

Soc 117 Sport as a Social Institution

Spring 2018 | UC Berkeley

Instructor: Linus Huang

Office Hours (drop-in): Wednesdays, 3:15 PM - 4:45 PM, 487 Barrows

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Graduate Student Readers: Aaron Platt, Ogi Radic & Marilyn de là Cruz

Final exam: Exam Group 6, Tuesday, May 8, 2018, 11:30 AM - 2:30 PM

What is this course about?

What counts as a “sport” and what doesn’t? Why is basketball unambiguously a sport, but not cheerleading? Why do women in the U.S. play soccer, but not football? Why is cricket a sport for the masses in India, but a sport restricted to the social elite in the U.S.? Why is college sports a multi-billion-dollar industry in the U.S., but barely even an activity for participants, let alone spectators, anywhere else in the world? The objective of this course is, as the late sociologist Pierre Bourdieu proposed, to explain how the supply of sports (what sports we have, who plays them, how competition is organized) and the demand for sports (how we “consume” sports as fans) comes to be in a particular places at particular times. The course is built upon case studies—including those that address the questions asked above—but students will learn how to question and analyze the social ordering of any part of the sports world.

Readings

All course readings are available in PDF format on the bCourses site.

Grading

Your course grade will be determined by:

- One **sports fandom survey**, online, on bCourses (5% of your course grade). This survey will ask how you participate in and/or follow sports (if at all). Data collected from this survey will supplement our discussion of sports fandom later during the term.
- Two **take-home midterm exams**, each 35% of the course grade. They will be “short essay” style in nature (further details to be given later).
- An **in-class final exam**, administered during the University’s officially scheduled timeslot for the course, on Tuesday, May 8th, 2018, from 11:30 AM-2:30 PM. The final exam will be cumulative and multiple choice. The final exam is worth 25% of the course grade.

The course grading scale is as follows:

A+	97+	A	93-96	A-	90-92
B+	87-89	B	83-86	B-	80-82
C+	77-79	C	73-76	C-	70-72
D+	67-69	D	63-66	D-	60-62
		F	0-59		

When it comes time to compute overall course grades, I will round to the nearest whole number using standard rounding conventions. It doesn't really matter what the letter grade on the individual assignments are.

There are no other discretionary considerations that will factor into your grade. Furthermore, I do not offer extra credit beyond that which I may build in to the midterm and final exams.

There are no surprises in how I calculate course grades. The GRADES section on bCourses incorporates the weightings above and will accurately keep you apprised of your course progress. During the semester, with a little arithmetic, you can figure out how you need to do on subsequent exams to earn a particular grade.

Academic Honesty & Classroom Conduct

The UC Berkeley Honor Code states that "As a member of the UC Berkeley community, I act with honesty, integrity, and respect for others" (<https://teaching.berkeley.edu/berkeley-honor-code>). I expect you will follow these principles. You may not copy specific text or ideas from others, whether from fellow students, from authors of our readings or other material you find, without specific attribution. To do otherwise is to plagiarize. You may not cheat on any of the exams by bringing in illicit outside material, copying from fellow students, or engaging in other dishonest practices. Violation of these rules will result in an immediate **-0-** on the *entire* assignment in question, plus a report to the Office of Academic Affairs at my discretion.

You may of course discuss the lectures and readings with your fellow students. Forming studying groups on your own is encouraged, especially since there are no discussion sections to accompany this course. If these groups are used to struggle through ideas or debate topics (both are also good uses of class time, by the way!), then the effort expended can be very rewarding. However, if groups are used simply to memorize a classmate's notes by rote, to subsequently recite on exams, **this is effectively another form of plagiarism** as far as I am concerned. I use this specific example because it has popped up in my courses before.

Study group meetings should be suspended during periods where a take-home exam is active. They can begin again after the exam due date has been reached.

Use of laptops, tablets, smartphones, etc. in class. I use my laptop for virtually everything and do not expect students not to utilize the various digital technologies we have at our disposal today. However, if you are texting, Twittering, Facebooking, watching YouTube or Netflix, or some other such thing in class, you are likely distracting others and I will ask you to leave.

Recommendation Letters

Writing recommendation letters for graduate programs or similar pursuits is part of my job and I am happy to do it. However, I am not inclined to write letters for people when all I know is what grade they earned in my course, even if it is a high grade. Students particularly from other countries may not be accustomed to talking to professors about their interests—be they academic, political, or otherwise—outside of class discussion. But, unless you are very vocal in class discussion (which would be great!), I'd advise you to visit me regularly in office hours if you are contemplating asking me for a letter of recommendation at some point in the future.

Reading/Exam Schedule

All readings for this course are available on bCourses in the READINGS folder of the FILES section.

Readings associated with a date are to be completed prior to the class meeting on that day. It may become necessary to adjust the reading schedule as the semester unfolds. If this happens, I will make the change(s) on bCourses—check the SYLLABUS section online to see the most up-to-date schedule. I will not change this PDF file.

Jan	17	Wed	Introduction: an institutionalist approach to understanding sports
	19	Fri	(cont'd)
	22	Mon	(cont'd)
	24	Wed	What is a sport? The case of eSports.
			<i>Reading:</i> B. McGrath, "Good Game: The rise of the professional cyber athlete" <i>The New Yorker</i> Nov. 24, 2014
	26	Fri	Why is cheerleading not a sport?
			<i>Reading:</i> L. Grindstaff & E. West, "Cheerleading and the Gendered Politics of Sport"
	29	Mon	(cont'd)
	31	Wed	Social institutions on the field of play
			<i>Reading:</i> M. Gladwell, "How David Beats Goliath: When underdogs break the rules" <i>The New Yorker</i> May 11, 2009
Feb	2	Fri	(cont'd)
	5	Mon	Whose knowledge of baseball has legitimacy?
			<i>Reading:</i> M. Lewis, <i>Moneyball</i> ch 2
	7	Wed	(cont'd)

Feb	9	Fri	Why do women in the U.S. play soccer, but not football? <i>Reading:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Markovits & L. Rensmann, "A Silent 'Feminization' of Global Sports Cultures?" D. Foley, "The Great American Football Ritual" SPORTS FANDOM SURVEY due on bCourses, February 9th, 2:00 PM
	12	Mon	(cont'd)
	14	Wed	Race, genetics, and sport <i>Reading:</i> M. Gladwell, "The Sports Taboo"
	16	Fri	(cont'd) Midterm #1 Distributed on bCourses Friday, February 16th, 3:00 PM
	19	Mon	VETERAN'S DAY: NO CLASS
	21	Wed	Sport & political protest <i>Reading:</i> N. Shapiro, "The burden of representation" <i>The Daily Californian</i> Nov. 5, 2017
	22	Thu	Midterm #1 DUE on bCourses Thursday, February 22nd, 12:00 PM
	23	Fri	(Sport & political protest, cont'd)
	26	Mon	(cont'd)
	28	Wed	Institutions of sports fandom <i>Reading:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> R. Giulianotti, "Supporters, Followers, Fans, and <i>Flâneurs</i>" B. McGrath, "When Fantasy Sports Beat Real Ones"
Mar	2	Fri	(cont'd)
	5	Mon	(cont'd)
	7	Wed	Why is college sports so popular in the U.S.? <i>No required readings.</i>
	9	Fri	Should varsity athletes be paid? <i>Reading:</i> T. Branch, "The Shame of College Sports" <i>The Atlantic</i> Oct. 2011
	12	Mon	(cont'd)
	14	Wed	(cont'd)
	16	Fri	(cont'd)

Mar	19	Mon	The economics of big-time college sports <i>Reading:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> James Andrew Miller, Steve Eder & Richard Sandomir, “College Football’s Most Dominant Player? It’s ESPN” <i>The New York Times</i> 24 Aug 2013 Steve Eder, Richard Sandomir & James Andrew Miller, “At Louisville, Athletic Boom Is Rooted in ESPN Partnership” <i>The New York Times</i> 25 Aug 2013
	21	Wed	(cont’d)
	23	Fri	How do sports become popular? The role of sports leagues <i>Reading:</i> E. Leifer, <i>Making the Majors</i> intro + ch 5
	26	Mon	SPRING BREAK
	28	Wed	SPRING BREAK
	30	Fri	SPRING BREAK
Apr	2	Mon	(The role of sports leagues, cont’d) Midterm #2 Distributed on bCourses Monday, April 2nd, 1:00 PM
	4	Wed	(The role of sports leagues, cont’d)
	6	Fri	How do sports become popular? The role of social class <i>Reading:</i> J. Kaufman & O. Patterson, “Cross-National Cultural Diffusion: The Global Spread of Cricket”
	9	Mon	(cont’d)
	10	Tue	Midterm #2 DUE on bCourses Tuesday, April 10th, 12:00 PM
	11	Wed	The political economy of professional sports <i>Reading:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> D. Coates, “A Closer Look at Stadium Subsidies” R. Eckstein & K. Delaney, “New Sports Stadiums, Community Self-Esteem, and Community Collective Conscience”
	13	Fri	(cont’d)
	16	Mon	<i>Nation still matters in the world of sport ...</i> <i>Reading:</i> A. Bertoli, “Nationalism and Interstate Conflict: A Regression Discontinuity Analysis” We will view the 2012 BBC <i>Panorama</i> episode “Stadiums of Hate” in class.
	18	Wed	(cont’d)
	20	Fri	... but perhaps not as much today as before. <i>Reading:</i> R. Poli, “The Denationalization of Sport”

	23	Mon	Deviance in sport: the case of PED usage <i>Reading:</i> B. Sluggett, "Creating the 'Pure' Athlete" ch 2
	25	Wed	(cont'd)
	27	Fri	(cont'd)
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	30	Mon	READING,
May	2	Wed	RECITATION, and
	4	Fri	REVIEW
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	8	Tue	Final Exam 11:30 AM-2:30 PM