



GENDER, RACE, AND SEXUALITY IN SPORTS MEDIA

Radio-Television-Film 365

Cross-Listed with AMS 325 and WGS 324

Autumn 2018

Class Meetings: Mondays and Wednesdays 3-4:30pm in BMC 3.206

Screenings: Streaming Online

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Office hours: Mondays 12:45-1:25pm; Tuesdays 3:20-5pm; Wednesdays 4:20-5pm

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Note: This syllabus is subject to revision! Please check Canvas and your email frequently for any updates to readings, screenings, or class.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course examines the cultural politics of sports with a focus on the representation of gender, race, and sexuality across an array of digital and legacy sports media. We will draw upon critical, cultural, and feminist theoretical lenses to consider sports as more than “just a game” or mere escapist entertainment. Rather, sports media culture can be understood as a microcosm of broader

cultural, political, economic, and social forces where power struggles play out on the court, on the field, in the ring, and across multiple screens. This course investigates how discourses of gender, race, and sexuality shape who watches, who participates in, and who is represented in the multi-billion-dollar enterprise of mediated sports. We will specifically scrutinize how discourses socially construct the sporting body to reinforce social inequalities and how fissures of resistance continue to erode these constructions.

REQUIRED TEXTS

All readings for this course are available for download on the **schedule hyperlinked on the Canvas home page**. There is no required textbook for the course.

SCREENINGS

There are several required screenings to be completed on your own time during the course of the semester. All of these are available on streaming sites for a fee (Netflix, Amazon, etc.) and in some cases for free. You can choose to watch these films together to reduce costs if you wish. All screenings for this course are listed on the **schedule hyperlinked on the Canvas home page**.

ASSIGNMENTS

I: Reading and Screening Pop Quizzes. (15% of final grade).

Throughout the course I will administer pop quizzes on the readings, screenings, and lectures to test your basic knowledge of course content. I will not necessarily warn you that a pop quiz is coming the next class day and you should be ready to take the quiz on any day. The quiz questions will consist of content since the last quiz. Your lowest quiz grade will be dropped.

II: Engagement Activities. (10% of final grade).

Engagement activities are opportunities for you to think about course content more deeply and share your insights in writing or with your classmates. These may be short reflective writing exercises, pair work, or group activities. Your two lowest engagement activities scores will be dropped.

III: Weekly Discussion Posts. (25% of final grade).

Each Friday you will submit a 300-word discussion post reflecting on some aspect of gender, race, and sexuality in sports media covered that week and respond to two other students' posts. Each post will cite at least one reading (or a screening that is academic or documentary/educational in nature) and one concept discussed in class. Your two lowest discussion post scores will be dropped. **Please see additional assignment instructions on Canvas.**

IV: Final Group Project Part 1: Photo Essay (20% of final grade)

You will analyze found images of a gender in the media topic that interests you using concepts, theories, and discussions from this course. This activity will be done in **groups of two**. The photo essay that is essentially a first draft of your final video essay (see description below). You will select 8-10 images that help you argue a major thesis about some aspect of

race in the media. You'll also provide written descriptions of the images that includes an introduction, body, and conclusion. **More information on this assignment is on the Canvas assignment page.**

V: Final Group Project Part 2: Video Essay (30% of final grade)

Your final project for this class will be a 5-minute video essay and will be completed with the same partner and on the same topic as your photo essay. A video essay is similar to a final paper in that you have to use analysis skills to make a claim about a particular media artifact. The assignment requires you to incorporate photos, video, and your own voices into the video essay. This assignment will be completed in pairs and I have reserved some class time for you to work with your partners. You do not need to have experience in video essays to do this assignment well and there will be dedicated class time for learning video editing/how to do video essays. The assignment is divided into three parts.

- a) 5-minute video essay
- b) Feedback on Student Videos
- c) Self and Peer Evaluation of Group Assignment

More information on this assignment is on the Canvas assignment page.

CLASS POLICIES

Syllabus Revisions: Changes to the course schedule and assignments may occur due to unforeseen circumstances; please make sure you check Canvas frequently for updates.

Grading system: This class will be graded using the following letter grade system: A (94%+), A- (90-93%), B+ (87-89%), B (84-86%), B- (80-83%), C+ (77-79%), C (74-76%), D (60-69%), and F (less than 60%). Final grades that are .5 and above will be rounded up.

Access and Accommodation: Your experience in this class is important to me, and it is the policy and practice of the University of Texas to create inclusive and accessible learning environments consistent with federal and state law. Please inform me early in the first weeks of the semester if you have a learning difference or other issue that could affect your performance in this class. The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 512-471-6259, <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>.

Inclusion: Consideration for each other is very important in this classroom. This includes being respectful of diversity of all kinds: race, ethnicity, sex and gender, sexual orientation, ability/disability, among others. The diversities that each of us bring to the classroom allow us to be exposed to other points of view. Please show consideration for each other, and be open to listening to new perspectives and ideas. If you have any concerns about any of these issues within this class, please let me know as soon as possible. Conversations will remain confidential unless you request otherwise. Alternatively, students seeking support around these issues can find more information and resources

Attendance: Each week we will have pair and group activities that will help you engage more deeply with course content. Although attendance is not specifically required, active engagement is a portion of your grade and a major factor in your learning. If you must be absent, please check with a classmate to find out what you have missed.

Late assignments. For purposes of fairness for all students, you will be given a reasonable amount of time to complete all assignments. Late assignments will be subject to a grade penalty.

Digital Devices. Computers and tablets are allowed (and encouraged) in in our media classroom, but please only use them for class related work! People with laptops should sit in the middle or back of the room to avoid distracting other students. Cell phones should be on silent and put away during class.

Mutual Respect: In lecture and discussion sections we will be talking about such loaded topics as gender and sexism in the media industries and American society. We will also discuss how other identities such as race, sexuality, class, ability, and other differences are portrayed in the media. In this endeavor, one of my main responsibilities is to ensure that the classroom is a space in which everyone can feel safe, speak up, and feel respected. I don't expect that we'll always agree or that conversations will always be comfortable for everyone. In fact, I encourage discussion and debate in class. What I do ask, is that you engage with me and with each other with attentive listening and mutual respect. If discomfort ever gives way to fearing for one's emotional or physical safety, then please address these concerns with me immediately.

Academic Honesty: Work turned in by a student should be solely her/his own work. Any time an outside source is utilized in the writing of a student paper and not properly acknowledged, this is a form of plagiarism. Plagiarism, cheating on an assignment or exam, or other academic misconduct will not be tolerated and results in severe sanctions, which can include failing the course or expulsion from the university. Please don't put yourself in this position. For more information on scholastic dishonesty, please visit the Student Judicial services Web site at <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs>.

Writing Support: I encourage you to seek writing assistance from the Moody College Writing Support Program or the University Writing Center. The Moody College Writing Support Program, located at BMC 3.322, offers one-on-one assistance without charge to students seeking to improve their writing in all fields of communication, including film and television studies. Students may book half-hour appointments at moody.utexas.edu/students/moodywriting or drop in during all stages of the writing process. The University Writing Center, located in Learning Commons, PCL 2.330, also offers individualized assistance to students who want to improve their writing skills. There is no charge, and students may come in on a drop in or appointment basis. They are at 512-471-6222 and uwc.utexas.edu.

Counseling Support: Taking care of your general well-being is an important step in being a successful student. If stress, test anxiety, racing thoughts, feeling unmotivated or anything else is getting in your way, there are options available for support.

For *immediate* support:

- Visit/Call the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC): M-F 8-5p | SSB, 5th floor | [512-471-3515](tel:512-471-3515) | cmhc.utexas.edu
- CMHC Crisis Line: 24/7 | [512.471.2255](tel:512-471-2255) | cmhc.utexas.edu/24hourcounseling.html

CARE Counselor in the Moody College of Communication is: Abby Simpson, LCSW

- M-F 8-5p | CMA 4.134 | [512-471-7642](tel:512-471-7642) (Please *leave a message* if she is unavailable)

FREE Services at CMHC:

- Brief assessments and referral services
- Mental health & wellness articles - cmhc.utexas.edu/commonconcerns.html
- MindBody Lab - cmhc.utexas.edu/mindbodylab.html
- Classes, workshops, & groups - cmhc.utexas.edu/groups.html

CLASS SCHEDULE

(This schedule will change. Please refer to Canvas frequently for revisions to the schedule)

Unit 1: Setting Our Approach

Week 1: Introductions

Wednesday, August 29: Introductions

Read:

- The Course Syllabus

Week 2: Do Sports Matter?

Monday, September 3: **No Class – Labor Day**

Wednesday, September 5: Do Sports Matter?

Watch:

- Zirin: Not Just a Game (Streaming for free at UT Libraries)

Read:

- [Ja'han Jones. \(2017\). Colin Kaepernick is to the NFL is What Black People are to America.](#)

Friday, September 7: Discussion Post 1 Due

Week 3: Foundations

Monday, September 10: Cultural Studies of Sport

Read:

- Ott and Mack: Cultural Analysis
- Andrews and Giardina: Sport without Guarantees: Towards a Cultural Studies that Matters

Wednesday, September 12: Sports and Identity: Watching Sports Critically

Read:

- Dines and Humez: Reading Media Texts Critically
- Henderson: Representation

Friday, September 14: Discussion Post 2 Due

Unit 2: Sports, Race, and the Color Line

Week 4: The Color Line

Monday, September 17: Jack Johnson and the Birth of the Black Athlete

Read:

- Andrews, Mower, and Silk: Ghettocentrism and the Essentialized Black Male Athlete
- Dodai Stewart. (2016) Here's Why Simone Manuel's Historic Gold Metal is So Emotional for Black Americans. <http://fusion.net/story/335984/simone-manuel-gold-medal-historic-racism/>

Wednesday, September 19: Linsanity

Read:

- Park: Race, Hegemonic Masculinity, and the "Linpossible"

Watch:

- Long (2013): Linsanity (Available for rent on Amazon or via YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=roPoU6DB5gY>)

Friday, September 21: Discussion Post 3 Due

Week 5: From Ali to La Hoya

Monday, September 24: Muhammed Ali

Read:

- Zirin: 'I Just Want to Be Free:' On the Radical Reverberations of Muhammed Ali

Watch:

- Siegel (2014): The Trials of Muhammed Ali (Netflix)

Wednesday, September 26: *La Raza* Representations

Read:

- Garcia: Boxing, Masculinity, and Latinidad: Oscar De La Hoya, Fernando Vargas, and *Raza* Representations

Friday, September 28: Discussion Post 4 Due

Week 6: O.J.

Monday, October 1: OJ Made in America Part 1

Watch:

- Edelman: OJ Made in America: Parts 1 and 2 (Available streaming on Amazon for a fee)

Wednesday, October 3: OJ Made in America

Watch:

- Edelman: OJ Made in America: Parts 3-5 (Available streaming on Amazon for a fee)

Friday, October 5: Discussion Post 5 Due

Week 7: Whiteness

Monday, October 8: Whiteness

Read:

- Leonard: Playing While White: Privilege and Power on and Off the Field

Wednesday, October 10: The PyeongChang 2018 Olympics

Read:

- TBD

Friday, October 12: Discussion Post 6 Due

Unit 3: Sports, Gender Non/Conformity, and Sexual Identity

Week 8: Gendered Ideals

Monday, October 15: On Men and Idealized Masculinities

Read:

- Anderson and Kian: Examining Media Contestation of Masculinity and Head Trauma in the NFL

Wednesday, October 17: On Women and Idealized Femininities

Read:

- Jennings: Beauty and Strength: Defining the Female Body in The Ultimate Fighter Season 20 Promotional Campaign

Friday, October 19: Discussion Post 7 Due

Week 9: Fighting for Space

Monday, October 22: Space Invaders

Read:

- Adjepong and Carrington: Black Female Athletes as Space Invaders

Wednesday, October 24: Girl Fight

Read:

- Fojas: Sports of Spectatorship: Boxing Women of Color in Girlfight and Beyond

Watch:

- Kusama: Girlfight (Available for rent online at Amazon)

Friday, October 26: Discussion Post 8 Due

Week 10: Postfeminism and the G.O.A.T.

Monday, October 29: Postfeminism + Photo Essays

Read:

- Toffoletti: Analyzing Media Representations of Sports Women: Expanding the Conceptual Boundaries Using a Postfeminist Sensibility

Wednesday, October 31: Serena Williams + Group Work

Read:

- Rankine: The Meaning of Serena Williams

Friday, November 2: **Photo Essay Due**

Week 11: The Gender Binary

Monday, November 5 Intersex Athletes

Read:

- Sloop: "This is Not Natural": Caster Semenya's Gender Threats

Wednesday, November 7: Transgender Athletes

Read:

- McClearen: The Paradox of Fallon's Fight: Interlocking Discourses of Sexism and Cissexism in Mixed-Martial Arts

Watch:

- Thomas (2015): Game Face (Available on Netflix)

Friday, November 9: Discussion Post 9 Due

Week 12: Queering Sports

Monday, November 13: Gay Athletes

Read:

- McCune: Michael Sam and the Queer Art of Failure

Wednesday, November 15

Read:

- Holmlund: When is a Lesbian Not a Lesbian: The Lesbian Continuum and the Mainstream Femme Film

Friday, November 19: Discussion Post 10 Due (last discussion post!)

Unit 4: Digital Sports and Sports Activism

Week 13: Digitizing Sports

Monday, November 19: Digital Bodies and Esports

Read:

- Lupton: Digital Bodies

Wednesday, November 21 – **No Class for Thanksgiving Break**

Week 14: Activism

Monday, November 26: #blacklivesmatter and Women's Sports Activism

- Modiano: The NFL, Activism, and #blacklivesmatter
- Cooky: Women's Sports Activism

Wednesday, November 28: Video Essays + Group Work

- No reading

Week 15: Final Projects

Monday, December 3: Group Work on Final Project

Tuesday, December 4: **Final Project Due 11:59pm on Canvas**

Wednesday, December 5: Screening Final Essays

Week 16: Final Projects

Monday, December 10 – Screening Final Projects

Due: **Feedback on Video essays due by 11:59pm**

Due: **Partner and Self Evaluations due by 11:59pm**