

SC359.01: SPORTS IN SOCIETY
Spring, 2008

Michael A. Malec
Phone: (617) 552-4131
WWW: www2.bc.edu/~malec

Office: McGuinn 402
E-mail: malec@bc.edu
Office Hours: TBA

PREREQUISITE:

The prerequisite for this course is one previous course in Sociology. Note that SC359 is NOT a university Core course.

PURPOSE OF THE COURSE:

I assume that you are taking this course because you have some interest in sports, as a participant, a fan, or just as a TV spectator. As such, you are probably familiar with the simplistic cliches that praise sport ("Sport builds character") and with the equally facile criticisms ("Athletes are dumb jocks"). A sociological approach to sport will help us to discover how much or little truth there is in these cliches or critiques.

Sociology is the systematic study of human behavior as it occurs in and is influenced by social groups, institutions, organizations, and societies. Note the emphasis on "systematic." This means that we must go beyond (but not exclude) our personal experiences. We will use the conceptual frameworks and research methods of sociology to look at and better understand sport. I assume that sport, as a social phenomenon, is inherently neither good nor bad. Such value judgments are meaningful only after we place sport in a social context and examine the antecedents and consequences of sport in a specific social system.

Finally, I assume that sport presents us with a microcosm of our society. By looking at sport, we also look at and learn about our society. For example, looking at racism in sport should help us to understand racism in general.

READINGS:

There are four required texts; these are available in the BC Bookstore.

Keith Dunnavant, *The Fifty-Year Seduction* (Thomas Dunne, 2004)

D. Stanley Eitzen: *Fair and Foul* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1999).

John McPhee: *Levels of the Game* (Farrar Strauss, 1969).

William G. Bowen & James L. Shulman: *The Game of Life* (Princeton: 2001).

Additional readings will be assigned from time to time; most of these will be on reserve in O'Neill or available electronically.

All reading assignments should be completed prior to the corresponding class session. This is not a make-work request. Lectures are more comprehensible if you've read some related material beforehand. Studying is easier if you don't have to cram. And I DO value discussion in class; it is easier for you to participate in discussion if you know what we are talking about.

GRADING:

Your grade will be determined as follows:

25% -- Mid-term Exam: Thursday, March 27. **MARK YOUR CALENDAR NOW!**

10% -- Various short (1-2 pages) papers

35% -- Term Paper: DUE no later than Friday, April 25 at 3:00PM

>>>> WARNING: LATE PAPERS WILL BE PENALIZED! <<<<

>>>> A paper is late if it arrives at 10:31! <<<<

30% -- Final Exam: On the date assigned by the Registrar: **Monday, May 12 AT 9:00 AM.**

NO EXCEPTIONS! THE FINAL EXAM IS ON THE DAY AND TIME SET BY THE UNIVERSITY REGISTRAR. ***NO EXCEPTIONS!*** Do not ask for an alternative date. Do not buy airline tickets for an early departure. If you must get sick on that date, get very, very sick.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS:

1. For all written work I expect to receive TYPED papers.

2. The papers are due on the assigned dates, at the beginning of class. None of the following excuses is acceptable: • I had it in my suitcase but the airplane lost it; you know how they are. • My room was robbed last night. They got everything, even your paper. • My dog chewed it up. • Didn't you get it? I put it in campus mail! (or e-mail!) • The print queue is backed up seven hours! • My roommate spilled coffee on it. • *Etc. ad nauseum.*

3. I do expect your papers to reflect a university level of writing. Any paper that contains three or more misspelled words on a page, or contains gross grammatical errors, or is badly organized, may be penalized. Papers may be returned for rewriting. THEREFORE: (a) Please prepare your paper sometime before the eve of the due date. (b) Write a rough draft, show it to a friend for comments, then write a final copy; (c) Proofread your paper and have a friend also proofread it.

4. PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING WILL NOT BE TOLERATED. It is your obligation to be fully aware of the Boston College policies on academic honesty. ANY violation may subject the offender to severe penalty, including course failure. If you are not familiar with the Boston College policy on academic honesty, see the 2007-08 Boston College Bulletin, pp. 35-36, or on the web at: <http://www.bc.edu/integrity>

5. Do keep a copy of all of your work. Do retain all of the work that is returned to you until after you have received your final course grade.

ATTENDANCE:

FOUR unexcused absences are permitted during the semester. For each absence over four, the course grade will be lowered by one step (e.g., from a B+ to a B). The only "excused" absences are those presented to me in writing (a) by a health care practitioner certifying that you had a sound medical reason to be absent from class (and note that the BC Infirmary does **not** give out such notes) or (b) by your Dean certifying that you had a serious personal reason to be absent from class.

EXAMS, DUE DATES, ETC.:

Each exam will be based on reading material and class content. The mid-term will cover sections I-III (roughly) of the outline. The final exam will cover the entire course, with much emphasis on Sections IV and V. Except for extreme emergencies, I do NOT give make-up exams. If you anticipate any problems with an assignment due date or an exam date, you **MUST** notify me **IN WRITING** at least one week in advance. The date for the final exam is set by the University Registrar; I will make no exceptions for this.

IN THE CLASSROOM:

- I will always try to begin class on time; I expect you to be there.
- All electronic devices (cell phones, computers, beepers, etc.) must be turned off during class.
- Unless you have a medical condition (of which you should notify me), please use the bathroom before class; do not leave the room for a bathroom (or other) break unless it is an emergency.
- The classroom is not a dining hall; no food is allowed; a liquid in a **spill-proof** container is allowed.
- Gentlemen do not wear hats indoors, except for religious reasons.

Approximate Course Schedule

(Dates for topics covered are tentative and subject to change.)

I. INTRODUCTION (Week of Jan. 14)

A. Sociology and the Sociology of Sports: Why Study Sports?

READ: *Fair and Foul*, Chs. 1, 2, and 6

James, Ch.2, "Against the Current" from *Beyond A Boundary* (reserve)

B. A Brief Historical Perspective (Jan. 21)

READ: TBA

II. SPORT, SOCIETY, AND VALUES

A. Sport as a Shaper of Values (Feb. 4)

Read: *Levels of the Game* (all)

Stevenson, "Becoming an International Athlete" (reserve)

Donnelly and Young, "Construction and Confirmation of Identity" (reserve)

Chambliss, "Mundanity of Excellence" (reserve)

B. Sports for Children (Feb. 11, 18)

READ: TBA

C. Deviance and Violence (Feb. 25)

READ: *Fair and Foul*, Chs. 4 and 5

Wacquant, "The Social Logic of Boxing..." (reserve)

Spring Break: March 3-7

III. SPORTS AND SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

A. Sports in High School and College (March 10, 17)

READ: *The Game of Life* (all)

Fair and Foul, Ch 8

March 20 is Holy Thursday -- No Class

THE MIDTERM EXAM: MARCH 27

- B. Sport and Politics (March 24, 31)
READ: TBA

- C. Sport and the Media (April 7)
READ: *The Fifty-Year Seduction* (all)

- D. Sport and the Economy (April 14)
READ: *Fair and Foul*, Ch. 7 and 10

IV. SPECIAL TOPICS IN SPORT SOCIOLOGY

- A. Gender (April 21)
READ: Acosta & Carpenter, "Women in Intercollegiate Sport" (reserve)

<p style="text-align: center;">THE TERM PAPER IS DUE MAY 1 AT 10:30 AM LATE PAPERS WILL BE PENALIZED</p>

- B. Race, Ethnicity, and Class (April 28)
READ: *Fair and Foul*, Chs. 3 and 9
Foley, "The Great American Football Ritual" (reserve)
Chambliss, "Mundanity of Excellence" (reserve)

- C. Conclusion
READ: *Fair and Foul*, Ch 11

<p style="text-align: center;">THE FINAL EXAM IS ON MONDAY, MAY 12 AT 9:00 AM NO EXCEPTIONS NO MAKE-UP EXAMS</p>
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[W]hat I know most surely about morality and the duty of man I owe to sport....
Albert Camus

<http://blownglass.wordpress.com/2006/08/>