

# **ELEMENTS OF COMPETITIVE PERFORMANCE**

James A. Woods College of Advancing Studies, Boston College,  
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We are living longer and in an increasingly competitive world. This course recognizes the growing phenomenon of adults striving for higher levels of physical/athletic performance than ever, balancing athletic pursuits with families, careers, and other interests. Does achievement in athletics lead to success and balance in other aspects of life?

In this course you will explore the reasons for this trend, both theoretical and practical. You will study the stages of adult development according to theory and popular literature; the physiology of aging; gender and competition; theories of excellence, athletic success, and motivation; positive psychology; and the effects that athletic success have on other areas of life. For the sake of focus, running will figure as an example relevant to many other sports. You will also experience concretely the process of setting and achieving a physical goal and its effects on the rest of life by setting a goal of your own, tailored to your particular interests and abilities. Your physical goal may be competitive and may even be as basic as walking.

**Office Hours:** by appointment, scheduled by phone or e-mail

## **Required Reading:**

1. The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything, Robinson, K.; Viking Adult, New York, 2009.
2. Winning Every Day, Holtz, Lou; Harper Collins Publishers, New York, 1998.
3. The Masters Athlete: Understanding the Role of Sport and Exercise in Optimizing Aging, Baker, Horton & Weir, eds.; Routledge, New York, 2010.
4. Outliers, Gladwell; Gladwell, M; Little Brown and Company, New York, 2008.
5. The Happiness Advantage, Anchor, Shawn; Crown Publishing Group, New York, 2010.
6. MOVE! How Women Can Achieve Athletic Goals At Any Age, Utzschneider, Catharine; Cedar Crest Books, Natick, MA, 2011.

Recommended Reading:

1. Age Is Just A Number: Achieve Your Dreams at Any Stage in Your Life, Torres, Dara; Broadway Books, New York, 2009.

### **Course Format:**

This course consists of 12 classes. They will normally begin with students talking in pairs about their physical goals for 5 to 10 minutes and continue with class discussion and presentations by the instructor. There will be two guest speakers.

### **Requirements:**

Regular, on-time attendance in class. More than one missed class will result in a half letter drop in the final grade.

Students are expected to come to class on time, participate in class discussion, complete assigned readings and writing by the time specified, and attend all classes barring extenuating, verifiable circumstances. Please contact me or the College of Advancing Studies office in advance of class if you are unable to attend class.

In addition, students are expected to take quizzes as scheduled and to complete papers on time. In fairness to students who submit their homework assignments and take quizzes on time, grades for late assignments and quizzes will be dropped by one grade each class meeting from the due date or until the assignment is turned in. No assignment will be accepted after the last day of class. The format of a quiz will be changed for any student who does not take it as scheduled. Plagiarism or any cheating will result in a failed grade for the the course.

### **Grading**

Your grade will be determined as follows:

First paper (due Class 3)	15%
Mid-term (Class 6)	20%
Second paper (due March 22)	25%
Presentations on learnings from setting goals	10%
Final (Class 12)	30%

This is a preliminary syllabus, which may be modified during the course of the semester.

### **Class 1 – January 26th**

#### **Readings:**

*“Executive Sweatshop”*

*“Masters of All Universes”*

*The Masters Athlete, Chapter 1*

MOVE! How Women Can Achieve Athletic Goals At Any Age, Introduction to Chapter 6

**Discussion:**

Introduction – What are the “Elements of Competitive Performance”?

Are these elements the same in personal, athletic, professional, and “community” life?

The growing phenomenon of masters athletics – why is society so competitive?

Setting and achieving goals

Physiology of aging

Set a four-week physical goal.

**Class 2 -- February 2nd**

**Readings:**

*“Nurture over Nature: A New Twist to the Development of Expertise”*

*“The Luck Factor”*

*Outliers, Part I*

**Discussion:**

Nature or nurture: which contributes more to excellence?

What about luck?

How much does opportunity contribute to excellence?

**Class 3 – February 9<sup>th</sup>**

**Readings:**

*“How to Grow a Super Athlete”*

*Outliers, Part II*

**Discussion:**

Ingredients of success

**Class 4 – February 16<sup>th</sup> – FIRST PAPER DUE**

**Readings:**

*“The Luck Factor”*

*“What If The Secret To Success is Failure?”*

**Discussion:**

Theories of excellence and ingredients of success, cont.

**Class 5 - February 23rd**

**Readings:**

*The Masters Athlete, Chapter 7, "Understanding Master Athletes' motivation for sport"*

*"Gender and Competition: Different Ways to Work and Play"*

*The Happiness Advantage, introduction – page 104*

**Discussion:**

Motivation, happiness, and competition

Happiness and achievement: Which comes first?

Do men and women view competition differently?

**Class 6 – March 1st**

**MID TERM**

**Guest Speaker**

**Class 7 – March 8th**

**Readings:** *The Happiness Advantage, page 105 – end*

**Discussion:**

Positive psychology: Can we learn to have a happy, optimistic outlook?

Happiness and achievement: Which comes first?

**March 22 – SECOND PAPER DUE**

**Class 8 – March 29**

**Readings:** *The Masters Athlete: Chapters 3 to 6*

*"Stronger, Faster, Smarter"*

*"The Incredible Flying Nonagenarian"*

*"The Physiology of Aging as It Relates To Sports"*

**Discussion:**

The physiological effects of training on aging:

How does training affect our bodies and brains?

**Class 9 – April 12th**

**Readings:**

*The Masters Athlete: Chapters 8 to 12*

*MOVE!, Chapters 11 – 14*

**Discussion:**

The psychosocial and cultural effects of training on aging – How does training effect the rest of life? In what ways do athletic pursuits help or hinder life balance and our ability to compete in other areas of life?

**Class 10 -- April 19th - short presentations on learnings from setting goals**

**Readings:**

*Winning Every Day, Chapters 1 to 4*

Guest Speaker

**Discussion:**

Winning attitudes that help us achieve our potential.

**Class 11 – April 26<sup>th</sup> – short presentations on learnings from setting goals**

**Readings:**

*Winning Every Day, Chapter 5 to 11*

**Discussion:**

More winning attitudes.

What you learned in striving for your physical goal.

**Class 12 May 3rd**

**FINAL EXAM**