SOCIOLOGY OF SPORTS
Sociology 281

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Spring 2013
MW 1:00-2:15pm
Sturges 219
Office Hours:
M 11:30-12:30
T/Th 2:30-3:30pm

Required Readings:

All readings available on MyCourses.

Course Description:

Sport is much more than just fun and games; it is a powerful institution in our society, closely intertwined with family, community, school, media, politics, economics, religion, and other institutions. As a result, whatever our relationship to sports – from active participant to enthusiastic spectator to casual fan to agnostic to opponent – we are all influenced by sports.

In this course, our primary focus is on closely analyzing our sporting landscape in an effort to understand why particular sports are available and popular (or not) at particular times and places and among particular groups. For example, we will consider why football has surpassed baseball as the national pastime, why soccer is so popular at the youth level but not at the collegiate or professional levels, why different racial groups predominate in particular sports, why NASCAR has become so popular, why cities invest millions in sports teams despite the lack of a financial return, and how some sports performances are determined to be "better" than others, among other issues.

This analysis is structured around a series of central themes and questions that we will address and that are central to sociological perspectives on contemporary issues, including sports: race, class, and gender stratification; increasing corporate power in politics, the economy, and culture; the continued transition toward a post-Fordist convergence of state and corporate interests; and, most recently, the emergence of a post-9/11 neoconservative agenda.

Assignments and Grades:

There will be no exams in this class. Your grade will be based entirely on your class participation and your written work, which will take the form of journals and regular in-class Application Exercises. The writing assignments are designed to sharpen your critical thinking skills, your sociological imagination, and your writing ability.

Journals: Much of your written work for this class will be in journal form; through this journal, you will be creating a log of your experiences in the class. In your journal, I would like for you to elaborate your reactions to course readings, lectures, and discussions and apply course materials to current and past events. In addition to more general analyses of the course materials, I would like to see an autobiographical component to your entries, in which you give regular attention to the ways in which your own sporting roles and practices (i.e. which sports have and have not been available to you and why; which sports and teams you follow and why) are informed by issues raised in the course.

Because the issues discussed in class and in the readings are contemporary and closely related to our own experiences and interests – whether as a sports participant, spectator, fan, student, citizen, or taxpayer – there should be little difficulty in identifying subject matter for your journal entries.

For those of you new to this type of assignment, it might be useful to think of journals as a type of written class participation. Class participation is generally of three types: (1) questions or comments designed to elicit clarification or elaboration of an issue; (2) questions or comments that challenge a point made in class by offering contrary evidence or analysis; or (3) questions or comments designed to extend a point made in class by offering supportive evidence or analysis, whether from your own experiences and observations, from other courses, or elsewhere. These are three available approaches to your journals. They may – and should – be used alternatively depending on your understanding of the particular issue at hand.

You choose the topics for journal entries; just be sure that for each section of the semester you address the major issues, concepts, and analyses from the course materials.

Regular journal entries should be made at least twice a week, at least three or four substantial paragraphs at a time. Please date each entry. Also, unless it seriously infringes on the manner in which you would like to keep your journal, please type your entries. Journals will be collected three times during the semester. NOTE: Journal entries should not merely summarize readings; these are NOT reading notes.

My evaluation of journals will focus on originality, application of your sociological imagination, evidence of your commitment to the effort, and the whole range of stylistic issues. It is critical that your entries are ***sociological***; they must be informed

by sociological concepts and focused on sociological questions. Go beyond mere observation or opinion; analyze. Remember: this is your primary means of demonstrating to me your sociological imagination and your understanding of the course materials.

Application Exercises: As you can see, this course is organized around a series of questions that provide the opportunity to explore the linkages between sociology and sports. At regular points throughout the semester (every 3-4 classes or so), class will begin with a brief (10-15 minutes) writing exercise in which you will be given a question similar to the questions around which the course schedule is organized and asked to draw on readings and class discussions to answer that question.

The Future of Football Project: As we will discuss in class, football is more powerful, profitable, and popular than at any time in its history and than any other sport. At the same time, football is facing what some call an "existential crisis" raised by evidence of the serious and even lethal effects of brain trauma. Because this crisis is only now coming to be recognized, how it might affect the future of football is very much uncertain.

The future of football is an issue to which sociology can and should make important contributions. Sociology provides a framework and a literature for thinking about how powerful industries respond to crises; how regulations are made, enforced, and resisted; how race, class, and gender shape educational and occupational paths; how race, class, and gender shape exposure to risks; how social landscapes change through the entrance, growth, decline, and exit of actors, for example. All of these issues – and others – are implicated by the growing evidence of the risks associated with football.

As we progress through the course materials, use your journals to develop your thoughts about the future of football. A final essay on this subject, integrating and expanding upon your earlier journal entries, and including a bibliography of relevant research, will be due during the final exam period with your final journals.

I expect that your assignments will be original works, meaning that you wrote them for this class and this class only. Any non-original work constitutes plagiarism and will result in an E for the assignment and may result in an E for the class.

The grading scale is as follows: 92+ A, 90-91 A-, 88-89 B+, 82-87 B, 80-81 B-, 78-79 C+, 72-77 C, 70-71 C-, 60-69 D, below 60 E.

Course Schedule

Finding the Sociology in Sports

Jan. 23 **Introduction: Mapping the Landscape of Sports**

Interrogating the Self: The Sociology of our Sporting Interests
http://www.everydaysociologyblog.com/2012/02/the-super-what.html

Jan. 28-30 **Why Do We Play and Watch the Sports We Do? Using the Sociological Imagination to Map the Landscape of Sports**

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1988. "Program for a Sociology of Sport." *Sociology of Sport Journal* 5: 153-161.
Bourdieu, Pierre. 1993. "How Can One Be a Sports Fan?" in During, Simon (ed.), *The Cultural Studies Reader.* New York: Routledge.
Mills, C. Wright. 1959. "The Promise," from *The Sociological Imagination.* London: Oxford University Press.

Feb. 4 **Will We Still be Watching Football in Twenty Years? The Future of Football**

Cowen, Tyler and Kevin Grier. 2012. "What Would the End of Football Look Like?" *Grantland.* February 9. Available at: http://www.grantland.com/story/_/id/7559458/cte-concussion-crisis-economic-look-end-football
Kotz, Deborah. 2012. "Boston researchers find new evidence linking repeat concussions to permanent brain injury." *Boston Globe.*
McGrath, Ben. 2011. "Does Football Have a Future?" *The New Yorker*, January 31.http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2011/01/31/110131fa_fact_mcgrath
Shpigel, Ben. 2012. "Football Faces 'Turning Point' on Safety Risk." *New York Times.*http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/21/sports/football/with-fears-about-safety-football-faces-uncertain-evolution.html?_r=1&hpw
Madden 2001 Intro and Madden 2012 Intro

Feb. 6-11 **What is the Sociology of Sports? Surveying the Field**

Washington, Robert E. and David Karen. 2001. "Sport and Society," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 27: 182-212.
Zirin video, *Not Just a Game*

Sports and the (Re)Production of Race, Class, and Gender Relations

Feb. 13 **Why has Soccer Been Such a Popular Youth Sport for So Long Without Becoming a Popular Sport Among Adults? Seeing Race, Class, and Gender in Sports**

Andrews, David L., Robert Pitter, Detlev Zwick, and Darren Ambrose. 2003. "Soccer, Race, and Suburban Space," in Ralph C.Wilcox, David L. Andrews, Robert Pitter, and Richard L. Irwin (eds.), *Sporting Dystopias: The Making and Meanings of Urban Sports Cultures*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 197-220.

Bennett, Roger. 2011. "Soccer's Big Takeover." *ESPN FC.* September.

Feb. 18 **Why Does the SEC Always Win the College Football Championship? Explaining the Popularity of Football in the South**

Borucki, Wes. 2003. "'You're Dixie's Football Pride'": American College Football and the Resurgence of Southern Identity." *Identities* 10: 477-494.

Everson, Darren. 2008. "What the Rise of Southern Football Says About America." *Wall St Journal,* December 5.

Foley, Douglas E. 1990. "The Great American Football Ritual: Reproducing Race, Class, and Gender Inequality." *Sociology of Sport Journal* 7:111-135.

Map of Home States of Division I College Football Players

Map of home states of NFL players

Feb. 20-25 **Why Do Kenyans Dominate Marathons and Jamaicans Dominate Sprints? Race and Athletic Success**

Burfoot, Amby. 1992. "White Men Can't Run." *Runner's World.* August.

Burfoot, Amby. 2008. "White Guys Still Can't Run." *Runners World.* August 12.

Dabbs, Brian. 2012. "Paths to the Marathon in a Small Kenyan Town." *New York Times.* May 1.http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/02/sports/iten-a-kenyan-town-made-for-marathoners.html?pagewanted=all

Gladwell, Malcolm. 1997. "The Sports Taboo," *The New Yorker*, May.

Jennings, Jay. 2011. "Why is Running So White?" *Runners World.* December. Available at http://fitbie.msn.com/get-fitter/why-running-so-white/page/6

National Public Radio. May 4, 2011. *Inside Jamaica's Sprint Factory*. http://www.npr.org/2012/05/04/151956595/a-need-for-speed-inside-jamaicas-sprint-factory

Walton, Theresa and Ted M. Butryn. 2006. "Policing the Race: US Men's Distance Running and the Crisis of Whiteness." *Sociology of Sport Journal* 23: 1-28.

Wiggins, David K. 1989. "'Great Speed but Little Stamina:' The Historical Debate Over Black Athletic Superiority." *Journal of Sport History,* 16, 2: 158-185.

F 27-M 4 **"If You Couldn't Join a Team, What Would You Join"? The Preferred Sports Worker**

P.L.A.Y Nike Commercial, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KlRuHnnV5aA

Brooks, Scott N. and Michael A. McKail. 2008. "A Theory of the Preferred Worker: A Structural Explanation for Black Male Dominance in Basketball." *Critical Sociology*, 34, 3: 369-387.

James, Steve. *Hoop Dreams,* 1994 (video). http://www.hulu.com/watch/249576

Map of the Hometowns of NBA Players

Sack, Allen L., Parbudyal Singh, and Robert Thiel. 2005. "Occupational Segregation on the Playing Field: The Case of Major League Baseball. *Journal of Sport Management*, 19: 300-318.

JOURNALS DUE FEBRUARY 27

March 6 **What Are We Watching When We Watch Sports? The Gendering of Sports Performances**

Cooky, Cheryl and Nicole Lavoi. 2012. "Playing but Losing: Women's Sports After Title IX." *Contexts*, 11.

Messner, Michael. 2007. "Sports and Male Domination: The Female Athlete as Contested Ideological Terrain," in Messner, *Out of Play: Critical Essays on Gender and Sport.* Albany: SUNY Press.

Shakib, Sohaila and Michele D. Dunbar. 2002. "The Social Construction of Female and Male High School Basketball Participation: Reproducing the Gender Order Through a Two-Tiered Sporting Institution." *Sociological Perspectives* 45, 4: 353-378.

March 11-13 **Why Are Fights Part of Hockey and Why Isn't Cheerleading a Sport? Sports Performances as Gender Performances**

Branch, John. 2011. Three-Part Series on Derek Boogaard: "A Boy Learns to Brawl," "Blood on the Ice," and A Brain 'Going Bad.'" http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/04/sports/hockey/derekboogaard-a-boy-learns-to-brawl.html?scp=4&sq=derek%20boogaard&st=cse

For more on the Boogaard case, see: http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/04/sports/hockey/in-hockey-enforcers-descent-a-flood-of-prescription-drugs.html?pagewanted=all

Grindstaff, Laura and Emily West. "Cheerleading and the Gendered Politics of Sport" *Social Problems* 53.4 (2006): 500-518.

Kane, Mary Jo. 2011. "Sex Sells Sex, Not Women's Sports." *The Nation* July 27. At: http://www.thenation.com/article/162390/sex-sells-sex-not-womens-sports

Messner, Michael A. 2007. "Masculinities and Athletic Careers," in Messner, Michael A. *Out of Play: Critical Essays on Gender and Sport.* Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

----------. 2007. "When Bodies are Weapons: Masculinity and Violence in Sport," in Messner, Michael A. *Out of Play: Critical Essays on Gender and Sport.* Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

---------- and Cheryl Cooky. 2010. "Gender and Televised Sports: News and Highlight Shows, 1989-2009." Ctr for Feminist Research.

March 25 **Then Why Not Just Go Ahead and Permit Performance-Enhancing Drugs?**

Bello, Robert J. 2008. "Faster, Higher, and Stronger: Why Athletes Should Have the Choice to Use Performance-Enhancing Drugs."

Savulescu, J., B. Foddy, and M. Clayton. 2004. "Why We Should Allow Performance Enhancing Drugs in Sport." *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, 38: 666-670.

Smith, Chris. 2012. "Why It's Time to Legalize Steroids in Professional Sports." *Forbes*, August 24.

Sports and the Neo-Liberal Project: Corporate Domination of Sports and Society

M 27-Apr 1 **What Does it Mean to Be Like Mike? The Professional Athlete as Pitchman and Product**

Cole, C.L. 2001. "Nike's America/America's Michael Jordan," in Andrews, DL. (ed.) *Michael Jordan, Inc.: Corporate Sport, Media Culture, and Late Modern America.* Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Kellner, Douglas. 2001. "The Sports Spectacle, Michael Jordan, and Nike: Unholy Alliance?" in Andrews, David L. (ed.) *Michael Jordan, Inc.: Corporate Sport, Media Culture, and Late Modern America.* Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Malice at the Palace video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N37H1kSDvJc&noredirect=1

Leonard, "After Artest: The NBA and the Assault on Blackness"

Morris, Wesley. 2012. "What We Talk About When We Talk About Hoodies." http://www.grantland.com/story/_/id/7764334/trayvon-martin-miami-heat-talk-talk-hoodies

April 3-8 **What Happens When You Build Statues to People Who Are Still Alive? The Commercial Corruption of College Sports and College Life**

Branch, Taylor. 2011. "The Shame of College Sports." *The Atlantic*.
Frontline, *Money & March Madness.* http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/money-and-march-madness/
Lewis, Michael. 2007. "Serfs of the Turf." *New York Times,* Nov. 11.
McAllister, Matthew P. 1998. "College Bowl Sponsorship and the Increased Commercialization of Amateur Sports." *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 15: 357-381.
Pappano, Laura. 2012. "How Big-Time College Sports Ate College Life." *New York Times*. January 20.
Wetzel, Dan. 2012. "Bowls' Extravagent Revenues are Closely Examined as the NCAA Mulls a Playoff System." *Yahoo Sports.* http://sports.yahoo.com/news/ncaaf--bowls--extravagant-revenues-are-closely-examined-as-the-ncaa-mulls-a-playoff-system.html

April 10 **Do Youth Sports Enhance or Threaten Childhood? Commercial Pressures and the Search for the Preferred Fourteen Year Old**

Himmelsbach, Adam and Pete Thamel. 2012. "Middle School is Basketball's Fiercest Recruiting Battleground." *New York Times*. June 25. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/26/sports/basketball/in-washington-area-private-high-schools-fight-for-basketball-recruits.html?
McGrath, Ben. 2012. "The Jersey Game." *The New Yorker.* January 2. http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2012/01/02/120102fa_fact_mcgrath
Spagnuolo, Diana L. 2003. "Swinging for the Fence: A Call for Institutional Reform as Dominican Boys Risk Their Futures for a Chance in Major League Baseball." *University of Pennsylvania Journal of International Economic Law,* 24: 263.
Wetzel, Dan and Don Yaeger. 2000. *Sole Influence: Basketball, Corporate Greed, and the Corruption of America's Youth.* New York: Warner Books.

JOURNALS DUE April 10

April 15 **Should Buffalo Build Ralph Wilson a New Football Stadium? Public Dollars Supporting Private Interests**

Albergotti, Reed and Cameron McWhirter. 2011. "A Stadium's Costly Legacy Throws Taxpayers for a Loss." *Wall St. Journal,* July 12.
Delaney, Kevin J. and Rick Eckstein. 2003. "Public Dollars, Private

Stadiums, and Democracy." In *Public Dollars, Private Stadiums.* New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

DeMause, Neil. 2011. "Why Do Mayors Love Sports Stadiums?" *The Nation*. http://www.thenation.com/article/162400/why-do-mayors-love-sports-stadiums

Garofalo, Pat and Travis Waldron. 2012. "If You Build It, They Might Not Come: The Risky Economics of Sports Stadiums." *The Atlantic,* September.

Hruby, Patrick. 2012. "Let's Eliminate Sports Welfare." *Sports on Earth,* http://www.sportsonearth.com/article/40595178/

http://deadspin.com/5964116/animated-infographic-watch-as americas-stadiums-pile-up-on-the-backs-of-taxpayers

For ongoing commentary on public funding of sports facilities, see http://www.fieldofschemes.com/

Sports and the Post-9/11 Hegemonic Project: Nationalism, Patriotism and Militarism

April 17-22 **Why Do We Sing the National Anthem Before Sporting Events? Sports in the Immediate Aftermath of 9/11**

Butterworth, Michael L. 2005. "Ritual in the 'Church of Baseball': Suppressing the Discourse of Democracy after 9/11." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 2, 2: 107-129.

NBC Sports, Opening Ceremony of 2002 Winter Olympics http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1oAPYBydHhY

Silk, Michael. 2011. "Pedagogy, Culture, & Politics: The Post-9/11 Sporting Nation," in *The Cultural Politics of Post-9/11 American Sport: Power, Pedagogy and the Popular.* New York: Routledge.

Stempel, Carl. 2006. "Televised Sports, Masculinist Moral Capital, and Support for the US Invasion of Iraq." *Journal of Sport & Social Issues,* 30, 1: 79-106.

April 24 **Why Are They Playing Basketball on an Aircraft Carrier? Sports and the Normalization of Militarism**

Quicken Loans Carrier Classic, North Carolina v. Michigan State, 2011 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1GbSd7PYjsU&feature=related

Apr26-May 1 **Why Has NASCAR Become So Popular? NASCAR and Conspicuous Hegemonic Americanism**

Daytona 500 2011 Pre-Race Coverage, Fox Sports http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TOfR53Vz10M&feature=related

Derbyshire, John. 2003. "NASCAR Nation: One Journalist's Journey of Discovery," *National Review*, November 10.
Lee, Jason W. et al. 2010. "NASCAR: Checkered Flags Are Not All That Are Being Waved." *Sports Marketing Quarterly* 19: 170-179.
Newman, Joshua I. 2007. "A Detour Through 'NASCAR Nation': Ethnographic Articulations of a Neoliberal Sporting Spectacle." *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*: 42, 3: 289-308.
---------- and Michael D. Giardina. 2008. "NASCAR and the 'Southernization' of America: Spectatorship, Subjectivity, and the Confederation of Identity." *Cultural Studies <-> Critical Methodologies*, 8,4: 479-506.

May 6 **What Have We Learned? The Future of Football II**

May 13 Final Exam, 3:30-6:30pm. JOURNALS DUE.