

University of Florida, Spring 2010  
**Sport, Society, and Politics**

Professor: Tamir Sorek

Time: Tuesday 1:55-2:45, Thursday 1:55-3:50

Location: 2319 Turlington Hall

Office hours: 3356 Turlington Hall, Tuesday and Thursday, 11:00-12:00 or by appointment.

E-mail: [tsorek@ufl.edu](mailto:tsorek@ufl.edu)

### **Description**

Sport is popularly considered as a sphere separate from 'important' aspects of social and political dynamics. Studies in the social sciences have proven the opposite: both active and passive involvements in competitive sports take part in shaping and undermining collective identities, as well as in political mobilization around these identities. This course takes a global and comparative perspective to follow the processes through which national, racial, ethnic, civic, religious, local and gender identities are constructed by sport. Special emphasis is given to: the significance of sport in deeply divided societies; sports as a political battleground for the production of meanings in ethno-national conflicts and colonial contexts; and the implication of sport globalization on various collective identities. Theoretical themes are illustrated through various particular case studies from around the globe, including North America, Latin America, Europe, Africa, India, the Middle East, and Papua-New Guinea.

### **Grading**

1. Two exercises	20 %
2. Participation in the website forum and in class	15 %
3. Reading reports	20 %
3. A movie review	5 %
5. Final exam	40 %

### **Assignments**

#### **Reading**

1. Coakley, Jay. 2008. *Sports in Society: Issues and Controversies* (10th Edition).
2. Bairner, Alan. 2001. *Sport, Nationalism and Globalization*.
3. Items from e-reserves.

**Weekly on-line reading reports (20%):** Students are expected to post a short but thoughtful commentary (200-300 words). A commentary is not a summary. It can be any of the following (or a combination of them): criticism of the article/chapter, pointing out how a specific article refers to other items or lectures in the course, an idea that came to mind

while reading the item, a reaction to a classmate's argument about the item, or a reference to subjects of discussions proposed in class. You are expected to comment on the relevant reading of each week before Thursday at 1 pm. While grading your reports, late comments will not be counted. The aim of this assignment is to verify that students read the relevant materials on time. If it is found to be ineffective it will be replaced by weekly multiple choice quizzes.

**Two exercises (20%):** Students will submit two exercises in the sociological research of sport, according to specific guidelines. Submissions will be made in pairs. You cannot work with the same classmate for both exercises. In other words, for each exercise you will have to work with different classmate.

**Class participation and web discussion (15%):** Attendance in this class is mandatory but is not enough. You are expected to take an active part in both class and web discussions. For each student, the grade will be based on the mode of participation in which s/he is more active among the two. In other words, if you are too timid to talk in class, you have the opportunity to substitute it with active contribution to discussions on the course website.

**A movie review (5%):** Throughout the semester we will watch four documentary movies. You are required to submit a review of one of them, no later than 7 days after the screening. A review is not a summary - you are expected to write your thoughts about the movie as a student in the course 'Sport, Society, and Politics'. The length should be approximately 300 words.

**Final exam (40%):** The final exam will be taken on the last day of class (4/20). A recommended way to make sure you are ready for the exam is to: 1) Consistently prepare a summary of approximately one page length for each of the reading items throughout the semester. 2) Verify that you understand the theoretical concepts presented in the reading and lectures.

## **Research project**

Students who have a particular interest in a specific subject can ask (**no later than 1/26**) to replace the two exercises and part of the final exam with a research project. Only students who choose this option will be eligible for future letters of recommendation.

## **Plagiarism**

Using others' ideas and words without clearly acknowledging the source of that information is considered plagiarism and is a serious violation of the honor code of the University of Florida (please see <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php> for details). Submitting plagiarized work will automatically result in a failing grade in this course and will be reported to the relevant authorities in the university. In order to prevent plagiarism, papers submitted in this class, including your reading reports and movie reviews, will be checked by the Turn-it-in software.

## Office Hours

Each student is required to see the professor during office hours at least once before Spring Break.

## Class schedule and reading assignments

### 1/7: Sports and Modernity

In order to understand what makes sport a powerful social force we have first to understand it in its historical context. We will discuss two relevant theories about the relation between sport and modernity, Norbert Elias' "The civilizing process", and Allan Guttman's "Weberian theory about sport as the ultimate expression of rationalization".

Reading: Sports in Society, Chapter (pp. 1-27) + pp. 60-61

### 1/12 - 1/14: Sports and Social Class-I

In this section we will ask the following questions: Why do certain sports attract people from higher social classes while other sports attract people from lower classes? Why is it that the higher one's social class, the greater one's overall involvement in sports? Is sport a realistic channel for social mobility? Does sport contribute to class consciousness or does it prevent its development? We will discuss these questions, assisted by different theories, including Functionalism, Neo-Marxism, Hegemony theory, and Pierre Bourdieu's ideas.

**Reading:** Sports in Society, Chapter 10 (pp. 316-351)

### 1/19 – 1/21: Sports and Social Class-II

#### Reading:

- Brohm, Jean-Marie. 1978. *Sport - a Prison of Measured time*. London: Ink Links, pp. 175-182  
- Stempel, C. 2005. "Adult Participation Sports as Cultural Capital: A Test of Bourdieu's Theory of the Field of Sports." *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 40(4): 411–432.

### 1/26 – 1/28: Sports, Gender, and Sexuality

In this section we will discuss the significance of sport as an important sphere of struggles over 'gender ideology', namely, a web of ideas and beliefs about masculinity, femininity, and the relationship between men and women. We will analyze the historical exclusion of women from sport in different countries and their gradual inclusion in the US since the early 1970's. We will give special attention to the relation between 'hegemonic sports' and masculinity in different countries.

#### Reading:

Sports in Society, Chapter 8 (pp. 232-273)

## **2/2 – 2/4: Sports, Gender, and Sexuality - II**

### **Reading:**

Jones, Katharine W. (2008). Female fandom: Identity, sexism, and men's professional football in England. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 25(4), 516-537.

## **2/9 – 2/11: Sport and Race**

In this section we will critically analyze the popular beliefs that sport has some inherent property that makes it a possible instrument of integration and harmonious race relations, and that it provides an opportunity for re-distribution of resources between different ethnic and racial groups. We will discuss the contribution of sport to the construction of ethnic and racial identities, and will ask under which circumstances racial and ethnic identities are politicized in the field of sport. In addition, we will investigate the sociological reasons for the over-representation of African-Americans in certain American sports, and will discuss the intersection of race and gender in sport.

### **Reading:**

Sports in Society, Chapter 9 (pp. 275-313)

## **2/16 – 2/18: Sport and Race II**

### **Reading:**

1. Joshua I. Newman, "Old times three were not forgotten: Sport, identity, and the Confederate flag in the Dixie South", *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 22 (3) 2007

2. "The Politics of Protest: The 1968 Olympic Games." Pp. 285-295 in *The Unlevel Playing Field: A Documentary History of the American Experience in Sport*, edited by D. Wiggins and P. Miller. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Movie: Fist of Freedom

## **2/23 – 2/25: Sport and Religion**

1. Sports in Society, Chapters 15 (p. 528-563)

2. Sorek, Tamir, 2007, "The Islamic Soccer League" Ch.7 (pp. 128-149) from: *Arab Soccer in a Jewish State: The Integrative Enclave* (Cambridge University Press).

## **3/2 – 3/4: Sport and National Identities**

How does sport contribute to the construction and undermining of national identities? Why do different nations have different 'national sports' and to what extent are these games related to the collective identity of the nation? What is the relation between sport, nationalism, and the gender order? Different case studies from America and Europe will be used to look for answers for these questions.

**Reading:** *Sport, Nationalism and Globalization*. Ch. 1,3,5,6 (1-20, 45-68, 91 – 137)

## **3/16 – 3/18: Sport and National Identities: II**

- Markovits, Andrei S. , and Steven L. Hellerman. 2001, Ch. 1 (pp 7-51) from: *Offside : soccer and American exceptionalism in sport*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

### **3/23 – 3/25: Sport, Colonialism, and Decolonization**

Sport and colonialism have been intimately connected. The most popular spectator sports in most of the ex-colonies were brought to these countries by European colonialist powers. Sport games were used as a political tool to establish colonial domination, to ‘modernize’, ‘civilize’, ‘Westernize’ and Christianize the natives. Frequently, the same games later were used as tools for mobilizing anti-colonial and nationalist opposition. In addition, colonial sports were important elements in the crystallizations of settler communities separate from the mother country (in the U.S., South Africa, New Zealand). In this section will discuss these themes as they are expressed in various contexts.

**Reading:** Darby, Paul. 2001. *Africa, Football, and FIFA*. London and Portland: Frank Cass. Pp. 8-22

Appadurai, Arjun. 1996. "Playing with Modernity: The Decolonization of Indian Cricket." pp. 89 - 112 in *Modernity at Large*, edited by Arjun Appadurai. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

**Movie:** Trobriand Cricket

### **4/1: Sport in Deeply Divided Societies: South Africa**

#### **Reading:**

Booth, Douglas: *The race game: Sport and Politics in South Africa*, Ch. 5 (pp. 55-84).

### **4/8: Sport in Deeply Divided Societies: Northern Ireland**

*Sport, Nationalism and Globalization:*

Ch.2: British Nationalism or Ulster Nationalism? Sport and the Protestants of Northern Ireland.

Ch.4: National Identity and International Recognition: Sport and the Development of Irish Nationalism

### **4/13 – 4/15: Sport in Deeply Divided Societies - Israel**

**Reading:** Sorek, Tamir. 2003. "Arab Football in Israel as an 'Integrative Enclave'." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 26, pp. 422-50

**Movie:** Mondial in Shefaram