FYS 390: Sports, Leadership, and Social Justice

Spring 2011

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Office hours: Friday, 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. and by appointment. Generally: Meeting Monday and Wednesday before class is usually impossible because of conflict with my teaching schedule and the need to prepare for our class sessions. I have some availability after class Monday and Wednesday (until 5) if I know in advance you need to speak with me (let me know 24 hrs in advance), and also Friday afternoon (2 to 5 p.m.) if you let me know in advance. Generally, Tuesdays and Thursdays are research days and I often work off-campus those days. Occasional meetings on those days are possible if it is worked out a few days in advance and there are no other timely preparations. I will be there for the posted office hours every Friday except March 4 (spring break) and March 18 (out of town for a conference). All students are required to attend office hours at least once prior to spring break or otherwise make an appointment with me.

Outline of the Course

This class will critically examine sports in three dimensions: as a social phenomenon and cultural practice worth of critical study in its own right; as an arena in which not just games but social, cultural, and political issues are contested; and as a vehicle for radical social change.

Perhaps surprisingly for a leadership studies class, except for one day there will be relatively little explicit discussion in this course of coaching as such. This is not because coaching is an uninteresting or unimportant phenomenon. It is instead for two reasons: first, we simply do not have enough time to give the topic the detailed treatment it deserves; second, an aim of the class is to focus primarily on the perspectives of the athletes and the way they experience sports. That said, coaches will certainly come up in several of the readings (especially the autobiographical works by Jerry Kramer and Andre Agassi, but we will be seeing coaches through players’ eyes in each case. If you are primarily interested in examining different models of coaching I would a) invite you to look at the syllabus for the FYS Fall 2010 version of this course, which does include a lot of literature on coaching b) examine the excellent book Successful Coaching by Rainer Martens as well as the recent collection Ethical Issues in Coaching (Routledge, 2011); and c) consider writing your research paper for the course on a topic related to coaching; this is acceptable so long as the paper addresses a justice or ethics-related issue. We will spend one day early in the class discussing ethical issues in youth coaching (Jim Thompson’s Positive Coaching, another recommended book).
The First Quarter of the course will discuss sports on its own terms from the standpoint of athletes. First we consider the *craft of the athlete*. There are four issues to consider here: First, seeing athletes as complete persons. Second, recognizing that athletic excellence is a form of *intelligence* and *skillful craft* that is worthy of respect. Third, understanding why outstanding athletes are successful (hint: practice). Fourth, considering the examples of two outstanding athletes who evolved identities and personalities that far transcended sports as such (Bill Bradley and Arthur Ashe).

Next we go on to consider *experiences* of athletes as told by athletes themselves, considering two texts: lineman Jerry Kramer’s classic account of the 1967 Green Bay Packers (and Coach Vince Lombardi), *Instant Replay*; and tennis star Andre Agassi’s recent acclaimed autobiography, *Open*. These different narratives raise an array of issues related to sports and its purpose.

In the Second Quarter of the class, we go on to discuss several issue of social justice as they arise within college and professional sports. First, we consider the relationship between race, class, and basketball, explored in a high school setting. Second, we look at issues of gender equity, with a particular focus on women’s tennis and the push for equity in pro tennis in the 1970s. Third, we consider sexuality and sports, with primary focus on an ethnographic study of male gay athletes, supplemented by additional readings on how gays and lesbians are represented and discussed in sports media culture. Fourth, we consider the structure of collegiate sports as a whole and whether the current “amateur” structure is ethically justifiable. Fifth, we consider professional sports and the fundamental question of to whom beloved pro teams should belong—the fans and communities that support them, or the owners?

In the Third Quarter, we consider how sports have been and might be used as a vehicle for promoting large-scale, fundamental social change. We begin with a detailed examination of the historical example of Muhammad Ali in the 1960s. We then consider the role soccer played in developing a generation of anti-apartheid leaders in South Africa, beginning on Robben Island in the 1960s. We then look at the organized effort of the last fifteen years by civil rights lawyers to alter the hiring policies of NFL teams so as to increase the portion of African-American head coaches in the league. Finally, we will consider the current homeless soccer movement, a worldwide phenomenon that has reached Richmond as well. The key questions here are when, under what conditions, and how sports might become not a vehicle for celebrating the status quo but for promoting fundamental change in the direction of social justice.

Note also that questions of justice and ethics will be a running theme throughout the class. In several weeks, we will read chapters from Robert Simon’s book *Fair Play*, which is an explicit treatment of ethical issues arising in sports. But we will also call on your background in prior Jepson classes (especially “Justice and Civil Society” and for many of you, “Ethics”) in the class discussions and in evaluating the other readings.
The Fourth Quarter consists of your research papers. This is expected to be a substantial piece of work; it is the only piece of extended writing you will do in this class. Your paper should connect to themes of the course, and while it may touch on events or issues discussed in the syllabus, it should go deeper and well beyond what we will do in class. It is important that you begin thinking of topics, events, or ideas to write about very early in the class.

Throughout the course we will also keep a course blog to which each student will contribute three posting. Your blog postings should draw on our course readings and discussion to engage with contemporary issues in sports; the basic format is that you will discuss issues raised in the weekly columns of Dave Zirin (“Edge of Sports”) and the sports columnists of *The New York Times*.

**Class Requirements:**

1. Doing all the class readings *religiously*
2. Attending *all* classes, arriving on time and staying until the end.
3. Weekly response paper of 600-800 words. Response should discuss specific issues raised in the reading or in discussion in some depth; go for depth rather than breadth. For instance, it is better to focus on one or two incidents in the career of Andre Agassi rather than attempting to summarize the contents of “Open.” Due by email Wednesdays at midnight (after class).
4. Subscribe by email to Dave Zirin, *The Edge of Sports*
5. Read all sports columnists in *The New York Times* daily. This newspaper is available in the Dining Hall for free. Or you can read online at [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com).
6. Over the course of the semester, write **three** “blog postings” of 500-600 words responding to issues raised or arguments made by either Zirin or one of the New York Times columnists. You may draw on course readings in your posting, and may use first-person when appropriate. Think of this as your chance to be the sports columnist. Submit your posting to me by email and we will post them on a Jepson web site after opening. For each posting, include links to the articles you are citing plus other relevant material. You must submit the first posting by February 15, second by March 20, and your third by April 24. If the initial submission is substandard, I will return it to you for revision before it is published; you must complete the revision to get credit for the posting.
7. Research paper of 18-22 pages. **You should begin thinking about this the first day of class.** A paper topic must be chosen and approved by March 1, and an outline and bibliography must be submitted and approved by April 1. You must meet with me at least once about your term paper prior to April 1. Due at the end of exam period (earlier for seniors).
8. Attendance at four films: “Arthur Ashe: Citizen of the World,” (with discussion afterward); “Hoop Dreams”; “Training Rules”; “Not Just a Game” and one lecture (Jackson Katz).
9. Attendance at two class field trips: to the Robins Center for the Richmond v. Charlotte, women’s basketball game (go Abby!) Wed. January 26 at noon; to a Richmond City Pee Wee Basketball game Sat. February 5 (morning—game is one hour).

10. Attendance at office hours for a brief meeting prior to spring break (15 minutes).

11. There are two optional class social events: viewing party for NCAA Men’s Basketball Tournament Final (April 4), and pickup soccer game with members of local homeless soccer team after the last day of class (April 22)

Grade Composition

**Participation. 25%.** In this class, attendance and participation are huge! The main work of the class is doing the reading and showing up prepared to discuss the readings. I will provide updates on your participation grade roughly February 15 and March 20 so you know where you stand. Informed engagement with the material in the class is what I am looking for. This class is not a spectator sport. You will lose one-third of a letter grade your semester participation grade for each unexcused absence (i.e. B+ becomes B). Persistently showing up late will be similarly penalized. The easiest way to get a disappointing final grade in this course is to miss class.

**Weekly Response Papers 35%.** These will be evaluated in accord with a) whether they were submitted on time b) the quality of the writing (should be clear, readable, not sloppy) c) the quality of the engagement with the text d) overall understanding of the class material and how it is related over the course of the semester. **Note:** the weeks in which Simon’s Fair Play has chapters assigned, you are required to draw on those chapters in your response paper.

Turn response papers in via email. I will return response papers each week by email with brief comments and indication of grade. There are five possible grade: no credit, check minus (equivalent to B/C+ or worse), check, (B- to B+), check plus (A- to A), check double-plus (A/A+). Every paper counts: you’ve got to bring it every week!

**Blog Postings 10%.** These will be evaluated in accord with a) whether they were submitted on time b) whether it was submitted in good, publishable written English c) the quality of the discussion of the issue you provide and d) the extent to which your posts show evidence of integrating what we have discussed in class. You can draw on some material from your written response papers, but the posting as a whole must be substantially different (i.e. not the same thing with cosmetic changes). **Exception:** if you write an outstanding response paper, it is possible I might recommend it to be published as a blog posting with no or small changes. If so, I will let you know, and it will count as one of your postings for the semester.

**Term Paper 30%.** This will be evaluated in accord with a) quality of background research b) quality of writing c) insight into the topic the paper provides. Success in these areas depends heavily in clearly defining your topic and the question driving your paper. Your aim is to write something that any student of sports (including your professor) will learn something from. An
early start, early identification and exploration of research materials, and a good organization will be crucial.

**PLAN OF STUDY**

**Pregame Warmup: Historical Background**


Note: You must this book in its entirety prior to the first day of class. There will be a quiz based on the book the first day of class. You must pass with at least 85% to continue in the course. The quiz will not be at all hard if you have read the book, but it will be extremely difficult if you have not. If you fail the first attempt, you must take a second (newer and harder) quiz on Monday the 17th, and so on, until you pass. The book provides a basic historical overview of the intersection between sports and politics in the United States that will be extremely valuable background knowledge for the rest of the class. It will be a much better course if everyone is familiar with this information from the beginning.

**First Quarter: Understanding Sports on Its Own Terms: An Athlete-Centered View.**

*The Craft of the Athlete*

**January 12.** Craft and Character I: Bill Bradley

John McPhee, *A Sense of Where You Are* [entire]

**January 17.** Historical Background, II

Abbreviated class for MLK Day Commemoration. Further discussion of *A People’s History of Sports in the United States*

**January 19, January 24, January 26. Tricks of the Trade and Secrets of Success**

Read for January 19: Chris Ballard, *The Art of a Beautiful Game*, Chapters 1-8


Read for January 26: Ballard, *Art of a Beautiful Game*, Chapters 9-12; Syed, *Bounce*, Chapters 6, 8, 10

**CLASS FIELD TRIP TO UR WOMEN’S BASKETBALL GAME, January 26 at noon in the Robins Center**

**January 31.** Craft and Character II: Arthur Ashe
John McPhee, *Levels of the Game* [entire]  

**Film 1. Arthur Ashe, Citizen of the World**, with discussion afterward. Field trip to Ashe monument and site of old Brook Field TBA. **Film will be shown evening of January 31.**

**February 2. The Role of Coaches: An Ideal Type**

Jim Thompson, *Positive Coaching: Building Character and Self-Esteem Through Sports*. Chapters 2-7, pp. 33-141. [**Note: buying this book is not required. I will make a PDF of these chapters available. If you are interested in coaching however I recommend you buy this book for future reference.**]

Class Field Trip: Saturday February 5: Attendance at Richmond City Pee Wee Basketball League Game. Details TBA, but games typically are in the morning. (Makeup Dates Available if You are Out of Town.)

**Recommended Film: “Lombardi” airing on HBO February 3 and 4.**

**The Experience of the Athlete**

**February 7, February 9. Winning as the Only Thing?**


Read for February 9: Kramer, *Instant Replay*, Chapters 4-5 and Epilogue

In-class film: “Lombardi” (excerpts)

**February 14, February 16. What Price Glory?**


Read for February 16: Agassi, *Open*, 251- end.

**Second Quarter: Social Justice Issues Within Sports**

**February 21, February 23. Race, Basketball, and the Elusive Promise of Social Mobility Through Sport**


Read for February 23: May, *Living Through the Hoop*, Chapters 6-8 and Epilogue; Glyn Hughes, “Managing Black Guys: Representation, Corporate Culture, and the NBA.”

**Film 2. “Hoop Dreams”. Film will be shown Monday February 21, evening.**
February 28, March 2. Women Athletes and the Struggle for Gender Equity


SPRING BREAK

March 14, March 16. Homosexuality and Homophobia in Sports


Required Lecture March 15: Jackson Katz, the “feminist footballer”, 8 p.m. Jepson Alumni Center


March 21, March 23. College Sports and “Amateurism”


Read for March 23: Sack, *Counterfeit Amateurs*, Chapter 7-10

March 28, March 30. Sports as Profit-Making

Read for March 28: Simon, *Fair Play*, Chapter Seven; Dave Zirin, *Bad Sports: How Owners are Ruining the Game*, Chapters 1-7


Film 4: Not Only a Game: Sports and Politics. Film Screening Tentatively Set for Monday March 28
Third Quarter: Sports as a Vehicle for Social Change

April 4, April 6. Ali, Race, War.
Read for April 4: Mike Marqusee, *Redemption Song: Muhammad Ali and the Spirit of the 1960s*, Chapters 1-3
Read for April 6: Marqusee, *Redemption Song*, Chapters 4-5, Epilogue, Afterword

Class Viewing Party for NCAA Men’s Basketball Final, home of Dr. Williamson [location tentative; attendance not mandatory], 9 pm-11:30.

April 11, April 13. Soccer vs. Apartheid in South Africa
Read for April 11: Chuck Korr and Marvin Close, *More Than Just a Game: Soccer vs. Apartheid*, Chapters 1-6

April 18. Sports Law and Civil Rights in the Modern NFL
N. Jeremi Duru. *Advancing the Ball: Race, Reformation and the Quest for Equal Coaching Opportunity in the NFL* [entire]

April 20. The Global Homeless Soccer Movement
Short excerpt from Dave Badini, *Home and Away: In Search of Dreams at the Homeless World Cup* or related reading; Simon, *Fair Play*, 193-208. Class guests: Volunteers and players from Richmond Rebels street soccer team.

Tentative: post-class informal pickup soccer game with class and members of the Richmond Rebels, Intramural Fields, 4:30-5:30.

Fourth Quarter: Research Paper on sports and social justice, 18-22 pages: you may address either an issue of justice internal to sports or the intersection between sports and broader social movements. Detailed instructions on the paper will be provided later.