Honesty.** It is assumed that the work you submit to me is your own work, and when you have used the ideas of others you have properly indicated that you have done so. Plagiarism and cheating are serious offenses and may be punished by failure on the exam, paper or project; failure in the course; and/or expulsion from the university.

**Research Paper and Presentation.** A research paper dealing with some aspect of urban sociology is required. One objective of the paper assignment is to acquaint students with social science journals and social science research, and another key objective of the paper is to use it as a basis for making a public presentation of an academic and/or public policy nature. The paper will be accomplished in several steps.

**First** a topic must be chosen and submitted for approval. Possible topics include those listed below as class topics, those covered in the reading, or others that seem to have relevance to cities and city life. The topic is to be turned in in writing on September 18.

**Second,** once approved, you will locate eight journal articles that deal with this topic, and you need to submit a list of them (cited in the style of the *American Sociological Review*) on October 18 (see list of suggested journals, below).

**Third,** an annotated bibliography is to be submitted by October 30. This involves short summaries of each article in addition to the simple citation. The short summaries should not quote or paraphrase the abstract for the article. Instead they should include (a) a short description of the author's objectives (e.g., what was the major question(s) the author was trying to illuminate?), (b) a brief discussion of the general theoretical approach; (c) a description of the nature of the data on which the conclusions were based and how the data were collected. Was it a survey, experiment, qualitative case study, theoretical or polemical treatment, or what? (d) a short summary of what the author(s) found and/or concluded. Each summary should be preceded by the full reference, being careful to properly format the reference and have it in alphabetical order by author’s last name.

**Fourth,** the first draft of the short paper is due on November 15th. In this paper, the topic is to be discussed using the eight references in an integrated way to inform this discussion. The paper should include an introduction of the topic, a discussion of the research you have found including its principal findings and controversies, and a conclusion--and a bibliography. The paper may be either one based only on a review of the research literature on a topic or it may include, in addition, data that you find and bring to bear on the topic. Below are some websites and journals that you might find useful in developing your paper. This draft will be peer reviewed by other class members.
Fifth and finally, once the "redlined" copy of the draft is returned to you, you will begin revising it accordingly, with the final draft due on December 6.

**Presentations:** Beginning on November 26 you should be prepared to make a short, in-class presentation on your research paper. If class size is too large for this to be feasible, students will post PowerPoint Presentations to WebCT and each student is required to read three other students’ presentations and make at least two comments on each. If we have time for in-class presentations, these will be rather short: ten minutes or so, depending on the number of students in the class. The presentation should describe the theme of the research paper and highlight what you found out about the topic. You should have a one-page (300 word) written essay on which to base your presentations. Of course you are encouraged to embellish your presentation with Powerpoint, overheads, hand-outs, and other such enhancements. We will discuss the elements of good presentations on October 23.

### Topic and Reading Schedule

Lectures will not necessarily correspond with reading assignments – class attendance is important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Class Topic</th>
<th>Reading Schedule (Due on this date)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1.</td>
<td>A Social History of Sports</td>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
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<td>Week 2.</td>
<td>The Place of Sport and Leisure in Society</td>
<td>Chapter 1 &amp; 4</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Leisure and Sport</td>
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<td>Week 4.</td>
<td>Sports and the Life Cycle: From Playground to Armchair Quarterback</td>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
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<td>Week 5.</td>
<td>Socialization into Sport and Leisure:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Who Plays and Why?</td>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
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<td>EXAM 1</td>
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<td>Week 6.</td>
<td>What happened to children's leisure?</td>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
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<td>Sandlot to Soccer Mom</td>
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Week 7. High School and College Sports

Week 8. Deviance in Sport: Drugs, Violence and Cheating

Week 9. The Influence of Power on Sport and Leisure: Gender

Week 10. The Influence of Power on Sport and Leisure:

Race/Ethnicity

EXAM #2

Week 11. The Business of Sports:

Migrating Superstars, Migrating Teams


Week 13. Sports Celebrities: Media and Endorsements

Week 14. The Future of Sports and Leisure

Week 15. Post Game Wrap-Up.

EXAM #3

Week 16. Presentations

Research Paper Due
Required Textbook:


Possible Supplementary or Alternative Books:


