Sociology 3061    Sociology of Sports
ONLINE      Fall 2017
Instructor:  Professor Michael Timberlake, Ph.D.
Office:    Virtual
E-mail:  Use the “message” feature within CANVAS for all mail, including mail with
attachments. In a pinch, use timber@soc.utah.edu
Office Hours:   I am happy to arrange a Skype meeting or telephone you to discuss the course
and any issues about it that you may have. However, I will be away from my
office much of the semester in connection with my research and therefore
unable to meet with you in person.

Course Access: This is an online class that can be “attended” from anywhere there is an internet
connection. Assignments and discussions will be submitted or “satisfied” electronically. However, in
order to take part in the course, you must have access to a computer that meets the system
requirements. If you do not have your own system, you may use computers available to students
located throughout the University of Utah campus. However, some of the material has an audio
component, so you should have headphones or an earpiece if you are using a computer in a public
place. If you are using a private system, you will need to ensure that it is compatible. You must also
be able to view PowerPoint presentations, as well as have a Media Browser on your system. Students
must be able to use an internet browser, send attached files via the mail feature within the course
presence on CANVAS.

Course Description. This course explores the ways in which sports are entangled in social, cultural,
political, and economic forces operating at many different levels, from the social psychological levels
to the global level. On one hand the course deals with the multiple ways in which individuals are
involved in sports organizations and activities, including our participation in sport for purposes of
recreation and leisure, sports participation as self-expression and personal fulfillment, participation as
spectators of sports and consumers of sports as entertainment commodities. On the other hand, the
course deals with the organization of sports and sports organizations as particular representations of
social organizations in general that can be analyzed in terms of goals and norms, social roles, manifest
and latent functions, including all the complex social dynamics that characterize other social
organizations, such as stratification (e.g., by race, class, and gender). The course will also deal with
the political economy of big time sports, including major university and professional sports and their
contradictory relationships to their institutional settings (e.g., in institutions of higher learning and in
communities).

Objectives. Students will become familiar with basic information on the sociology of sports, and the
course will provide the conceptual and theoretical tools to understand and analyze major social issues
in relation to sports. They will also learn to apply general principles of sociology to the analysis and
understanding of particular types of sports issues (e.g., leisure sports vs. organized sports), and they
will be able to critically evaluate the different types of sports in terms of their social uses. They will
learn to apply social science theories and knowledge to sport-society issues, to locate social science
scholarship on sports, to synthesize different sources of such scholarship, and to communicate as both
amateur social scientists and as educated members of the public. In-depth reading, possible online
group discussions, expert presentations, in-class exercises, individual presentations and online lectures will be used to achieve these learning objectives. The course will culminate with student presentations to the class on some important sports issue on which they have researched and developed an informed position or policy recommendation.

**Evaluation.** Students will be evaluated on the basis of three examinations, weekly participation in class Discussion, a research presentation, and commenting on classmates’ presentations. The examinations and presentation each count for 22% of the final grade (the Assignments will count toward the grade for the presentation—see points assigned for each on CANVAS), class participation, including commenting on others’ presentations as well as other possible special assignments will count for an additional 12% of your grade. **No extra credit work is available.** Reading should be completed for the date it is assigned. Online material often assumes that you have completed the reading. Most of the information in class will deal with general principles of the sociology of sports, and most of the reading assignments cover specific examples of how sociological principles can be used to gain critical insight into various issues in sports. Exams will cover both reading and in-class activities such as online lectures. **Since the material presented in class does not duplicate the content of the reading, it is important that students both complete all the reading and “attend” class.** Exams will require students to integrate diverse materials from class and reading in answering general questions, and it is extremely doubtful that satisfactory examination scores can be obtained without good understanding of both. You need participate on the Discussion board on a weekly basis at least. (See the Discussion tab on the left of the CANVAS page for the class, along with tabs for Quizzes, the weekly Modules, etc.)

You will take exams within CANVAS (under “Quizzes”), and you must take them by the deadline given. **We do not provide make-up exams.** However, you will have a four-day window during which each exam will be available for one hour. Each exam has 50 questions, and they are true/false, multiple choice, or very short answer.

**CANVAS:** The syllabus, assignments, lectures/PowerPoint presentations, announcements, etc. will be posted to the class presence at CANVAS. The “lectures” are organized into Modules, including one for each week of classes. These lectures include, at minimum, a PowerPoint presentation. In addition, a little over half the lectures have an audio lectures along with the PowerPoint. The audio versions are available as MP4 downloads (sometimes from a zip file). Sometimes the PowerPoint presentations have hyperlinks to web-based material of interest to the class. You can’t get to the hyperlinks from the MP4s, so you’ll have to click through the downloaded PowerPoints ’til you get to the hyperlink.

**Students are advised to check CANVAS frequently for any changes or announcements pertinent to this class.** Additionally, newspaper articles, journal articles or other media corresponding to course material will be periodically posted to CANVAS. Though not specifically assigned in the reading assignments listed below, students will find useful and relevant information in these articles and are encouraged to read them. Class Links on CANVAS will provide useful information when putting together your class presentation.

**Accommodations for Disabled Students.** If you have any condition, such as a physical or learning disability, which will make it difficult for you to carry out the work as I have outlined it or which will require academic accommodations, please notify me in the first two weeks of the course. To do so, you may make an appointment to speak with me in my office, or come by during office hours. Written documentation of the disability should be submitted along with the request for special accommodation. Contact the Center for Disabled Student Services (160 Union, 581-5020) to facilitate requests.
**Academic Honesty.** It is assumed that the work you submit to me is your own work, and when you have used the ideas of others you have properly indicated that you have done so. Plagiarism and cheating are serious offenses and may be punished by failure on the exam, paper or project; failure in the course; and/or expulsion from the university.

**Research Project and Presentation.** A short research-based position project dealing with some aspect of the sociology of sports is required. One objective of the presentation assignment is to acquaint students with social science journals and social science research, and another key objective of the project is to use it as a basis for making a public presentation of an academic and/or public policy nature. The project will be accomplished in several steps.

**First** a topic must be chosen and submitted for approval. Possible topics include those covered in the reading, or others that seem to have relevance to sociology and sports, in combination. Do not choose a topic that does not have as an important focus some aspect of society, social relations, social organization, social psychology, etc. Some of you might be tempted to, say, look at the effects of running barefoot on marathon performance. This is not sociology. Don’t do it.

You may initially choose a broad topic that you will need to narrow down as you develop the presentation. You might think of it as a question. For example How do sports relate to the family? This is a broad question/topic you could choose, but it is too broad for a research presentation. Thus, as you do background reading you will need to focus on some aspect of Sports and Family. Perhaps it would be “Adolescent’s participation in sports and satisfaction with family.” Or it could be a very macro-topic, such as Does having a professional sports team generate employment and/or income for cities? Or, you could look at issues related to race, class, or gender in connection with some aspect of sports (e.g., a particular sport or a particular level of sports like high school). However, stay away from non-sociological issues like the effects of race on athletic performance/skills. (This doesn’t mean you can’t take an issue like Why aren’t there more African American quarterbacks? It just means that I don’t want to see a serious consideration of bogus theories for answering this question. Stick to sociology.)

Or, it could be a question/topic that raises something like an ethical or philosophical issue, such as Should colleges and universities place so much importance on inter-collegiate athletics? You could then get into a kind of analysis of the arguments for and against that examine the relationship between research and learning vs. big-time college football, for example. What you need to turn in for this is just a couple short phrases and a sentence/question. For example, it might be: participation in organized sports. Does participating in organized sports help adolescents succeed in academically? It doesn’t need to be much more than that. It’s good to frame it as a question, and then later really approach it as something you want to find the answer to rather than something you are sure you know the answer to. **The topic is to be turned in, in writing, by September 17.** Use the Assignments tab on the left hand menu on the homepage for the course.

**Second,** once approved, you will locate five journal articles that deal with this topic, and you need to submit a list of them (cited in the style of the American Sociological Review) **by October 19.** The Assignment tab at CANVAS will have the instructions for this assignment and indicate that you need to list the articles in appropriate style. Again, this is where you will most likely need to narrow down the topic by choosing articles that focus on a similar aspect of the broad research question in which you are interested. We will discuss this “in class.” Again, you will turn this in via the Assignment bar.
Third, an annotated bibliography is to be submitted by November 2. This involves short summaries of each article in addition to the simple citation. The short summaries should not quote or paraphrase the published abstract for the article. Instead they should include (a) a short description of the author's objectives (e.g., what was the major question(s) the author was trying to illuminate?), (b) a brief discussion of the general theoretical approach; (c) a description of the nature of the data on which the conclusions were based and how the data were collected. Was it a survey, experiment, qualitative case study, theoretical or polemical treatment, or what? (d) a short summary of what the author(s) found and/or concluded. Use these four points as a check list for each entry! Each summary should be preceded by the full reference, being careful to properly format the reference and have it in alphabetical order by the first author's last name. Again, you will use the Assignment bar.

Fourth, you will produce a short PowerPoint presentation based on the work you have done. The presentation will include an introduction of the topic, a discussion of the research you have found including its principal findings and controversies, and a conclusion. The presentation may be either one based only on a review of the research literature on a topic or it may include, in addition, data that you find and bring to bear on the topic. You may make use of materials other than the research articles, but the research articles must be part of it. The presentation is due by December 1.

Fifth, after we make the presentations available to everyone in class, each of you will look at at least four other presentations and write at least two comments or questions to the author of each of these four presentations. I will let you know how to choose which ones to look at. Your comments must reach the Discussion board by December 8.


(2) Reader: I decided not to order the reader that I usually have students buy. I did this so you can save $. But I am legally able to post some of the essays from the reader, and these are in the first three modules/weeks, and they are required. On the following schedule these are listed as PDF readings. I will add other supplementary material to other modules, and this material is required consumption as well.

**Topic and Reading Schedule**

Lectures will not necessarily correspond with reading assignments – familiarity with both important. Note that the chapters are not necessarily assigned in the order they appear in the book.

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<tr>
<td>Week 1.</td>
<td>Course organization;</td>
<td>Week 2.</td>
<td>Social and Cultural Reasons for the Importance of Sports in American Society and in the World; Doing Research on Sports</td>
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<td>8/21</td>
<td>What is the Sociology of Sports?</td>
<td>8/28</td>
<td>Chapter 2 Text</td>
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<td>PDF readings</td>
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Week 3. Social Values and Sports Chapter 3 Text
9/4 Choosing a Presentation Topic. PDF readings

Week 4. Sports and the Life Cycle: From Playground to Chapter 8 Text
9/11 Armchair Quarterback

September 17 Submit Presentation Topic

Week 5. School and Sports. How Did that Happen? Chapter 9 Text
9/18 Why Does it Persist?
EXAM 1 (by September 25, Midnight; Online, available beginning 9/21)

9/25

Week 7. Social Problems and Sports in North America: Chapter 4 Text
10/2 Drugs, Violence, Gambling, Eating Disorders
Finding appropriate references (i.e., journal articles).

Week 8 10/9 Fall Break

Week 9 Hallelujah! October 19 Submit Reference List
10/16 Sports and Religion: WWJD (if He were a QB)? Chapter 14 Text

Week 10. Sports and Politics Chapter 13 Text
10/23

Week 11. Sports and the Economy Chapter 11
10/30 November 2 Submit Annotated Bibliography

EXAM 2 (by November 6)

Week 12. Sports and Mass Media Chapter 12 Text
11/6

Week 13. Sports, Stratification and Social Mobility Chapter 5 Text
11/13 Sports and Race/Ethnicity Chapter 6 Text

Week 14. Sports and Gender Happy Thanksgiving—help with the dinner and clean-up, guys!
11/20

Week 15. The Future of Sports and Leisure Chapter 15 Text
11/27 December 1 Submit PowerPoint Presentation
12/4

December 8—Comments Due on 4 Peers’ PowerPoint Presentations
EXAM 3 (by December 15)

For a list of all the important due dates look under the Assignment tab on the home page for the course. There you will see due dates for Discussions, Assignments, and Quizzes (exams).