

Soc117 Sports as a Social Institution

Fall 2012 | UC Berkeley

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Final Exam: Exam Group 13 | Thursday, December 13, 2012 8-11 AM

Course Overview

To speak of “sports as a social institution” is to look at sports in two slightly different ways. First, sports are shaped by social institutions—that is, sports are NOT isolated worlds entirely with their own internal rules and logic. Instead they are embedded within broader institutions such as race, gender, sexuality, the emergence of fantasy sports, the profit motive, etc.—all of which interfere with the presumed ultimate objective of winning or of sports-as-meritocracy. A sociological understanding of sports in this sense means understanding the different types of social meanings society invests in sports, and what consequences this has.

Second, sports are *themselves* institutions, which may be very local in nature—for instance, a variation of a game of kickball played only a few friends in one very specific neighborhood in the world; or global in scope, as in soccer (“football” to everyone outside the U.S.) during the quadrennial World Cup. If society shapes sports, sports also shapes society. Together, these two conceptual approaches will comprise an institutionalist understanding of sports that we’ll seek to build over the course.

Required Readings

There are two required texts plus a course reader. The two texts are:

- Eric Leifer, *Making the Majors: The Transformation of Team Sports in America*
- Andrei S. Markovits & Lars Rensmann, *Gaming the World: How Sports are Reshaping Global Politics and Culture*

Both of these texts are available at the ASUC Bookstore.

We will spend about four total weeks on these two texts. The balance of the course’s readings will come from a course reader, available at **University Copy Services** at **2425 Channing Way**, two blocks south of campus in the arcade under the Durant-Channing garage.

Grading

Course grades will be determined by three components: two midterms and a final exam.

- **Two midterms** (30% each): Both midterm exams will be administered in-class. They will be short answer (one- or two-paragraphs responses per question) in format. The first will be given on **Monday, September 24th**, and the second will be on **Monday, October 22nd**. Both will occupy the full hour of class.

The first midterm will cover the first 4 weeks of course material, up through the section on Sports & Media. The second midterm will not be cumulative, but will cover the next 4 weeks of material through our section on “Moneyball”.

- **Final exam** (35%). The final exam will be cumulative. It will be administered during the university-designated final exam group period. Soc117 is in Exam Group 13, which goes on **Thursday, December 13th**, from **8-11 AM**.

For all exams, you will be responsible for the corresponding readings, material from lecture, and appropriate class discussion. I will expect you to have completed readings prior to class and to come to class prepared to talk about them. Lectures will include some review of the readings where appropriate but will also significantly expand upon them.

The grading scale is as follows. ‘[’ means including, and ‘)’ means excluding, so ‘[83-87)’ for example means everything including 83 up to but **NOT** including 87.

A+	[97+	A	[93-97)	A-	[90-93)
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/tab 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.

There are no other discretionary considerations that factor in to the calculation of your final grade. As the course progresses, you can calculate your performance and what you need to do on subsequent graded assignments to get X grade exactly.

Lecture, Reading, and Assignment/Exam Schedule

The following schedule is based on the plan of covering two readings per week. Since we’re on a MWF schedule, the idea is to spend M and half of W on the first piece, and then the second half of W and all of F on the second. Occasionally we’ll spend only one day on a reading, and occasionally we’ll spend two whole days on a reading instead of only one-and-a-half. **You must have the indicated readings completed prior to the class they are listed.**

All readings except Leifer and Markovits & Rensmann are in the course reader.

Aug 24 Fri Introduction: what is a sociology of sports?
Readings: none

Aug 27 Mon Introduction: institutionalist vs. functionalist approaches to sociology
Readings: none

Society Shapes Sports ...

Aug 29 Wed The game on the field/court/pitch
Readings:

- Gladwell, "How David Beats Goliath" *The New Yorker* 11 May 2009
- Lewis, "If I Only Had the Nerve" *ESPN* 18 Dec 2006

31 Fri (cont'd)

Sports, Race, and Gender

Sep 3 Mon ***** LABOR DAY: NO CLASS *****

5 Wed Why do men play baseball and women play softball?
Reading: Ring, "America's Baseball Underground"

7 Fri The NBA and WNBA
Reading: Banet-Weiser, "Hoop Dreams"

Sports, the Body, and Technology

Sep 10 Mon Sports and the Body
Reading: George, "Making Sense of Muscle"

12 Wed Sports and Technology
Reading: Sluggett, "Creating the 'Pure' Athlete"

14 Fri (cont'd)

Sports and Media

Sep 17 Mon Sports media representations
Reading: Messner, Dunbar & Hunt, "The Televised Sports Manhood Formula"

19 Wed The economic organization of sports media
Reading: Horrow & Swatek, "Remote Controlling What You See on TV"

21 Fri Does the medium transform the product?
Readings:

- Giulianotti, "Supporters, Followers, Fans, and *Flâneurs*"
- "NFL Scrambles to Fill Seats" *Wall Street Journal* 29 Jun 2012

Sep 24 Mon **MIDTERM #1, IN-CLASS**

The Political Economy of Sports

Sep 26 Wed Are sports a “public good”?
Readings: Eckstein & Delaney, “New Sports Stadiums, Community Self-Esteem, and Community Collective Conscience”

28 Fri (cont’d)

Oct 1 Mon Sports league structure & ownership
Reading: Horrow & Swatek, “So You Wanna Own a Sports Team?”

The Creation of Major League Sports in the U.S. as Cultural Products

Oct 3 Wed The major leagues: cultivating a “public”
Reading: Leifer, *Making the Majors* introduction + ch 1, 4

5 Fri (cont’d)

8 Mon National publics: why did the NFL pass MLB as America’s #1 sport?
Reading: Leifer, *Making the Majors* ch 5

10 Wed Local publics: MLB and the NBA try to catch up
Reading: Leifer, *Making the Majors* ch 6

12 Fri (cont’d)

Oct 15 Mon “Moneyball” as a social institution
Readings:

- Lewis, *Moneyball* ch 2, 3, 4, 12
- “Can Statistics Explain Soccer?” *Wall Street Journal* 24 Jun 2008

Sports Shapes Society ...

Oct 17 Wed The social meaning of sports
Reading: Foley, “The Great American Football Ritual”

19 Fri (cont’d)

22 Mon **MIDTERM #2, IN-CLASS**

24 Wed Sports as a “hegemonic” culture
Reading: Markovits & Rensmann, *Gaming the World* ch 1

- Oct 26 Fri Soccer as a global hegemonic culture
Reading: Markovits & Rensmann, *Gaming the World* ch 2
- 29 Mon The feminization of soccer in the U.S.
Reading: Markovits & Rensmann, *Gaming the World* ch 4
- 31 Wed Nativism and American exceptionalism in sports
Reading: Markovits & Rensmann, *Gaming the World* ch 5
Video: We will watch the BBC Panorama/Euro 2012 feature “Stadiums of Hate” in class

Nov 2 Fri (cont’d)

Sports and Higher Education

- Nov 5 Mon What role does sports play in education? One answer: brand differentiation!
Reading: Markovits & Rensmann, *Gaming the World* ch 6
- 7 Wed Is college sports part of the academic mission or is it just a business?
Readings:
- Suggs, “Football, Television, and the Supreme Court”
 - Branch, “The Shame of College Sports” *The Atlantic* Oct 2011
- 9 Fri (cont’d)
- 12 Mon ***** VETERAN’S DAY: NO CLASS *****
- 14 Wed Should college football be banned?
Readings: none
Video: IQ² “Should college football be banned?” (first half)
- 16 Fri (cont’d)
Readings: none
Video: IQ² “Should college football be banned?” (second half)
- 19 Mon Should we pay college athletes?
Readings:
- “Let’s Start Paying College Athletes” *New York Times* 30 Dec 2011
 - “Rebutting Taylor Branch’s belief in paying student-athletes” *Sports Illustrated* 21 Sep 2011
 - “College athletes already have advantages and shouldn’t be paid” *Sports Illustrated* 20 Jan 2012
- 21 Wed Title IX and the reverse discrimination thesis
Reading: Cheslock, “Who’s Playing College Sports?”

23 Fri ***** THANKSGIVING: NO CLASS *****

Sports and Violence

Nov 26 Mon Functionalist approaches
Reading: Collins, "On-Field Player Violence"

28 Wed Institutional approaches
Reading: "Does Football Have a Future?" *The New Yorker* 31 Jan 2011

30 Fri Course wrap-up and evaluations

Dec 3-7 ***** RRR Week *****

13 Thu **FINAL EXAM 8-11 A.M.**