Sports, Society and the Body

ANTH 167
Spring 2018

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This course offers students a study of sports around the world from an anthropological perspective. It takes as its central focus a dialectic relationship between the fan/enthusiast and the critic/academic; in this class, sports are understood neither as an escape from everyday life and its problems nor as a straightforward reflection of their surrounding social world. Instead, sports will be explored as productive of society, politics and ways of being in the world.

Throughout the semester, we will focus on topics such as the relationship of sports to colonialism, nationalism, modernity and industrialization, as well as the relationship of sports to changing gender norms, body cultures and ideas about race. Furthermore, we will also examine controversies surrounding sex-testing in professional sports and the uses of performance enhancing drugs to explore how our concepts of the body and the human are changing. This class enables students explore sports and body cultures from multiple theoretical perspectives. Throughout the semester, students will research, write about and film a local sports culture in order to gain skills in doing original ethnographic research.

Learning Goals

— Understand how sports practices and traditions reflect and produce ideas of the body.
— Understand how colonialism and anti-colonial nationalism were enacted through sports.
— Understand sports cultures from a global and comparative perspective.
— Understand the key different approaches and methodologies for the study of sports and body cultures.
— Acquire skills in ethnographic research, writing and filmmaking through documenting a sports culture.

Course Requirements

Course grade composition:
Attendance: 10%, Participation: 20%, Ethnographic paper: 20%, Fieldwork materials: 10%
Ethnographic film project: 20%, Mini-paper 1: 10%, Mini-paper 2: 10%

➢ Attendance (10%): Since each class builds on the next, I take attendance seriously. Full attendance is also essential for establishing a productive learning community and class
dynamic. However, I understand that things come up during the semester that can prevent you from coming to class. As a result, you may miss two classes, no questions asked without it affecting your grade. **However, for each additional class that you miss, your attendance grade will be reduced by ten points.** Please note: since I give you two freebies, I do not have a system of “excused” or “unexcused” absences, so please do not contact me or the TF about reasons for missing class (other than a major medical emergency requiring an extended absence from the university). More than two absences due to University athletic events will not count against your grade.

- **Participation (20%):** Active participation in class discussions is a crucial component to the course. It is essential to come to class prepared, which means having done all the reading. You should have a firm understanding of the author’s argument, as well as the data or information they use to back it up. Take notes on the readings and bring them to class. If you are having trouble speaking in class, come prepared with a short question or comment ahead of time. An A grade for participation means at least one thoughtful contribution (based on the course readings) to each class discussion. You don’t have to bring in a fancy critique— even a simple “this part of the text was interesting” type comment shows that you are thinking about the reading. Talking to your neighbors, using electronic devices or reading during class time will count against this grade.

- **Mini-papers (20%):** You will be give a prompt to write a short essay (4-5) that engages with the course readings. Successful papers demonstrate close attention to the author’s arguments and main points (as well as why the reading matters).

- **Ethnographic paper (20%):** You will study a sport that you are unfamiliar with, conduct fieldwork and produce an ethnography and short film (see below) about it. The goal is to investigate what motivates people to participate in this sport (exploring questions such as: what does it mean to be an insider, who participates and, as Dyck puts it: “how does their participation in these activities relate to or influence other aspects of their lives.” A successful paper (and film) highlights the internal flow and feel of the game as well as how the sport connects with social, political or historical processes outside it.

- **Fieldwork materials (including with camera) (10%):** From February onward, you will be expected to conduct fieldwork and library research. This includes taking field notes, conducting interviews and capturing scenes on film. The TF and I will check in on your progress periodically during class and in one-on-one meetings (occasionally having you hand in or show us field notes or copies of interview transcripts). These items will not be individually graded. However timely submission of all materials (including bringing them to meetings with me or the TF) will get you an A grade. Failure to show on-going work will lead to a B or lower.

- **Ethnographic film (20%):** The body cultures associated with sports are sometimes best captured in film. Working in pairs, you will create a three minute film that ethnographically explores a local sports culture. This short will contain 1) a question or problem, 2) ethnographic footage of people doing the sport/i.e. action, 3) interview material from participants and 4) a voiceover or some other kind of structuring device (more details about this assignment will be provided during the semester). You can create this film with your phone or with video equipment available from the library, however the final product will be edited using Adobe PremierPro. During the semester Mark Dellelo (Digital Media Lab manager) and I will teach basic camera, sound and editing techniques. A close-to-finished version of your film will be screened April 24.
On that date, the ethnographic filmmaker Harjant Gill will be visiting the class. He will watch your films and provide helpful critiques which you will incorporate into your final film project, which is due May 8.

**Accommodations:**

If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have an accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.

**Academic Integrity:**

You are expected to be honest in all of your academic work. Please consult Brandeis University Rights and Responsibilities for all policies and procedures related to academic integrity. Students may be required to submit work to TurnItIn.com software to verify originality. Allegations of alleged academic dishonesty will be forwarded to the Director of Academic Integrity. Sanctions for academic dishonesty can include failing grades and/or suspension from the university. Citation and research assistance can be found at LTS - Library guides.

**Required Books:** (Available in the bookstore. There is a copy at library reserves as well).


**Classroom policies**

—Complete all the readings by the course time.
—Bring the course reader (or your own printout) and/or the assigned course books to class each day.
—No electronic devices are allowed in the classroom.

**Course schedule**

**Jan 11**  
Introduction to the class

**Jan 16**  
Doing anthropology of sports

—“Games, Bodies, Celebrations and Boundaries: Anthropological Perspectives on Sport,” Dyck (p. 13-24).
—Counterplay: An anthropologist at the Chessboard, Desjarlais (ch. 1)
—“Pedaling in Pairs” Hammer (p. 503-512).

Jan 23  Body cultures
—“‘I Was a Gladiator’: Pain, Injury, and Masculinity in the NFL,” Rodgers.
—FILM: Bigger, Stronger, Faster (dir. Bell) [watch at home]

Jan 25  Foundational theories of sports and play
—“The Definition of Play” and “The Classification of Games,” Caillois.

Jan 30  Culture, power and ideology
—Sport, Prison of Measured Time (“Twenty Thesis on Sport”), Brohm.
—“Just do...what? Sports, Bodies, Gender,” Messner and Dworkin (p. 341-354).

Feb 1   Research workshop 1: Observation and field notes

Feb 6   Genealogical and historical approaches to sports

Feb 8   Sports, modernity and nation-building
—“Baseball and the Quest for National Dignity in Meiji Japan.” Roden (p. 511-517 and pictures).
—“Samurai Baseball: The Vicissitudes of a National Sporting Style,” Kelly.

Feb 13  Research workshop 2: Camera technique [session with Mark Delello]
*Mini-paper 1 due*

Feb 15  Sports and Colonialism
—“Playing with Modernity: The Decolonization of Indian Cricket,” Appadurai (p. 1-10).
—Beyond the Boundary, CLR James (pages TBA).
Feb 20 -22 Winter Break [read the book Beyond the Boundary during the break]

Feb 27  Sports, Race and Colonialism

—Beyond the Boundary, CLR James (pages TBA).

March 1 NO CLASS [watch the film, Lagaan on latte and bring in short piece of writing.]

March 6  Nation-Building and postcoloniality

—FILM: Lagaan [watch at home before class]

March 8  Research workshop 3: Conducting and recording interviews

— Spradley, "Interviewing an informant."

March 13  Research workshop 4: Film editing [session with Mark Delello- meet at Getz media lab, Farber 3rd floor]

-*Bring in your film clips*

March 15  Race, racism and US sports culture


March 20  Race, power and the sports industry


March 22  Gender ideologies and sports

—“Powered up or Dreaming?” (In Built to Win: The Female Athlete as Cultural Icon), Heywood and Dworkin (p.1-11 plus image p. 17).
—“Sport and Sex, Gender and Sexuality,” Besnier, Brownell and Carter. (p. 127-129 and 141-157).

March 27  Research workshop 5: Film editing II [meet at Getz media lab and bring in your film work done so far]

*Mini-paper 2 due*

March 29  Gender, sports and the state
—*Training the Body for China: Sports in the Moral Order of the People’s Republic*, Brownell (ch. 8 “Sex, the Body, and History in Chinese and Western Sports” and first half of ch. 9, “Bodies, boundaries and the state”).

April 3-5 NO CLASS Passover break

April 10 Policing the sex binary in elite sports

—“The Five Sexes: Why male and female are not enough,” Fausto-Sterling.

—“Sport and Sex, Gender and Sexuality,” Besnier, Brownell and Carter.

—“Out of bounds? A critique of the new policies on hyperandrogenism in elite female athletes,” Karkazis et al.

— April 10 [Getz media lab 3:30-5pm for additional film editing consultations]—

April 12 Performance enhancing drugs and the “natural” body

—“A History of Anabolic Steroids in Sport,” Todd (p. 319-328).

—*Wheelmen: Lance Armstrong, the Tour De France and the Greatest Sports Conspiracy ever* (excerpts).

April 17 Sensory ethnography

—*The Rider*, Krabbé. pages TBA

April 19 The body and future approaches to the anthropology of sports

—*The Rider*, Krabbé. pages TBA

April 24 Film screenings Special guest visit: Professor Harjant Gill, Towson University.

—“Before Picking up the Camera,” Gill.

April 26 Film screenings

Ethnographic paper due April 30.
Final film project due May 4.