

Spring 2013

Sociology 3061-090

Professor: Dr. Michael Timberlake



[SOCIOLOGY OF SPORTS]

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.

Sociology of Sports

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ONLINE

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Office Hours: Wednesday 4-6:30PM with Advanced Notice
Other times by appointment. I am around my office most of the day.

System Requirements: This is an online class that can be “attended” from anywhere there is an internet connection. Assignments and possible discussions will be submitted electronically. However, in order to take part in the course, you must have access to a computer that meets the system requirements. If you do not have your own system, you may use computers available to students located throughout the University of Utah campus. However, some of the material has an audio component, so you should have headphones or an earpiece if you are using a computer in a public place. If you are using a private system, you will need to ensure that it is compatible. There is a “Check Browser” tab on the Blackboard Vista homepage. You must use this feature right away in order to ensure that your system will operate efficiently within the context of this course. The recommended browser is Firefox (www.mozilla.com/firefox). You must also be able to view PowerPoint presentations, as well as have a Media Browser on your system. Students must be able to use an internet browser, send attached files via the mail feature of Blackboard Vista (WebCT), and create text messages in Blackboard Vista in the event that we utilize “live” sessions.

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 multiple ways in which individuals are involved in sports organizations and activities, 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, including 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 their 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 issues (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 to 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, possible online group discussions, expert presentations, in-class exercises, individual presentations and online 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 an informed 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 submitting a power point presentation and commenting on others' presentations as well as other possible special assignments will count for an additional 20% of your grade. **No extra credit work is available.** Reading should be completed for the date it is assigned. Online material often assumes that you have completed the reading. 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 online 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.

Blackboard/WebCT: The syllabus, assignments, lectures/PowerPoint presentations, announcements, etc. will be posted to the class presence at Blackboard/WebCT. Students are advised to check Blackboard/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 Blackboard/WebCT. Though not specifically assigned in the reading assignments listed 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 short research-based position paper dealing with some aspect of *the sociology of sports* 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 covered in the reading, or others that seem to have relevance to sociology and sports, in combination. Do not choose a topic that does not have as an important focus some aspect of society, social relations, social organization, social psychology, etc. Some might be tempted to, say, look at the effects of running barefoot on marathon performance. This is not sociology. Don't do it. You may initially choose a broad topic that you will need to narrow down as you develop the paper. You might think of it as a question. For example How do sports related to the family? This is a broad question/topic you could choose, but it is too broad for a paper. Thus, as you do background reading you will need to focus on some aspect of Sports and Family. Perhaps it would be "Adolescent's participation in sports and satisfaction with family." Or it could be a very macro-topic, such as Does having a professional sports team generate employment and/or income for cities? You could look at issues related to race, class, or gender in connection with some aspect of sports (e.g., a particular sport or a particular level of sports like high school). However, stay away from non-sociological issues like the effects of race on athletic performance/skills. (This doesn't mean you can't take an issue like Why aren't there more African American quarterbacks? It just means that I don't want to see in serious consideration of bogus theories for answering this question. Stick to sociology. Or, it could be a question/topic that raises something like an ethical or philosophical issue, such as Should colleges and universities place so much importance on inter-collegiate athletics? You could then get into a kind of analysis of the arguments for and against that examine the relationship between research and learning vs. big-time college football, for example. The topic is to be turned in in writing by _____.

Second, once approved, you will locate five 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*) by _____ (see list of suggested journals, below). Again, this is where you will most likely need to narrow down the topic by choosing articles that focus on a similar aspect of the broad research question in which you are interested. We will discuss this "in class."

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 *draft of the introduction to the short paper* is due by _____. In this introduction the topic is to be discussed using the five references in an integrated fashion. So rather than just presenting the summaries of each article, use the summary information written earlier to produce a coherent essay that introduces your topic. You can do some cut and pasting from the earlier summaries, but this introduction should flow better than a straightforward list.

Fifth and finally, use the corrected introduction as the basis for a final paper. The major difference is that the final paper will 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. The final paper is due by _____.

Presentations: By _____ you should upload a PowerPoint presentation based on your paper. This will be equivalent to an in-class presentation on your research paper. The presentation should describe the theme of the research paper and highlight what you found out about the topic. Every class member is required to look at and comment on at least four other students' PowerPoint presentations, using the Blackboard Vista/WebCT mail and discussion board. I will have instructions on this later.

Required Text Book: D. Stanley Eitzen and George H. Sage, *Sociology of North American Sport*, 8th edition. Paradigm Publishers. Boulder, Colorado; 2009. Paperback.

Topic and Reading Schedule

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

Date	Class Topic	Reading/Lecture Schedule (Due by this date)
Week 1.	Course organization; What is the Sociology of Sports?	Chapter 1
Week 2.	Social and Cultural Reasons for the Importance of Sports in American Society and in the World; Doing Research on Sports	Chapter 2
Week 3.	Social Values and Sports Choosing at Paper Topic.	Chapter 3
Week 4.	Sports and the Life Cycle: From Playground to Armchair Quarterback September 17 Submit Paper Topic	Chapter 4
Week 5.	School and Sports. How Did that Happen? Why Does it Persist? EXAM #1 (Precise time and place to be announced)	Chapter 5
Week 6.	College and Sports. Huh? Why?	Chapter 6
Week 7.	Social Problems and Sports in North America: Drugs, Violence, Gambling, Eating Disorders Finding appropriate references (i.e., journal articles).	Chapter 7
Week 8.		

Week 9	Hallelujah! Sports and Religion: WWJD (if He were a QB)? October 18 Submit Reference List	Chapter 8
Week 10.	Sports and Politics October 30 Submit Annotated Bibliography	Chapter 9
Week 11.	Sports and the Economy EXAM #2 (Precise time and place to be announced)	Chapter 10
Week 12.	Sports and Mass Media Writing Tips	Chapter 11
Week 13.	Sports, Stratification and Social Mobility Sports and Race/Ethnicity November 15 Submit Introduction to Paper	Chapter 12 Chapter 13
Week 14.	Sports and Gender	Chapter 14
Week 15.	The Future of Sports and Leisure November 29 Submit PowerPoint Presentation	Chapter 15
Week 16.	Post Game Wrap-Up. EXAM #3 (Precise time and place to be announced) _____—Comments Due on 4 Peers' PowerPoint Presentations	

Possible Supplementary or Alternative Books:

D. Stanley Eitzen, Ed., Sport in Contemporary Society: An Anthology, 7th edition, New York: Worth Publishers, 2005

Jay J. Coakley. Sport in Society: Issues and Controversies. 7th edition). WCB. McGraw-Hill. Boston. 2001.

D. Stanley Eitzen, Beyond Fair and Foul: The Myths and Paradoxes of Sports. 4th ed., 2009. Rowman and Littlefield.