

Soc117 Sports as a Social Institution

Fall 2013 | UC Berkeley

Instructor: **Dr. Linus Huang**

Office Hours: **Mondays 3:30-5:30 p.m. or by appt., 434 Barrows Hall**

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Final Exam: **Exam Group 12, Wednesday, December 18th, 7-10 PM**

Graduate Student Readers: **TBA**

Course Overview

A sociology of sports is concerned with the ways that *society shapes sports* and with *the role that sports plays in society*. The first set of issues draws our attention to the fact that sports is not simply a neutral arena in which outcomes are meritocratically decided. Rather, it is shaped by race, gender, sexuality, the profit motive, norms about “the proper way to play the game”, the media, “Moneyball” and the increasing role of financial/statistical analysts in pro sports, the relative indifference to international competition in American sports culture, and numerous other social institutions. All of these shape the meaning we attach to sports as consumers (i.e., as fans) and even as participants, making sports more than just technical athletic contests.

The second set of issues broadly speaks to the significance of sports in wider society. Does sports “bring people together”, which is a common refrain? Or does it reinforce or create new social divisions? What role should sports play in higher education? Why are college sports so popular in the U.S. in the first place, when they are virtually nonexistent as mass spectator phenomena anywhere else in the world? Is sports a public good—and hence a legitimate use for public resources—or is it just private entertainment?

The premise of this course is that sports is a potent socio-cultural force today, for better or for worse. Course material is therefore aimed at focusing upon the dominant cultural manifestations of sports in the U.S.: big-time college sports, and the professional team sports. The course is not intended as a survey of the sports world and will give less attention to individual sports (amateur or professional), youth sports, purely recreational or other informal sporting, as well as the more physiological aspects of sports study. I make no claim to any great justification for giving less attention to these issues and/or parts of the sports world, but I do invite interested students to raise them during the course as appropriate.

Readings

Doing the readings and coming to class prepared to talk about them are a vital part of the course experience! All course readings will come from the course *reader*—a customized textbook tailored to a specific course, for those new to Berkeley. This reader will be available at **University Copy Services, 2425 Channing Way**, a few blocks south of campus. If you do not know where this is, just type “2425 Channing Way, Berkeley, CA” into Google Maps. The reader is only available at University Copy Services—not at Krishna or Copy Central or any of the other copy shops around campus.

Course Format

This is a lecture course and I will indeed do a fair amount of lecturing. However, class participation is expected and will make everyone's experience far, far, more enlightening, not to mention enjoyable. Furthermore, although an obviously substantial part of the course material will come from the readings, additional material—both theoretical and empirical—will be presented in class that is not strictly from the readings. You will be responsible for this additional material on the exams. Therefore, class attendance and participation are crucial to success in the course.

Grading

Course grades will be determined by two in-class midterm exams (30% each) and a final exam (40%) administered during the University's officially designated exam period for this course (see above).

All three exams will be of a short answer variety, where "short answer" means from one to four paragraphs per question. You will need to bring exam booklets ("blue books", for sale at the ASUC Store) for each exam.

The grading scale is as follows. All scores are significant to the first digit after the decimal. '[' means including, and ') ' means excluding, so '[83-87)' for example means everything including 83 up to but **NOT** including 87.

		A	[94+	A-	[90-94)
B+	[87-90)	B	[83-87)	B-	[80-83)
C+	[77-80)	C	[73-77)	C-	[70-73)
D+	[67-70)	D	[63-67)	D-	[60-63)
		F	[0-60)		

I will use the "Assignments" tool on the course bspace site to keep a record of your scores, so as midterm scores are released, make sure that what is on bspace matches what is on your actual returned paper/exam. If there is a problem, report it immediately. Do not wait until the end of the semester to report an issue with either of the midterms.

Note: There are no other discretionary considerations that factor in to the calculation of your course grade. As the course progresses, you can calculate your performance for yourself, given the weightings indicated above, and determine exactly what you need to do on subsequent graded assignments to get X grade.

Disabled and English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) Students

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations must have their statuses verified by the DSP office by **Wednesday, September 11th**.

The course will require a modest degree of English writing proficiency during the three in-class examinations. If you are an ESL student for whom this may prove difficult, accommodations can be made provided you get in touch with me at the beginning of the semester. During exams, the use of language translation dictionaries is permitted, provided that the dictionaries are on actual paper (paperback or hardcover). For purposes of fairness, software-based dictionaries running on general-purpose computing devices (i.e., smartphones, tablets, laptops) will not be allowed during exams.

Resources

Writing for Sociology. Although this course will not be as writing-intensive as others, writing will still be important on the in-class midterm and final exams. Graduate students and faculty in the sociology department at Berkeley have put together a writing guide specifically geared toward sociology students. It is intended for longer-form writing assignments, but could still be useful for the short-answer (e.g., 1-4 paragraphs) questions that will be on the exams.

The URL for this guide is: <http://sociology.berkeley.edu/undergraduate-writing-resources>.

Student Learning Center. The campus Student Learning Center (SLC) offers various services for both ESL and native-speaking students. See their website at:

<http://slc.berkeley.edu/ucftr/index.htm>

and in particular their writing resources at:

<http://slc.berkeley.edu/writing/index.htm>.

International Students. The Berkeley International Office offers a variety of services, including ESL resources. See their website at:

<http://internationaloffice.berkeley.edu/>

And note their English Language Resources section, drawn from various online resources throughout the U.S.

http://internationaloffice.berkeley.edu/english_resources

Academic Honesty

The University has recommended the following guidelines concerning academic honesty and they apply for this course:

The student community at UC Berkeley has adopted the following Honor Code: “As a member of the UC Berkeley community, I act with honesty, integrity, and respect for others.” The hope and expectation is that you will adhere to this code.

Collaboration and Independence: Reviewing lecture and reading materials and studying for exams can be enjoyable and enriching things to do with fellow students. This is recommended. However, unless otherwise instructed, homework assignments are to be completed independently and materials submitted as homework should be the result of one’s own independent work.

Cheating: A good lifetime strategy is always to act in such a way that no one would ever imagine that you would even consider cheating. Anyone caught cheating on a quiz or exam in this course will receive a failing grade in the course and will also be reported to the University Center for Student Conduct. In order to guarantee that you are not suspected of cheating, please keep your eyes on your own materials and do not converse with others during the quizzes and exams.

Plagiarism: To copy text or ideas from another source without appropriate reference is plagiarism and will result in a failing grade for your assignment and usually further disciplinary action. For additional information on plagiarism and how to avoid it, see, for example:

<http://gsi.berkeley.edu/teachingguide/misconduct/prevent-plag.html>

Academic Integrity and Ethics: Cheating on exams and plagiarism are two common examples of dishonest, unethical behavior. Honesty and integrity are of great importance in all facets of life. They help to build a sense of self-confidence, and are key to building trust within relationships, whether personal or professional. There is no tolerance for dishonesty in the academic world, for it undermines what we are dedicated to doing – furthering knowledge for the benefit of humanity.

Your experience as a student at UC Berkeley is hopefully fueled by passion for learning and replete with fulfilling activities. And we also appreciate that being a student may be stressful. There may be times when there is temptation to engage in some kind of cheating in order to improve a grade or otherwise advance your career. This could be as blatant as having someone else sit for you in an exam, or submitting a written assignment that has been copied from another source. And it could be as subtle as glancing at a fellow student's exam when you are unsure of an answer to a question and are looking for some confirmation. One might do any of these things and potentially not get caught. However, if you cheat, no matter how much you may have learned in this class, you have failed to learn perhaps the most important lesson of all.

Reading Schedule

All indicated readings are in the course reader (see above). Assigned readings must be completed **BEFORE** the class they are associated with. In many cases I will go over the readings, especially the more difficult ones. But in other cases I will build upon rather than recapitulate the readings.

Aug	30	Fri	Introduction: what are we studying in this course? <i>readings: none</i>
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Sep	2	Mon	##### LABOR DAY. NO CLASS. #####
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	4	Wed	Thinking about the sociology of sport: functionalist perspectives <i>readings: none</i>
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Sep	6	Fri	Thinking about the sociology of sport: conflict perspectives <i>readings: none</i>
	9	Mon	Thinking about the sociology of sport: critical/institutionalist perspectives <i>readings: none</i>
	11	Wed	Social institutions and sports strategy <i>readings: Malcolm Gladwell, "How David Beats Goliath" • Michael Lewis, "If I Only Had the Nerve"</i>
	13	Fri	(cont'd; no new readings)
	16	Mon	Culture and authority in sports organizations <i>readings: Michael Lewis, Moneyball ch 2, 4, 12 • "Can Statistics Explain Soccer?" Wall Street Journal 24 Jun 2008</i>
	18	Wed	(cont'd; no new readings)
	20	Fri	Sports culture and community: sociological approaches <i>readings: none</i>
	23	Mon	Sports culture and community, cont'd <i>reading: Richard Giulianotti, "Supporters, Followers, Fans, and Flâneurs"</i>
	25	Wed	(cont'd; no new readings)
	27	Fri	***** MIDTERM EXAM #1 IN-CLASS *****
	30	Mon	Why are college sports so popular in the U.S.? <i>reading: Andrei Markovits & Lars Rensmann, "The Limits of Globalization: Local Identity and College Sports' Uniquely American Symbiosis of Academics and Athletics"</i>
Oct	2	Wed	Are big-time college sports still part of the academic mission? <i>video: IQ², "Should College Football Be Banned?" (1st half)</i>
	4	Fri	Are big-time college sports still part of the academic mission?, cont'd <i>video: IQ², "Should College Football Be Banned?" (2nd half)</i>
	7	Mon	Are big-time college sports still part of the academic mission?, cont'd <i>readings: Welch Suggs, "Football, Television, and the Supreme Court" • Taylor Branch, "The Shame of College Sports" The Atlantic Oct 2011</i>
	9	Wed	(cont'd; no new readings)

Oct	11	Fri	The tension between revenue and egalitarianism within big-time college sports: the case of Title IX <i>reading:</i> Women's Sports Foundation, "Who's Playing College Sports?"
	14	Mon	(cont'd; no new readings)
	16	Wed	Sports and race: sociological approaches <i>readings:</i> none
	18	Fri	Race and sports media <i>reading:</i> "How MLB Announcers Favor American Players Over Foreign Ones" <i>The Atlantic</i> 27 Aug 2012
	21	Mon	Race and sports culture <i>video:</i> BBC Panorama/Euro 2012 "Stadiums of Hate" <i>reading:</i> Andrei Markovits & Lars Rensmann, "A Counter-Cosmopolitan Backlash? The Politics of Exclusion, Racism, and Violence in European and American Sports Cultures" pp. 251-270
	23	Wed	(cont'd; no new readings)
	25	Fri	***** MIDTERM EXAM #2 IN-CLASS *****
	28	Mon	Sports and gender <i>readings:</i> Douglas Foley, "The Great American Football Ritual" • Andrei Markovits & Lars Rensmann, "A Silent 'Feminization' of Global Sports Cultures? Women as Soccer Players in Europe and America"
	30	Wed	(cont'd; no new readings)
Nov	1	Fri	The political economy of sports <i>reading:</i> Andrew Zimbalist, "May the Best Team Win"
	4	Mon	The political economy of sports, cont'd <i>reading:</i> Rick Eckstein & Kevin Delaney, "New Sports Stadiums, Community Self-Esteem, and Community Collective Conscience"
	6	Wed	(cont'd; no new readings)
	8	Fri	Sports and media <i>readings:</i> "Pay-TV Providers Bid to End Sports Networks' Win Streak" <i>Wall Street Journal</i> 15 Jul 2013 • "College Football's Most Dominant Player? It's ESPN" <i>The New York Times</i> 24 Aug 2013 • "At Louisville, Athletic Boom Is Rooted in ESPN Partnership" <i>The New York Times</i> 25 Aug 2013; "To Protect Its Empire, ESPN Stays On Offense" <i>The New York Times</i> 26 Aug 2013

Nov	11	Mon	##### VETERAN’S DAY. NO CLASS. #####
	13	Wed	What is the sports “product” that fans consume? The role of sports leagues <i>reading: Eric Leifer, Making the Majors intro + ch 1</i>
	15	Fri	(cont’d; no new readings)

	18	Mon	Why did American football overtake baseball as the #1 sport in the U.S.? <i>reading: Eric Leifer, Making the Majors ch 5</i>
	20	Wed	(cont’d; no new readings)
	22	Fri	Deviance in sports: an institutionalist perspective <i>reading: Bryan Sluggett, “Creating the ‘Pure’ Athlete” pp 1-20, 29-69</i>

	25	Mon	(cont’d; no new readings)
	27	Wed	##### NO CLASS. INSTRUCTOR CANCELLED. #####
	29	Fri	##### TURKEY DAY. NO CLASS. #####

Dec	2	Mon	Sports and violence: functionalist approaches <i>reading: Randall Collins, “On-Field Player Violence”</i>
	4	Wed	Sports and violence: institutionalist approaches <i>reading: TBA</i>
	6	Fri	Wrap-up + course evaluations

	9	Mon	READING,
	11	Wed	REVIEW, and
	13	Fri	RECITATION week
	18	Wed	***** FINAL EXAM IN-CLASS 7-10 PM *****