

History 399
“Game On”:
Sports and Society in the United States

Spring 2016
Tues/Th. 4:00-5:20 pm
112 Esslinger
Office Hours: Wed. 3:30-5:00 pm
or by appointment

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Consider the following quotations on the meaning of sports:

- “There are only three things that America will be remembered for 2000 years from now when they study this civilization: The Constitution, Jazz music, and Baseball. These are the 3 most beautiful things this culture's ever created.”

Gerald Early

- “Football is like life - it requires perseverance, self-denial, hard work, sacrifice, dedication and respect for authority.

Vince Lombardi

- “I wanted to use sports for social change.”

Billie Jean King

The social and cultural importance of sports in the United States would be difficult to exaggerate. As fans, millions of Americans follow college and professional sports by attending sporting events, watching them on television and social media, participating in fantasy leagues, listening to sports talk radio shows, and reading articles and books about athletes and athletics. From elementary school on up to adulthood, people play sports in organized leagues and in more informal settings, with greater access to sports for women and girls fueling the ranks of active participation. Sports is hailed for the important lessons it teaches about critical concepts such as character, teamwork, leadership, and competition, with many citing athletes as role models worthy of emulation. The athletic exploits and achievements of immigrants, people of color, and women have fostered greater social inclusion and acceptance, with sports being celebrated as a meritocracy where talent is the only criterion for success. Indeed, it is fair to say that sports has occupied a singularly prominent place in the personal and social lives of many Americans, serving as a frame of reference and a shared communal experience for both participants and spectators.

In spite of the widespread social respect and avid interest commanded by sports, athletics have generated considerable controversy throughout their history. Recent debates about college athletics and the line between professional and amateur have deep historical roots. Current issues surrounding violence in sports, scandals related to doping and other forms of cheating, the status of women and people of color, the business and finance of sports, and the treatment of athletes as employees have long been matters of conflict and contestation. And for some critics, the emphasis on competition and winning often associated with athletics tarnishes the values that sports professes to honor.

In this course we will critically assess the social impact and importance of sports and the powerful role they play in our lives, paying special attention to how sports have changed and evolved over time. We will use a variety of primary and secondary sources to assist us in our exploration of sports, including historical monographs, film, video clips, iconography, and oral histories. These sources will enable us to consider sports from a variety of perspectives and allow students to evaluate the relative merits of different kinds of historical materials.

Class Requirements

1. *Essay 1: 4-6 pages due April 14*
2. *Essay 2: 5-7 page essay due May 12*
3. *Brief Reaction Papers (to be submitted each Thursday, except for weeks when exams are due). These are 1-page reactions to our weekly readings in which you will describe the major themes or arguments you found most significant in that week's assignment.*
4. *Take-home final exam*

Grading

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|---|------------|
| 1. <i>4-6 page essay</i> | <i>20%</i> |
| 2. <i>5-7 page essay</i> | <i>25%</i> |
| 3. <i>Final paper</i> | <i>40%</i> |
| 4. <i>Class participation and reaction essays</i> | <i>15%</i> |

*Late work will be penalized by one half-letter grade for each day it is overdue.

Academic Honesty

Academic honesty is essential to one's personal integrity and the integrity of the class. Plagiarism or other forms of cheating are serious offenses, are totally unacceptable, and will not be tolerated.

Class Format

Tuesday's class will be largely done in a lecture style. However, we will review film clips and videos along with relevant primary documents, and I welcome your comments and questions during the lectures.

A segment of Thursday's class will be reserved specifically for discussion of the week's readings. I strongly encourage your active participation in these discussions.

Graduate Students

Graduate students taking this course for credit will write a 15-20 page paper due at the end of the term as their major class assignment. A prospectus outlining your topic will due by April 14. Graduate students will also meet separately with the instructor on several occasions during the term to discuss the weekly readings.

Readings

Books for the course are available at the UO Bookstore. They are:

- John J. Miller: *The Big Scrum: How Teddy Roosevelt Saved Football*
- Walter LaFeber: *Michael Jordan and the New Global Capitalism*
- Susan Ware: *Game, Set, Match: Billie Jean King and the Revolution in Women's Sports*

All class materials will also be placed on reserve at the Knight Library.

Other course readings are available in a class packet that can be purchased at the UO Bookstore.

Class Schedule

Week 1: March 29, 31: The Rise of Sports in America

John J. Miller, *The Big Scrum: How Teddy Roosevelt Saved Football*, Introduction and pp. 1-109.

Week 2: April 5, 7: Growing Pains: Amateurism, Professionalism, and Scandal

Miller, *The Big Scrum*, pp. 110-222.

Week 3: April 12, 14: Sports and the Immigrant Experience (*Essay 1 due*)

- Gerald R. Gems, "Sport and the Italian American Quest for Whiteness," *Sport in History*, Vol. 32, No. 4, 2012, pp. 479-503.
- Peter Levine, "Oy, Such a Fighter!" Boxing and the American Jewish Experience," in S. W. Pope (ed.), *The New Sports History: Recent Approaches and Perspectives*, pp. 251-283.
- Rita Liberti, "We Were Ladies: We Just Played Basketball Like Boys': African American Womanhood and Competitive Basketball at Bennett College, 1928-1942," *Journal of Sport History*, Vol. 26, Number 3, Fall 1999, pp. 567-584.

Week 4: April 19, 21: Sports During Depression and War

- Dominic J. Capeci, Jr. and Martha Wilkerson, "Multifarious Hero: Joe Louis, American Society, and Race Relations During World Crisis, 1935-1945," *Journal of Sport History*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (Winter 1983), pp. 5-25.
- Susan E. Cayleff, "The 'Texas Tomboy': The Life and Legend of Babe Didrikson Zaharias," in *OAH Magazine of History*, pp. 28-33.
- Susan E. Cayleff, "A Sportswriter's Dream: Beautiful Sports, Manly Sports, and Muscle Molls," in *Babe: The Life and Legend of Babe Didrikson Zaharias*, pp. 78-98.
- Mark Rubinfeld, "The Mythical Jim Thorpe: Re/presenting the Twentieth Century American Indian," in *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, pp. 167-189.

Week 5: April 26, 28: Great Experiments: Breaking the Color Line in Sports

- Gerald L. Early, “American Integration, Black Heroism, and the Meaning of Jackie Robinson,” pp. 169-184.
- Jackie Robinson, as told to Alfred Duckett, *An Autobiography of Jackie Robinson: I Never Had It Made*,” Chapter VII, “The Price of Popularity,” pp. 87-103, Chapter XXIII, “Aftermath,” pp. 259-267, and Chapter XXIV, “Epilogue,” pp. 268-279.
- Samuel O. Regalado, “What Kind of Country Is This?, from *Viva Baseball! Latin Major Leaguers and Their Special Hunger*, pp. 65-90.

Week 6: May 3, 5: Sports in the 60s

Walter LaFeber: *Michael Jordan and the New Global Capitalism*, pp. 13-112.

Week 7: May 10, 12: Athletes as Workers: Labor Relations and Sports (Essay 2 due)

Walter LaFeber: *Michael Jordan and the New Global Capitalism*, pp. 113-188.

Week 8: May 17, 19: “You’ve Come a Long Way, Baby”: The Rise of Women’s Sports

Susan Ware: *Game, Set, Match: Billie Jean King and the Revolution in Women’s Sports*, pp. 1-117.

Week 9: May 24, 26: The Political Economy of Sports

Ware, *Game, Set Match*, pp. 118-214.

Week 10: May 31, June 2: The Future of Sports in the United States

Joe Drape, “Alabama Is Rolling in Cash with Tide Lifting All Boats,” *New York Times*, November 5, 2015.

Taylor Branch, “The Shame of College Sports,” *The Atlantic*, October 2011, pp. 81-110

Interview with Mark Emmert, “Money and March Madness,” *Frontline*, February 14, 2011.