

ETHN 189 Sport and Cultural Politics

Fall Quarter 2004: Mon, Wed, Fri., 12-12.50, Peterson 103

Instructor: Brett St Louis

Office Hours: Mon. 2-4 pm., Wed. 2-3 pm.

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Course Description

Sport is an aspect of social life that we often take for granted as a simple form of "leisure" or "entertainment": as such, sport is something that "just is", a benign reflection of a human need for "play" and "recreation". However, sport is also an important social activity that helps to produce and reinforce crucial aspects of society including ideas and values, individual and collective identities, and social structure and relations. The course will explore this productive characteristic of sport through an examination of some key social functions and effects of sport as a form of cultural politics. The course will consider a series of theoretical and conceptual debates on how sport produces social meaning and order that will then be related to an international series of historical and contemporary examples. We will consider a range of case studies including cricket and colonialism / postcolonialism; the 1936 "Nazi Olympics" in Berlin; masculinity, violence and homoeroticism; gender and women's bodybuilding; and debates on the biological and racial basis of athletic ability.

Course Aims

- To enable students to identify the role of sport in the production and reproduction of social values, identities, and structures.
- To enable students to critically analyze sport as cultural-political form in relation to social power and stratification.

Course Texts

All course readings are available on E-reserve.

Course Requirements

You are expected to attend classes, complete the required reading for each session, prepare for the set tasks, and participate fully in group discussions and projects. The forms of assessment are listed below and papers *must* be submitted by the required deadline: *late papers will not be accepted*.

Assessment

All assignments constitute *individual tasks*. Submitted papers *must not* include work completed by another person (of course, unless cited and referenced as a published source). All papers *must* include citation, quotation, and full bibliographic references. Papers should be double-spaced and checked for spelling and typographical errors prior to submission.

Attendance & Class Participation

10%

1. Midterm Paper (3-4 pages)

25%

Write a critical assessment that compares *at least 2* of the 3 theoretical and conceptual positions discussed at the beginning of the course. *You should refer to at least 2 separate readings from each position.*

Submission Date: Friday, 29 October 2004. Turn your paper in *either* to the instructor in class on or before this date *or* to the Ethnic Studies Department Office (Social Sciences Building, Room 201) by **4.00 pm** on this date.

2. Historical Case Study Review (3-4 pages)

25%

Write a critical review of **one** of the following case studies:

- Cricket and colonialism / postcolonialism
- “Olympia” and the 1936 Berlin Olympics

Your review should refer to at least 3 separate texts — including relevant films screened in class.

Submission Date: Friday, 12 November 2004. Turn your paper in *either* to the instructor in class on or before this date *or* to the Ethnic Studies Department Office (Social Sciences Building, Room 201) by **4.00 pm** on this date.

3. Final Paper (5-6 pages)

40%

Write a paper in response to **one** of the following essay titles:

- Critically assess the relationship between masculinity and homoeroticism **and/or** aggression in sport.
- Critically assess the opposition of muscularity and femininity in women’s bodybuilding.
- Critically assess the controversy between biological, biocultural, and social explanations of the relationship between race and athletic ability.

Your paper should address the specific essay title chosen which *must* be typed on the cover page of your paper.

Submission Date / Time / Place*

Wednesday, 8 December 2004, 11.30am — 2.30pm; Room 230, Social Sciences Building.

*This is based on the provisional examination timetable. The final submission date, time, and place is to be confirmed. You will be notified in class and by email via Studentlink.

Statement on Interaction

It is crucial that we develop a mutually respectful classroom environment in order to explore the sensitive issues that we will encounter on the course. I suggest that you read the statement of UCSD Principles of Community that can be found at: <http://www-vcba.ucsd.edu/principles.htm>

CLASS TOPIC / DISCUSSION SCHEDULE

24 Sept **Introductory Session**

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL APPROACHES

1. Materialist Critique

27 & 29 Sept

These sessions will introduce Marxist critiques of sport as a form of capitalist state discipline. We will consider their analyses of sport as an ideological tool that reflects core capitalist social values such as competition and individualism and encourages the physical order and discipline necessary for the industrial workplace and society.

Brohm, "Theses Towards a Political Sociology of Sport", "Sport, An Ideological State Apparatus" & "Against Competitive Sport"
Morgan, Leftist Theories of Sport (Chapter 1)

2. Culturalist Critique

1 & 4 October

These sessions will explore how sport operates as a subtle cultural form of social discipline and order. We will consider some positions on the operation of sport as a cultural form that promotes particular ideas and values that are voluntarily accepted and widely understood. We will then evaluate the claims of some culturalist critiques that sports serve to hierarchically distinguish between different social groups and thus reinforce social stratification.

Bourdieu, "How Can One Be a Sports Fan?"
Elias & Dunning, Quest for Excitement (Introduction)
Hargreaves, Sport, Power and Culture (Chapter 8 & 10)

3. Aesthetic Critique

6 & 8 October

In contrast with the previous approaches to sport as an overt and covert ideological form of discipline and social control this session examines more sympathetic and positive perspectives. We will consider alternative analyses that discuss the progressive aesthetic value of sport, such as its captivating qualities of beauty and unpredictability that, as central to the human condition, transcend purposive social and political interests.

Hughson & Inglis, "The Beautiful Game and the Proto-Aesthetics of the Everyday"

Blake, The Body Language (Chapter 7)

Dyson, "Be Like Mike?"

James, Beyond a Boundary (Chapter 16)

HISTORICAL CASE STUDIES

Cricket and Colonialism / Postcolonialism

11, 13, 15 & 18 October

As *the* "English game", cricket played an important role in the maintenance of colonial government throughout the British Empire. These sessions discuss the cultural and political role of cricket in relation to both colonialism *and* postcolonialism by drawing on C.L.R. James's analysis of the two major social functions of West Indian cricket. First, we will consider how cricket reinforced the colonial moral authority to govern the colonized and also provided the ideological means of social dominance without violence or coercion. Second, we will discuss the evolution of cricket from an instrument of colonial dominance to an important signifier of postcolonial culture and consider whether a game used for disciplinary purposes can fulfill an alternative and oppositional function.

James, Beyond a Boundary (Chapter 2, 3 & 4) & "The 1963 West Indians"

Lazarus, Nationalism and Cultural Practice (Chapter 3)

Perkin, "Teaching the Nations How to Play"

Tiffin, "Cricket, literature and the politics of decolonization"

Kingwell, "Keeping a Straight Bat"

Body Politics and the 1936 Berlin Olympics

20, 22, 25 & 27 October

The attempt by the Nazi party to use the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games as a propaganda vehicle for the demonstration of Aryan supremacy is an extreme example of the political manipulation of sport. We will draw on Leni Riefenstahl's famous documentary film of the games, "Olympia", to consider the relationship between sport, representation and body politics. We will evaluate how the

representation of sport as a dramatic spectacle within the film represents physical performance through a fascist aesthetics of dominance, discipline and perfection and assess the enduring controversy surrounding "Olympia" as either an artistic documentary or work of fascist propaganda.

Guttmann, The Olympics (Chapter 4)
Kracauer, "The Mass Ornament"
Mandell, The Nazi Olympics (Chapter 3, 5 & 9)
McFee & Tomlinson, "Riefenstahl's *Olympia*"
Sontag, "Fascinating Fascism"

CONTEMPORARY CASE STUDIES

Homoeroticism, Violence and Sporting Masculinities

29 October & 1, 3 & 5 November

The relationship between modern sport, aggression and sexuality has been fiercely contested within debates on the popular function of sport. These sessions discuss the significance of aggression, violence and sexuality within male sporting participation and appreciation. We will also specifically assess the broader significance and meanings of men's sports as demonstrations of hypermasculine behavior and display and consider debates that suggest men's sport as a homoerotic site for the production and expression of violent impulses and sublimated homosexual desires.

Guttmann, The Erotic in Sports (Chapter 4 & 5)
Pronger, The Arena of Masculinity (Chapter 5 & 6)
Dunning, "Sport as a Male Preserve"
Burstyn, The Rites of Men (Chapter 6 & 7)
Elias, "An Essay on Sport and Violence"
Miller, Sportsex (Chapter 2)

Gender Politics and Women's Bodybuilding

8, 10, 12 & 15 November

These sessions consider the complexities of women's bodybuilding. We will examine the extent to which women's bodybuilding can be understood as a decisive move against the Western ideal of the slender female body and consider the extent to which many women bodybuilders remain disciplined by an unattainable body image despite contesting the archetype of feminine frailty and gaining the benefits of increased strength and self-esteem. Using excerpts from the documentary film "Pumping Iron II" as an example, we will evaluate the contradictory and antagonistic relationship between increased muscularity and femininity faced by women bodybuilders.

Dowling, The Frailty Myth (Chapter 1 & 6)

Mansfield & McGinn, "Pumping Irony"
Fisher, "Building One's Self Up"
Holmlund, "Visible Difference and Flex Appeal"
Lenskyj, Out of Bounds (Chapter 7)
Lowe, Women of Steel (Chapter 3, 5 & 6)

Racial Science and Natural Athleticism

17, 19, 22 & 24 November

Many contemporary commentators have considered the relationship between race, biology and athletic ability; for example as a means to explain the recent domination of men's sprinting and long distance running by black athletes. These sessions will introduce and examine competing biological, biocultural and social explanations of the relationship between race and athletic ability. We will also examine why these debates have attracted such fierce controversy and consider the relationship between the history of racial science and contemporary scientific descriptions, explanations, and evaluations of racial variation and capacity. This will form a basis for critically assessing the social and ethical implications of these arguments.

Burfoot, "African Speed, African Endurance"
Entine, Taboo (Chapter 3, 4 & 5) & "The Straw Man of Race"
Hoberman, Darwin's Athletes (Chapter 8, 9 & 14)
Kohn, The Race Gallery (Chapter 4)
Fleming, "Racial Science and South Asian and Black Physicality"
St Louis, "Sport, Genetics and the 'Natural Athlete'"

Conclusion: Course Summary & Final Paper Workshop

29 November & 1 & 3 December

These final sessions will provide a summary of the main themes and arguments engaged throughout the course. There will also be an opportunity for students to raise questions and observations as well as queries regarding the final paper.

Majoring or Minor in Ethnic Studies at UCSD

Many students take an ethnic studies course because the topic is of great interest or because of a need to fulfill a social science, non-contiguous, or other college requirement. Often students have taken three or four classes out of "interest" yet have no information about the major or minor and don't realize how close they are to a major, a minor, or even a double major. An ethnic studies major is excellent preparation for a career in law, public policy, government and politics, journalism, education, public health, social work, international relations, and many other careers. If you would like information about the ethnic studies major or minor at UCSD, please contact Theresa Aitchison, Ethnic Studies Department Undergraduate Advisor, at 858-534-6040 or taitchis@ucsd.edu