

# Soc 117 Sport as a Social Institution

Summer 2018 | UC Berkeley

**Instructor:** Linus Huang

**Office Hours (drop-in):** Tuesdays, 12:10 PM-1:30 PM, 487 Barrows

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**Final Exam:** In-class on last day of instruction, Thursday, August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018

## What is this course about?

This course surveys a curated list of topics in contemporary sport with the objective of developing an understanding of how sport is shaped by social structure. We can hardly cover all worthwhile topics in contemporary sport, for lack of time and source material. However, students will come away with a better understanding of sociological ways of looking at the world and of the world of sports in particular.

## Readings

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

## Grading

Your course grade will be determined by:

- ❖ **Attendance and Participation (20%).** You are each allowed one unexcused absence during the summer session. Every absence thereafter will result in a 1% deduction from your course grade, up to a maximum of -20%.
- ❖ **One in-class midterm (40%),** administered on Thursday, July 19<sup>th</sup>. The exam will be a combination of short answers, multiple choice, fill in the blank, and matching. More details on the format of the exam will be given over the course of the term.
- ❖ **One in-class final exam (40%),** administered on the last day of instruction, Thursday, August 9<sup>th</sup>. The format of the exam is yet to be determined.

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.

During the Fall and Spring terms, I invariably teach a MWF format, with each meeting 1 hour (actually, 50 minutes). In the six-week summer session, we meet four times a week for two hours each. I will treat these two-hour meetings as simply two 50-minute sessions separated by a 10-minute break after the first hour. We may cover a single topic for each of the two 50-minute sessions in a given meeting, but very often we will switch topics after the 10-minute break, as inelegant as that shift may seem (sorry, it can't be avoided). The following reading schedule therefore specifies what we will be doing in the first vs. second 50-minute session.

As will be explained in lecture, course topics are grouped into major themes. These are color-coded in the schedule grid below according to the following color scheme:

Theme #1	Theme #2	Theme #3
Do sports “bring us together”, or do they re-produce social stratification?	The tension between sport as <b>commercialized</b> vs. <b>non-commercialized</b> activity.	What role does <b>territory</b> play in the cultural logic of participation and spectatorship in sport?

			<i>first hour</i>	<i>second hour</i>
Jul	2	M	<b>Introduction: what is sociology?</b> <i>No readings.</i>	<b>Introduction: what is a sociology of sport?</b> <i>No readings.</i>
	3	Tu	<b>Is athletic excellence about genetics?</b> <i>Reading: D. Epstein, The Sports Gene ch 1, 9</i>	<b>Social stratification and sport: introduction</b> <i>No readings.</i>
	4	W	<i>Holiday! No class.</i>	
	5	Th	<b>Racial stratification within sport</b> <i>Reading: J. Reid &amp; J. McManus, “The NFL’s Racial Divide” The Undeclared Apr 26 2017</i>	<b>Gender stratification and sport: what counts as a “sport”?</b> <i>Readings:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• B. McGrath, “Good Game: The rise of the professional cyber athlete” <i>The New Yorker</i> Nov 24, 2014</li> <li>• L. Grindstaff &amp; E. West, “Cheerleading and the Gendered Politics of Sport”</li> </ul>

Jul	9	M	<i>Gender stratification and sport: what counts as a “sport”?</i> (cont’d)	<b>Gender stratification and sport: who gets to play a sport?</b> <i>Readings:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A. Markovits &amp; L. Rensmann, “A Silent ‘Feminization’ of Global Sports Cultures?”</li> <li>• D. Foley, “The Great American Football Ritual”</li> </ul>
	10	Tu	<i>Gender stratification and sport: who gets to play a sport?</i> (cont’d)	<b>How organized youth sports are about class anxiety</b> <i>Reading:</i> H. Levey Friedman, <i>Playing to Win</i> ch 1, 3
	11	W	<i>How organized youth sports are about class anxiety</i> (cont’d)	<b>Sports &amp; political protest</b> <i>Readings:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• K. Cohen, “The Forgotten Origins of Politics in Sports” <i>Slate</i> Jan 2 2018</li> <li>• H. Bryant, “How Did Our Sports Get So Divisive?” <i>The New York Times</i> May 12 2018</li> </ul>
	12	Th	<b>Sports spectator identity</b> <i>Readings:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• R. Giulianotti, “Supporters, Followers, Fans, and <i>Flâneurs</i>”</li> <li>• B. McGrath, “Dream Teams” <i>The New Yorker</i> Apr 13 2015</li> </ul>	<i>Sports spectator identity</i> (cont’d)
	16	M	<i>Sports spectator identity</i> (cont’d)	<b>Is sport about winning at all cost?</b> <i>Reading:</i> R. Beamish & I. Ritchie, “From Chivalrous ‘Brothers-In-Arms’ to the Eligible Athlete”
	17	Tu	<b>Why is college sports so popular in the U.S.?</b> <i>Reading:</i> A. Lifschitz, M. Sauder & M.L. Stevens, “Football as a Status System in U.S. Higher Education” <u>but only</u> pp. 206-07 (“Historical Narrative”)	<b>The amateurism model in college sports</b> <i>Reading:</i> T. Branch, “The Shame of College Sports” <i>The Atlantic</i> Oct 2011
	18	W	<i>The amateurism model in college sports</i> (cont’d)	<i>The amateurism model in college sports</i> (cont’d)
	19	Th	<b>In-class midterm</b>	
	23	M	<b>The economics of big-time college sports</b> <i>Readings:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• J.A. Miller, S. Eder &amp; R. Sandomir, “College Football’s Most Dominant Player? It’s ESPN” <i>The New York Times</i> Aug 24 2013</li> <li>• S. Eder, R. Sandomir &amp; J.A. Miller, “At Louisville, Athletic Boom Is Rooted in ESPN Partnership” <i>The New York Times</i> Aug 25 2013</li> </ul>	<i>The economics of big-time college sports</i> (cont’d)

Jul	24	Tu	<b>Cal's athletics crisis</b> <i>Reading:</i> CSA's Intercollegiate Athletics Review report	<b>Title IX in college sports</b> <i>No readings.</i>
	25	W	<b>Why do sports not become commercialized?</b> <i>Reading:</i> J. Kaufman & O. Patterson, "Cross-National Cultural Diffusion: The Global Spread of Cricket"	<b>Sports leagues: do we find favorite teams by "settling" or "searching"?</b> <i>Reading:</i> E. Leifer, <i>Making the Majors</i> intro, ch 5
	26	Th	<i>Sports leagues: do we find favorite teams by "settling" or "searching"? (cont'd)</i>	<i>Sports leagues: do we find favorite teams by "settling" or "searching"? (cont'd)</i>
	30	M	<b>The political economy of professional sports</b> <i>Readings:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• D. Coates, "A Closer Look at Stadium Subsidies"</li> <li>• R. Eckstein &amp; K. Delaney, "New Sports Stadiums, Community Self-Esteem, and Community Collective Conscience"</li> </ul>	<i>The political economy of professional sports (cont'd)</i>
	31	Tu	<b>Sports &amp; Nation: nation still matters in the world of sport...</b> <i>Video:</i> BBC Panorama, "Stadiums of Hate" Jun 1, 2012 <i>Reading:</i> A. Bertoli, "Nationalism and Interstate Conflict: A Regression Discontinuity Analysis"	<i>Sports &amp; Nation: nation still matters in the world of sport... (cont'd)</i>
Aug	1	W	<b>... but perhaps not as much today as it did before.</b> <i>Reading:</i> R. Poli, "The Denationalization of Sport"	<b>Social institutions on the field of play</b> <i>Reading:</i> M. Gladwell, "How David Beats Goliath" <i>The New Yorker</i> May 11, 2009
	2	Th	<b>Whose knowledge of baseball has authority?</b> <i>Reading:</i> M. Lewis, <i>Moneyball</i> ch 2, 4	<b>Cultural norms of the human body</b> <i>Reading:</i> M. George, "Making Sense of Muscle"
	6	M	<b>How we arrived at today's anti-PED world</b> <i>Reading:</i> B. Sluggett, "Creating the 'Pure' Athlete" ch 2	<i>How we arrived at today's anti-PED world (cont'd)</i>
	7	Tu	<b>Sports &amp; violence</b> <i>Readings:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• R. Collins, "On-Field Player Violence"</li> <li>• M. Messner, "Male Athletes, Injuries, and Violence"</li> </ul>	<i>Sports &amp; violence (cont'd)</i>
	8	W	"RRR Day". Course review & evaluations.	
	9	Th	<b>In-class final exam</b>	