

SOCIOLOGY OF SPORT (SO251R)  
TISCH 202  
FALL 2017  
MWF 11:15 AM – 12:10 AM

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### **Introduction**

Why do we love sports so much? Sports are nearly as old as human society. But in our *SportsCenter* culture of 24/7 sports, where North American sports alone are a \$67.7 billion industry, where tens of thousands of fans have tattoos of their favorite teams, where Presidents make March Madness brackets for public consumption, sports have become a very powerful social institution. Some critics see sports as the “toy department” of academia and journalism – not worthy of serious study. In one sense, organized sports are simply an entertaining microcosm of our wider society. At the same time, sports are a space where society is constructed, reproduced, and changed. For this reason, organized sports are as worthy of scholarly attention as religion, family, or the media.

Throughout the course, we will apply a sociological lens to the world of sports. In particular, this course examines organized sports as a form of recreation and leisure, as popular culture, and as an industry with significant labor issues. We will pay special attention to stratification within sport along lines of race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, and disability. Students will also consider the potential of sport for liberation and personal expression as well as a potential contributor to social problems.

As a designated research (“R”) course, Sociology of Sport has an unscheduled fourth credit hour. The objective of this time is for students to gain experience in social scientific research. This semester, we will work together as a class to carry out a literature review, design an empirical study, and collect and analyze data. It is my hope that this work will result in a sociological study appropriate for publication. However, the value of this opportunity is for students to learn more about the process (and the challenges!) of conducting social scientific research and to gain skills in conducting it.

### **Learning Outcomes**

Students completing SO251R should be able to:

1. Describe the various ways that sport operates as a social institution including its role as an agent of socialization, as an industry, and as a major contributor to recreation and leisure.
2. Discuss inequalities of race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability within sport.
3. Critically analyze the role of the market in shaping sport in capitalist societies.
4. Discuss how sport contributes to the formulation of social identities.
5. Design and conduct a social scientific study.

## Required Texts

Other readings for the course are available on the course's Blackboard site (<http://learn.skidmore.edu>).

## Requirements

1. **Scholarly Attitude** (10%) – Most faculty members evaluate “participation” as a part of students’ course grades. But mere “participation” – how much you do or don’t talk, sit up or fall asleep – isn’t really what most of us want from our students. Instead, most of us hope to see students accept our invitation to “the life of mind” by adopting a “scholarly attitude.” Having a “scholarly attitude” involves developing intellectual curiosity and a genuine engagement with the ideas presented in the course. Students with a scholarly attitude take the student role seriously and demonstrate their commitment to academic pursuits by actively engaging in the material, reflecting deeply on the readings, raising thoughtful questions and comments in class, bringing unsolicited materials to share that are directly relevant to the topics being covered, come early and/or stay late to raise their own questions about the material, and generally go above and beyond the requirements of the course. Students who lack a scholarly attitude passively complete the readings and responses, occasionally engage in other activities during lecture (playing with phones, texting, daydreaming, and so on), and are primarily concerned with obtaining a particular grade in the course. I will send you a course grade report after each of the exams that includes a current scholarly attitude score.

2. **Exams** (35%) – There will be two non-cumulative examinations testing material covered both in the readings and in class. The first will be held on **Oct. 6** and the second on **Dec. 12 at 9 AM** during the official exam period. Exams will incorporate definitions, short answer, and essay questions.

3. **College Athletes and Activism Research Project** (25%) – This research project will be conducted collaboratively by the entire class. We will investigate whether online activism (in the form of tweets) by DI collegiate athletes hinders their performance in their sport. In the first phase, students will work in groups of three to locate and write up findings from existing research relevant to our current study. Each group’s contribution to our literature review will be due on **Oct. 23** (30% of project grade). Another 30% of the project grade will be based on the amount and quality of contributions to data collection and analysis. Associated due dates and parameters will be announced once we have designed our study. Finally, students will submit a one-page statement of their contributions to the research project on Dec. 8. On the basis of these statements, I will assign project participation grades (20% of project grade) to each student.

4. **Research Paper and Panel Discussion** (30%) – Students will be given a topic related to an issue in sports and asked to write an 8-10 page research paper. Three or four students will be assigned the same topic and will participate in a panel discussion in front of the class on **Dec. 6**. You will be assigned to take either a pro- or con- position on the issue, but will have freedom to shape the nature of your argument. For the research paper, students will need to cite at least 10 sources, 5 of which need to be from academic journals or publishers (**due: Dec. 1**). All students will write their papers independently. However, groups should meet in advance of their panel discussion to think about how to frame the issue. Grades in the panel discussion will be based on participation, insight, and clarity. It will not be about persuasiveness or the ability to “win” the debate. Read the assignment sheet closely for complete instructions and all associated due dates.

**Summary:**

10% Scholarly Attitude  
 35% Two Exams  
 25% Athletes and Activism Study  
 30% Research Paper/Panel Discussion

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100% Final Grade

**Grades:**

94%-100%	A	90-93%	A-	87-89%	B+
84-86%	B	80-83%	B-	77-79%	C+
74-76%	C	70-73%	C-	67-69%	D+
64-66%	D	60-63	D-	<60	F

**Course Outline**

All listed readings are required. Please let me know immediately, if you have difficulty accessing the electronic files.

**Week 1: Introductions**

- Sept. 6            Introduction
- Sept. 8            Sport as a Social Institution  
 (E) Clavio, "Are esports the Next Major League Sport?"  
 (E) Serazio, "Just How Much Is Sports Fandom Like Religion?"

**Week 2: Theoretical Background**

- Sept. 11           Why Rich People Play Tennis  
 (E) Bourdieu, "How Can One Be a Sports Fan?"
- Sept. 13           Why Americans Don't Play Cricket  
 (E) Kaufman and Patterson, "Cross-National Cultural Diffusion: The Global Spread of Cricket"
- Sept. 15           Research Day: Sports and Activism  
 (E) New, "Athletes and Activism"

**Week 3: Sport and Socialization**

- Sept. 18           Pick-up Games and Travel Teams  
 (E) Williams and Feldman, "Anyone Up for Stickball? In a PlayStation World, Maybe Not"  
 (E) Coakley, "Play Group versus Organized Competitive Team"
- Sept. 20           The Problem with Friday Night Lights  
 (E) Ripley, "The Case Against High-School Sports"
- Sept. 22           Hockey Moms and Football Dads  
 (E) Heffernan, "Parents Ruin Sports for Their Kids by Obsessing About Winning"

#### **Week 4: Violence and Abuse**

- Sept. 25 Abuse in the Name of Sport  
(E) Ryan, "Female Gymnasts and Ice Skaters: The Dark Side"
- Sept. 27 Masculinity and Violence  
(E) Messner, "Playing Center: The Triad of Violence in Men's Sports"  
(E) Morris, "The Rate of Domestic Violence Arrests Among NFL Players"
- Sept. 29 Hazing and Team Unity  
(E) Johnson, "From the Sidelines: The Role of the Coach in Affecting Team Unity and Cohesion in Place of Hazing Traditions"  
(E) Phillips, "Man Up"

#### **Week 5: Deviance in Sport and Exam Week**

- Oct. 2 The Trouble with Doping  
(E) Gladwell, "Man and Superman"
- Oct. 4 When Do Athletes Cheat?  
(E) Mewett, "Discourses of deception: Cheating in Professional Running"
- Oct. 6 Exam #1

#### **Week 6: Fan Identities**

- Oct. 9 Research Day  
Readings TBA
- Oct. 11 Types of Fans  
(E) Giulianotti, "Supporters, Followers, Fans, and Flaneurs: A Taxonomy of Spectator Identities in Football"
- Oct. 13 Tribalism and Hooliganism  
(E) Buford, Excerpt from *Among the Thugs*

#### **Week 7: Gender, Politics, and Fandom**

- Oct. 16 Sports Guys  
(E) Hartmann, "The Sanctity of Sunday Football: Why Men Love Sports."
- Oct. 18 Female Athletes, Media, and Fandom  
(E) Neilson, "Go Mama! Branded by Beauty: How Danica Patrick Swooned Her Way into Sponsorship"  
(E) Allison, "What sells women's soccer?"
- Oct. 20 Signaling Politics Through Sport  
(E) Lindner and Hawkins, "Globalization, Culture Wars, and Attitudes Toward Soccer in America: An Empirical Assessment of *How Soccer Explains the World*"

### **Week 8: Big-Time College Sports**

- Oct. 23            What is a Student-Athlete?  
(E) Gurney et al., Excerpt from *Unwinding Madness*, Part I  
**Due: Literature Review sections**
- Oct. 25            The NCAA and What to Do About College Sports  
(E) Gurney et al., Excerpt from *Unwinding Madness*, Part II
- Oct. 27            Life at a Big Sports University  
(E) Markovits and Smith, “Sports culture and students at the University of Michigan”

### **Week 9: Cultures of College Sports**

- Oct. 30            Athletes and Binge Drinking  
(E) Green et al., “Binge-drinking and sports participation in college: Patterns among athletes and former athletes”
- Nov. 1             Athletes and Grades  
(E) Scott et al., “In-Season vs. Out-of-Season Academic Performance of College Student-Athletes”
- Nov. 3             What about Liberal Arts College Athletes?  
(E) Holmes et al., “Athletics and Alumni Giving: Evidence From a Highly Selective Liberal Arts College”  
(E) Cochran, “How to be a Collegiate Student-Athlete Without Falling Apart”

### **Week 10: Media, Data, and Sport**

- Nov. 6             The “Toy Department” of the Newspaper  
(E) Rowe, “Sports journalism: Still the ‘toy department’ of the news media?”
- Nov. 8             Data and Sports, Guest Speaker: Prof. Michael Lopez  
(E) Silver, “Rich Data, Poor Data”  
(E) McCann, “Hey, Nate: There Is No ‘Rich Data’ In Women’s Sports”
- Nov. 10            What ESPN Hath Wrought  
(E) Vogan, Excerpt from *ESPN: The Making of a Sports Media Empire*

### **Week 11: Race, Ethnicity, and Sport**

- Nov. 13            Race, Genetics, and Sport  
(E) Miller, “The Anatomy of Scientific Racism”  
(E) Conley and Fletcher, “What Both the Left and Right Get Wrong About Race”

Nov. 15 Race and Pro Sports  
(E) Hartmann, "Sport as Contested Terrain"  
(E) Lapchick, "The 2016 Racial and Gender Report Card: National Football League"

Nov. 17 Race and Fandom  
(E) Hackman, "Detroit's soccer scene flourishes but tensions of a changing city remain"

### **Week 12: Sport and Gender**

Nov. 20 Research Day  
Readings TBA

**\*\*\*Thanksgiving Break\*\*\***

### **Week 13: Gender & Sexuality**

Nov. 27 What is Sport?, Gendered Edition  
(E) Grindstaff and West, "Cheerleading and the Gendered Politics of Sport"

Nov. 29 Title IX  
(E) Cooky and Lavoie. "Playing But Losing: Women's Sport After Title IX."  
(E) Carpenter and Acosta, "Title IX in a Nutshell."

Dec. 1 Female Athletes and Identity  
(E) Blinde and Taub, "Women Athletes as Falsely Accused Deviants: Managing the Lesbian Stigma"  
**Due: Research Papers**

### **Week 14: Panel Discussions**

Dec. 4 Athletes, Sexuality, and Identities  
(E) Gieseler, "Derby drag: Parodying sexualities in the sport of roller derby"

Dec. 6 Panel Discussions I & II

Dec. 8 Wrap-up  
**Due: One page statement of contribution to study**

### **Exam Week**

Dec. 12 Final Exam (non-cumulative) at 9 AM

### **Course Policies**

**Disabilities:** If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need academic accommodation, you must formally request accommodation from Meg Hegener, Coordinator for

Student Access Services. You will also need to provide documentation which verifies the existence of a disability and supports your request. For further information, please call 580-8150 or stop by the office of Student Academic Services in Starbuck Center. I would also encourage you to communicate with me about any accommodations well in advance of exams and due dates.

**Electronic Devices:** Unless directed to do so, I expect that students will not use laptops or other electronic devices in class. Many studies have shown that people are extremely poor multi-taskers. Looking at Facebook, Twitter, Wikipedia, etc. or even doing Google searches that may seem relevant all distract from lecture and discussion. Moreover, most people retain information better when taking handwritten notes. 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 me privately. Otherwise, keep your laptop as well as your cell phone and any other devices will be turned off and stowed away during class.

**Late Policy:** On all assignments, your grade will be reduced by one unit for each day late (e.g., 1 day, from A to A-; 2 days, B+; 3 days, B, and so on). After two weeks from the due date, you will receive a zero for the assignment.

**Missed Exam:** Students who will miss an exam date due to an official school absence must schedule an alternative exam date and time *in advance*. As a general rule, I do not allow students with unscheduled exam absences to reschedule. In extreme circumstances, a make-up exam will be given at my discretion and I reserve the right to change the format.

**Cheating and Plagiarism:** By enrolling at the college, all students have agreed to abide by the *Skidmore Honor Code*, which says, “I hereby accept membership in the Skidmore College community and, with full realization of the responsibilities inherent in membership, do agree to adhere to honesty and integrity in all relationships, to be considerate of the rights of others, and to abide by the College regulations.” Part of that code means not to misrepresenting others’ work as your own. Please review the detailed description of the rules and regulations surrounding cheating and plagiarism as described in the *Skidmore College Student Handbook* ([http://www.skidmore.edu/student\\_handbook/honor-code.php](http://www.skidmore.edu/student_handbook/honor-code.php)). If you are unclear on what constitutes plagiarism and/or cheating, please discuss it with me in advance of due dates or exams. In the case of a violation, the offending student will receive a zero (“F”) for the assignment and I am required to report all offenses to the Dean of Academic Studies, which may result in disciplinary action. Please don’t let this happen!

**Civility and Respect:** The *Skidmore Honor Code* also has important implications for how students ought to treat each other. This course will include discussions of class, nationality, religion, gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality. I expect students to show respect toward all the subjects of our study. More importantly, I expect you to treat your classmates and your instructor with respect and dignity at all times – especially when you disagree with them.

**Title IX Statement and Reporting Responsibilities:** Skidmore College considers sexual and gender-based misconduct to be one of the most serious violations of the values and standards of the College. Unwelcome sexual contact of any form is a violation of students’ personal integrity and their right to a safe environment and therefore violates Skidmore’s values. Sexual and gender-based misconduct is also prohibited by federal regulations. Skidmore College faculty are committed to supporting our students and upholding gender equity laws as outlined by Title IX. If a student chooses to confide in a member of Skidmore’s faculty or staff regarding an issue of sexual or gender-based misconduct, that faculty or staff member is obligated to tell Skidmore’s

Title IX Deputy Coordinator. The Title IX Deputy Coordinator will assist the student in connecting with all possible resources for support and reporting both on and off campus. Identities and details will be shared only with those who need to know to support the student and to address the situation through the college's processes. If the student wishes to confide in a confidential resource, The Counseling Center Staff, Health Services, and Victim Advocates are all options available. More information can be found at <https://www.skidmore.edu/sgbm/> or by contacting the Title IX Deputy Coordinator.