Soc 117 Sports as a Social Institution

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Final Exam: In-class, Thursday, August 9th, 2012

Course Overview

To speak of “sports as a social institution” is to look at sports in two slightly different ways. First, sports themselves are institutions, which may be very local in nature—for instance, a variation of a game of kickball played only by a few neighborhood friends; or global in scope, as in soccer (“football” to everyone outside the U.S.) during the quadrennial World Cup. How do some sports grow from local phenomena to nationally or globally popular “codes” of play either performed or followed by hundreds of millions of people?

Second, sports are shaped by other social institutions such as race, gender, class, sexuality, violence, the emergence of fantasy sports, the profit motive, etc.—all of which potentially interfere with the presumed objective of winning or of sports-as-meritocracy. A sociological understanding of sports, therefore, entails an understanding of the different types of social meanings we invest in sports, and what consequences this has. Together, these two conceptual approaches will comprise an institutionalist understanding of sports that we’ll seek to build over the course.

Required Texts

Readings for the course will come from three different sources. First, readings for the first week of class, and the first week ONLY, will be posted under the “READINGS” folder under the “Resources” tab on the course bspace site. They will be in PDF format.

Second, there are two required books, both available at ASUC:


Between bspace and the two books, that’s about half the course readings. The rest of the readings will come from a course reader, soon to be available at University Copy at 2425 Channing Way, south of campus under the Channing/Durant parking garage.
Grading

Your grade will consist of three components:

1. **Four in-class quizzes** (7.5% each, 30% total) to be administered on the Thursday of the second through fifth weeks. These quizzes will cover the readings and class discussion of the previous week, including the readings to have been completed for the day of the quiz.

   Absolutely NO make-ups will be possible for the quizzes. If you have a prior commitment on one of these days, come see me within the first week.

2. **A take-home midterm exam** (35%), to be distributed on July 16th and due one week later. The details of this assignment will be elaborated upon as the exam approaches.

3. **An in-class final exam** (35%), to be administered on the last day of instruction, August 9th, as per the standard practice of the summer sessions (which otherwise have no RRR week or separate exam period). The exam will be predominantly or all multiple choice.

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.

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Lecture, Reading, and Assignment/Exam Schedule

Jul 2 Mon  Introduction: what is an “institutionalist” perspective on sports?
Readings: none

3 Tue  The game on the field/court/pitch
Readings:
- Michael Lewis, “If I Only Had the Nerve” *ESPN.com* 18 Dec 2006 (bspace)

4 Wed  **NO CLASS.** Happy 4th of July.

5 Thu  The social meaning of sports
Readings:
- Richard Giulianiotti, “Supporters, Followers, Fans, and *Flaneurs*: A Taxonomy of Spectator Identities in Football” (bspace)
- Douglas Foley, “The Great American Football Ritual” (bspace)
Jul  9 Mon  Gender and sport
   Readings:
   ▫ Jennifer Ring, “America’s Baseball Underground” (reader)
   ▫ Jamila Aisha Brown, “The WNBA Problem: Play Like a Man, Act Like a Lady” (reader)

10 Tue  Sports and the body
   Reading: Molly George, “Making Sense of Muscle” (reader)

11 Wed  Sports and technology
   Readings:
   ▫ Bryan Sluggett, “Creating the ‘Pure’ Athlete” (M.A. thesis) ch 1, pp. 1-20 + ch 2 (reader)
   ▫ “Pulling All the Strings” The Wall Street Journal 23 Nov 2010 (reader)

12 Thu  The media and sports
   Readings:
   ▫ Michael Messner, Michele Dunbar & Darnell Hunt, “The Televised Sports Manhood Formula” (reader)
   ▫ Rick Horrow & Karla Swatek, “Remote Controlling What You See on TV” (reader)
   
   QUIZ #1

16 Mon  The political economy of sports: are sports a “public good”?
   Readings:
   ▫ Andrew Zimbalist, “May the Best Team Win” (reader)
   ▫ Rick Horrow & Karla Swatek, “The Government Gets Into—and Out of—the Game” (reader)

TAKE-HOME MIDTERM EXAM DISTRIBUTED JULY 16th, 2012

17 Tue  The political economy of sports: league structure and ownership
   Reading: Rick Horrow & Karla Swatek, “So You Wanna Own a Sports Team?” (reader)

18 Wed  The institutionalization of the modern U.S. pro sports leagues: cultivating a “public”
   Reading: Eric Leifer, Making the Majors preface + ch 1, 4
Jul 19 Thu Institutionalization of the modern pro sports leagues: the NFL passes MLB  
*Reading*: Leifer, *Making the Majors* ch 5

**QUIZ #2**

23 Mon Institutionalization of the modern pro sports leagues: MLB and the NBA try to catch up  
*Reading*: Leifer, *Making the Majors* ch 6

**TAKE-HOME MIDTERM EXAM DUE IN-CLASS JULY 23rd, 2012**

24 Tue *Moneyball* as an institution  
*Readings*:  
- Michael Lewis, *Moneyball* ch 2, 3, 4, 12 (reader)  

25 Wed Globalization of sport: how did soccer become the world’s sport?  
*Readings*:  
- Andrei S. Markovits & Lars Rensmann, *Gaming the World* ch 2  

26 Thu Globalization of sport: the feminization of soccer  
*Reading*: Markovits & Rensmann, *Gaming the World* ch 4

**QUIZ #3**

30 Mon Globalization of sport: parochialism and its expressions  
*Reading*: Markovits & Rensmann, *Gaming the World* ch 5

We will watch the half-hour BBC America Euro 2012 feature “Stadiums of Hate” in class.

31 Tue Globalization of sport: American exceptionalism?  
*Reading*: Markovits & Rensmann, *Gaming the World* ch 6
Aug 1 Wed  College sports: the institutional context  
Readings:  
- Welch Suggs, “Football, Television, and the Supreme Court” (reader)  
- Taylor Branch, “The Shame of College Sports” (reader)  
- “The Beginning of the End for the NCAA” Grantland 1 Nov 2011 (reader)

2 Thu  Should we pay college athletes?  
Readings (yea):  
- “The Case for Paying College Athletes” The Wall Street Journal 16 Sep 2011 (reader)  
- “Why Jason Whitlock thinks we should give college football another chance” Slate 1 May 2012 (reader)

Readings (nay):  
- “NCAA President Mark Emmert: Paying College Athletes is a Terrible Idea” The Wall Street Journal 11 Jan 2012 (reader)  
- “Rebutting Taylor Branch’s belief in paying student-athletes” Sports Illustrated 21 Sep 2011 (reader)  
- “College athletes already have advantages and shouldn’t be paid” Sports Illustrated 20 Jan 2012 (reader)

QUIZ #4

6 Mon  Title IX and the reverse discrimination thesis  

7 Tue  Sports and violence  
Readings:  
- Randall Collins, “On-Field Player Violence” (reader)  
- “Does Football Have a Future?” The New Yorker 31 Jan 2011 (reader)

We will watch the intelligence² debate “Should college football be banned?” from May 8th, 2012 in class. The video will take the entire 100 minutes of class.

8 Wed  Sports and violence: Discussion  
Readings: none

9 Thu  FINAL EXAM (in-class)