

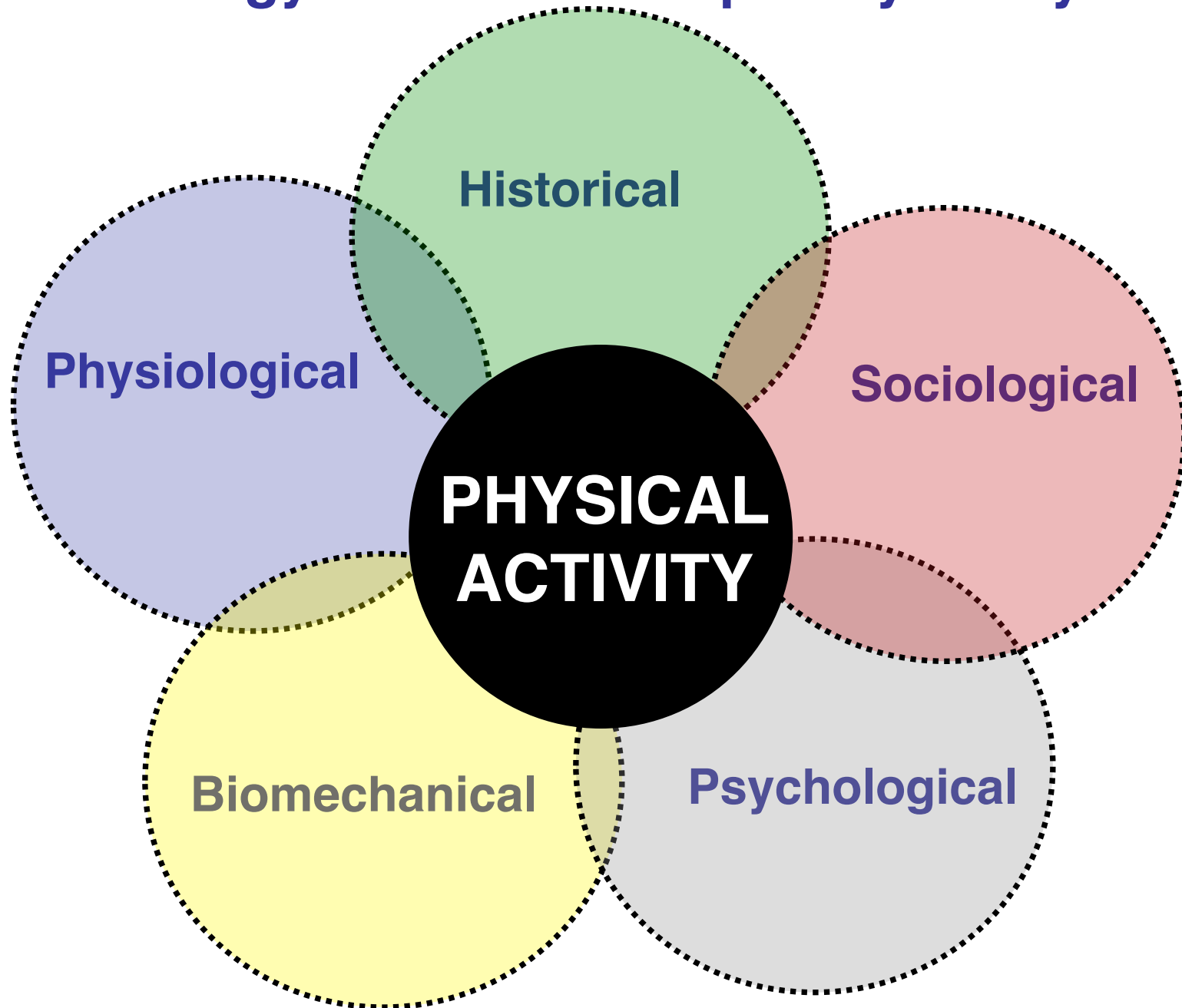
# **“Sport and the Sociological Imagination”**

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**Dr. David L. Andrews**  
**Physical Cultural Studies Program**  
**Department of Kinesiology**



# Kinesiology: The Interdisciplinary Study of....



# **Who Are You? Who Are You Going To Be?**

**Physical Therapy**

**Occupational Therapy**

**Physicians Assistant**

**Personal Trainer**

**Coach**

**Graduate School**

**Medical School**

**PE Teacher**

**Sport Management/Marketing**

**Other**

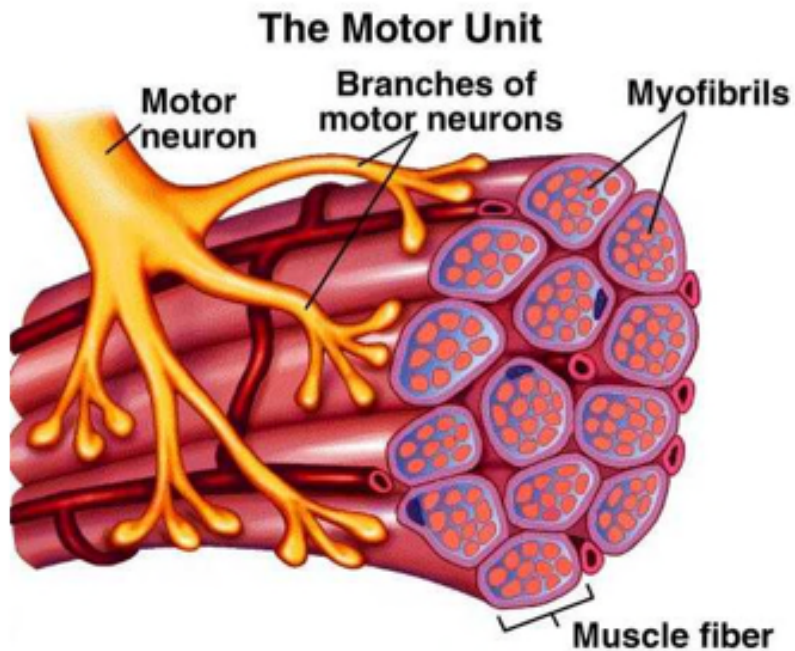
Don't treat the physically active **BODY** as an **ABSTRACT BIOLOGICAL** entity.



It is that, of course, but its also a **SOCIAL** and **CULTURAL** (and economic and political) phenomenon



# De-Naturalizing the Active Body



Bio-Physical Constitution



Socio-Cultural-Political  
Economic Constitution

~~NATURE~~  
NATURE

AND  
VS

~~CULTURE~~  
CULTURE?

# **Theme 1:**

## **A Critical and Theoretical Sociological Approach**

A “sport course” as part of the **CORE undergraduate curriculum** at one of the nation’s leading public universities?

As Sport Illustrated would say, surely a “sign that the apocalypse is upon us”; evidence of declining educational standards?”

I would argue to the contrary, and go as far to say that **if one is to truly understand contemporary American society, the one has to study contemporary sport culture...**

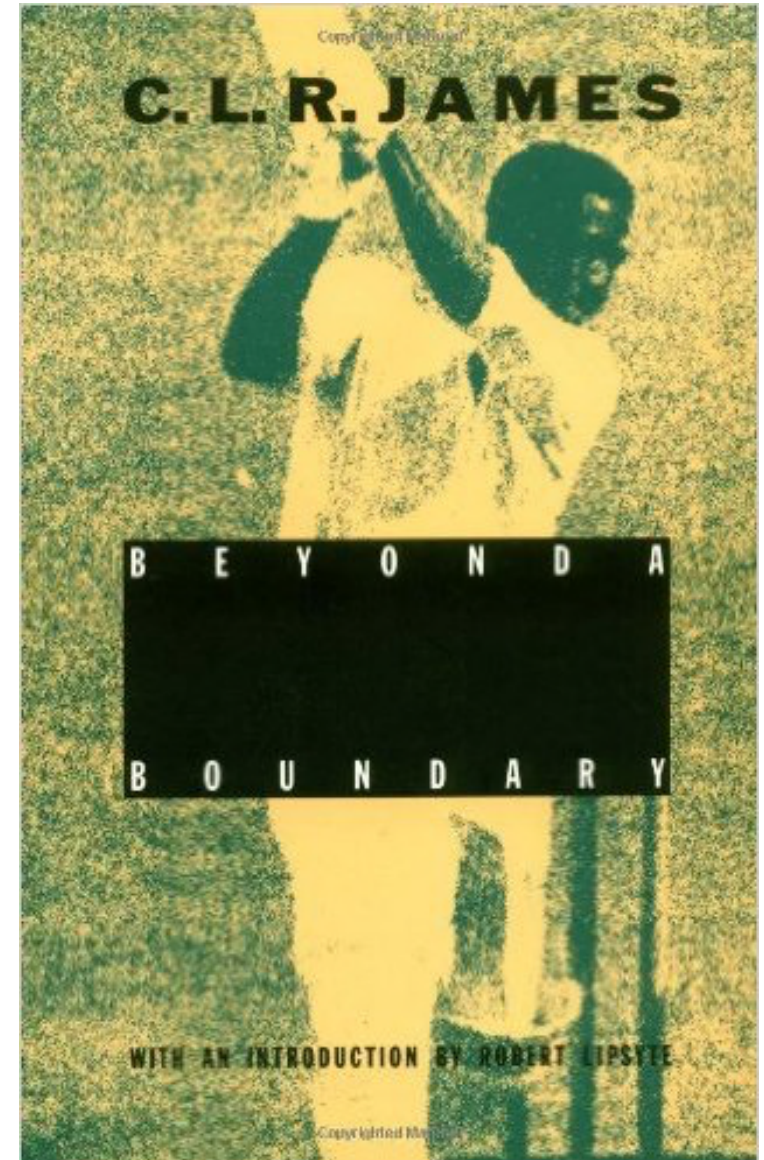
**What this course isn't?**

**A sport trivia-fest; a litany of descriptive sport stories and anecdotes**

**What this course is?**

**A theoretically and conceptually driven and critical examination of the structure and experience of contemporary sport culture and its relation to broader society.**

**“What do they know  
of cricket who only  
cricket know?”**



**C.L.R. James (1963)**



**“Only connect...  
live in fragments  
no longer”**

**E.M Forster (1910)**



# CONNECT SPORTING BODIES...



...TO THE **CONNECT** IN WHICH  
THEY ARE **LOCATED**/OUT OF WHICH  
THEY **EMERGED**.

**Broadly speaking,  
this course focuses on  
developing your ability to  
CONNECT SPORT and  
SOCIETY.**



**Module 1: Structures and Processes**

**Module 2: Bodies and Identities**

**Module 3: Collectivities and Spaces**

**It is a challenge...**

**To think about sport  
(and hence society) in  
a theoretical, critical,  
and insightful way**

# The Importance of Sport Criticism

**“Criticism is actually a form of commitment, a way of saying: If there are problems here and unwarranted breaches of social justice and human equality, let’s identify them and work to transform things to make sport [and hopefully society] better”.**

**Sage, G. H. (1998). *Power and ideology in American sport: A critical perspective* (Second ed.) (p. 12). Champaign: Human Kinetics.**

The aim of this course being to  
produce:

**CRITICAL  
SPORTING  
INTELLECTUALS**

# THE IMPORTANCE OF THEORY

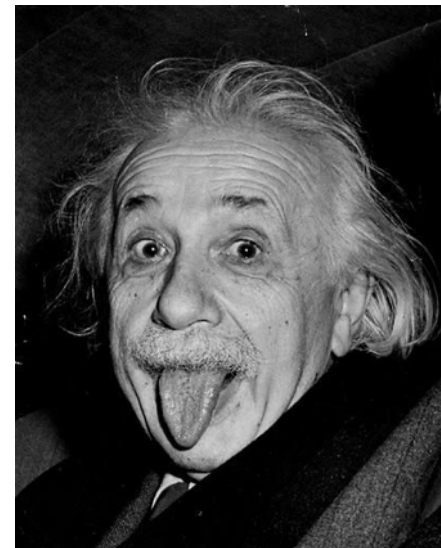
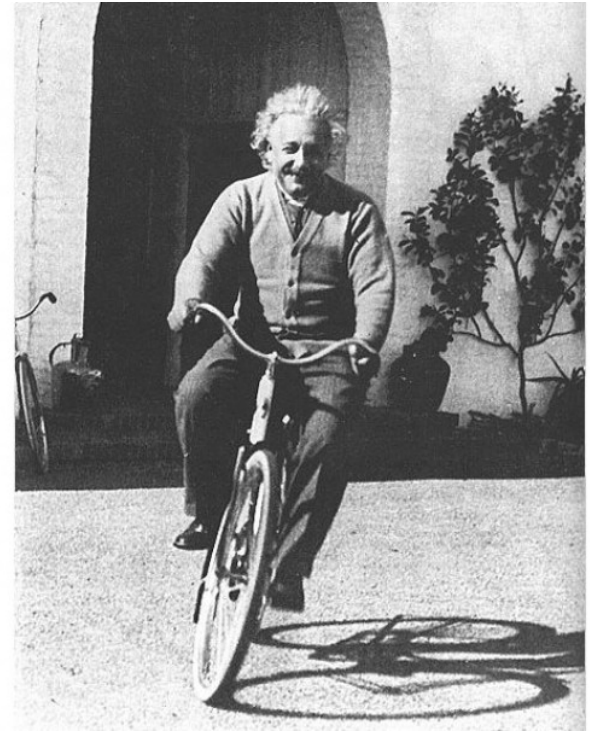
Theory is **interpretation**...it leads to **explanation** of some social phenomenon...and gives **order and insight** to what is, or can be, observed"

(Denzin, 1978, p. 6).

**“Whether you can  
observe a thing or not  
depends on the theory  
which you use.**

**It is theory which decides  
what can be observed.”**

**(Albert Einstein, 1926).**



When you see this image of spectacles, it is a reminder to **“think through”** the theoretical lens (concepts, frameworks, ideas) being introduced.



So, in this course you will hopefully become familiar with a broad range of **theoretical spectacles/lenses**



**“He just makes a lot  
of words up!”**

**“He just sticks  
‘ization’ on the end  
of everything!”**

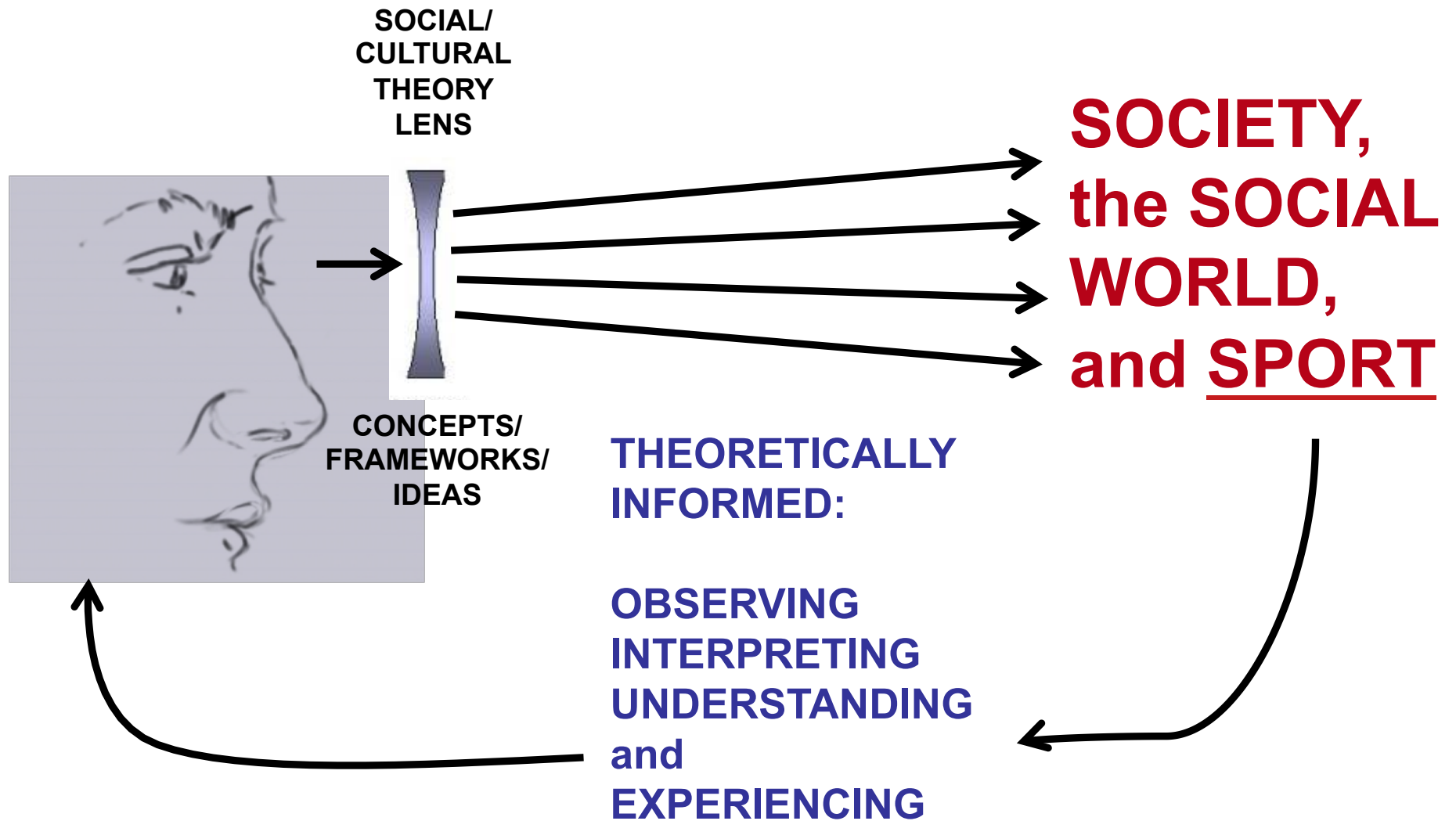
**The WORDS are the:**



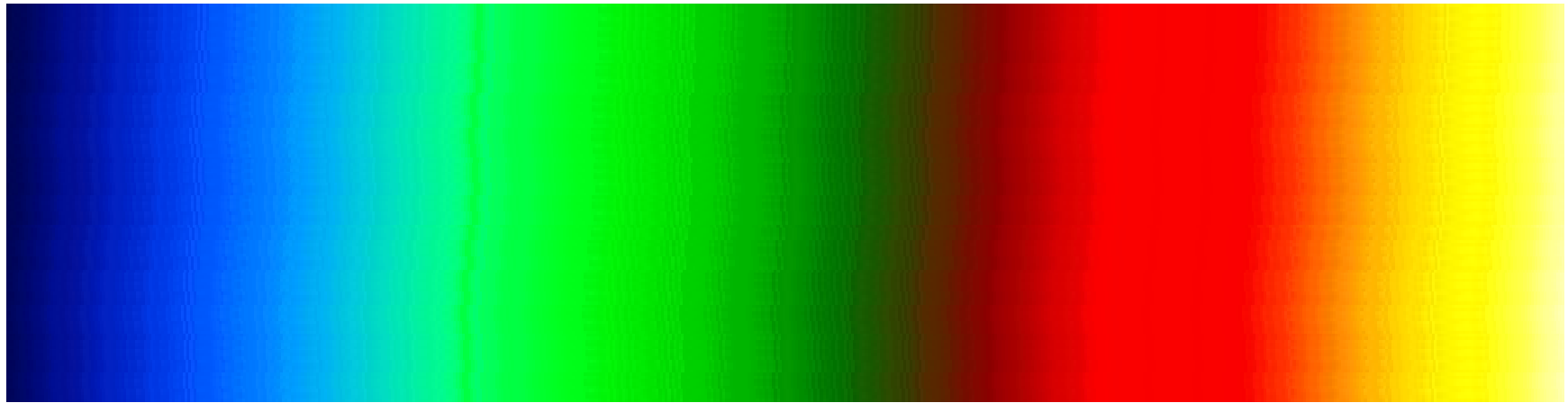
**Theories, concepts,  
and ideas through  
which you interpret  
and understand  
sport/physical  
culture in American  
society.**

**The course is about  
getting you to think/  
interpret  
CONCEPTUALLY.**

# The Social and Cultural Theory Lens



# **CRITICALLY** Engaging Course Theories and Concepts



## **COLD:**

“These theories and concepts **just don’t explain** my empirical experience and observations”



## **WARM:**

“These theories and concepts **partially, but not wholly, explain** my empirical experience and observations”



## **HOT:**

“These theories and concepts **totally relate to, and help me explain,** my empirical experience and observations”

# **Theme 2:**

## **Understanding the Sport Conundrum**

**Despite our general recognition that sport is a significant sociological phenomenon, there is a marked lack of uniformity relating to the precise:**

## **DEFINITION OF SPORT**

**According to some observers:**

**“Sport itself has **no essentialist, pre-given definition**, indeed it is very difficult to arrive at consensus as to what ‘sport’ is. Fierce argument can and does rage over whether snooker, darts, cycling, fishing, synchronised swimming, skating and professional wrestling are regarded as sports.”**

**Horne, J., Tomlinson, A., & Whannel, G. (1999).  
*Understanding sport: An introduction to the sociological and cultural analysis of sport (p. 161)*. London: E & FN Spon.**



## The **ESPN** View of the Sporting World?

Some define sport by suggesting it incorporates that which one confronts when reading the sports pages of major newspapers or, in more contemporary fashion, when viewing ESPN programming.

However, this form of definition has become increasingly problematic...

**ESPN staples such as college football and golf would generally be considered to be “sport” ...**



**However, could this also be said of...**



**Pool?**



**Bass Fishing?**



**“Redneck[sic] Games”?**



**Poker?**



**National Spelling Bee?**

**Clearly, a more sophisticated effort to define sport is required...**



**“Often we think of sport as a set of specific competitive physical activities based on elements of play, games, and contests. From this perspective we formally define sport as a structured, goal-oriented, competitive, contest-based, ludic physical activity.”**

**McPherson, B.D., Curtis, J.E., and Loy, J.W. (1989) *The Social Significance of Sport: An Introduction to the Sociology of Sport* (pp. 15). Champaign: Human Kinetics.**

## **Structured:**

Rules and codes of conduct, spatial and temporal constraints, highly bureaucratized.

## **Goal-Oriented:**

Commonly defined objectives allowing clear identification of winners (and losers).

## **Competitive:**

Essentially contest based, either between competitors or clock. Necessarily indeterminate activities involving excitement generated from uncertainty of outcomes.

## **Ludic:**

Involving elements of freedom of expression and playful creativity.

## **Physical:**

Involving the use of the body in an instrumental and vigorous fashion.

Evidently, what Loy *et al* are pointing towards is the **elite, highly structured and competitive** team and individual activities which do dominate the contemporary sporting landscape.

These are what Donnelly (1996) described as “prolympic” sports.

Donnelly, P. (1996). Prolympism: Sport monoculture as crisis and opportunity. *Quest*, 48, 25-42.

# Sport: An *Affective* Domain

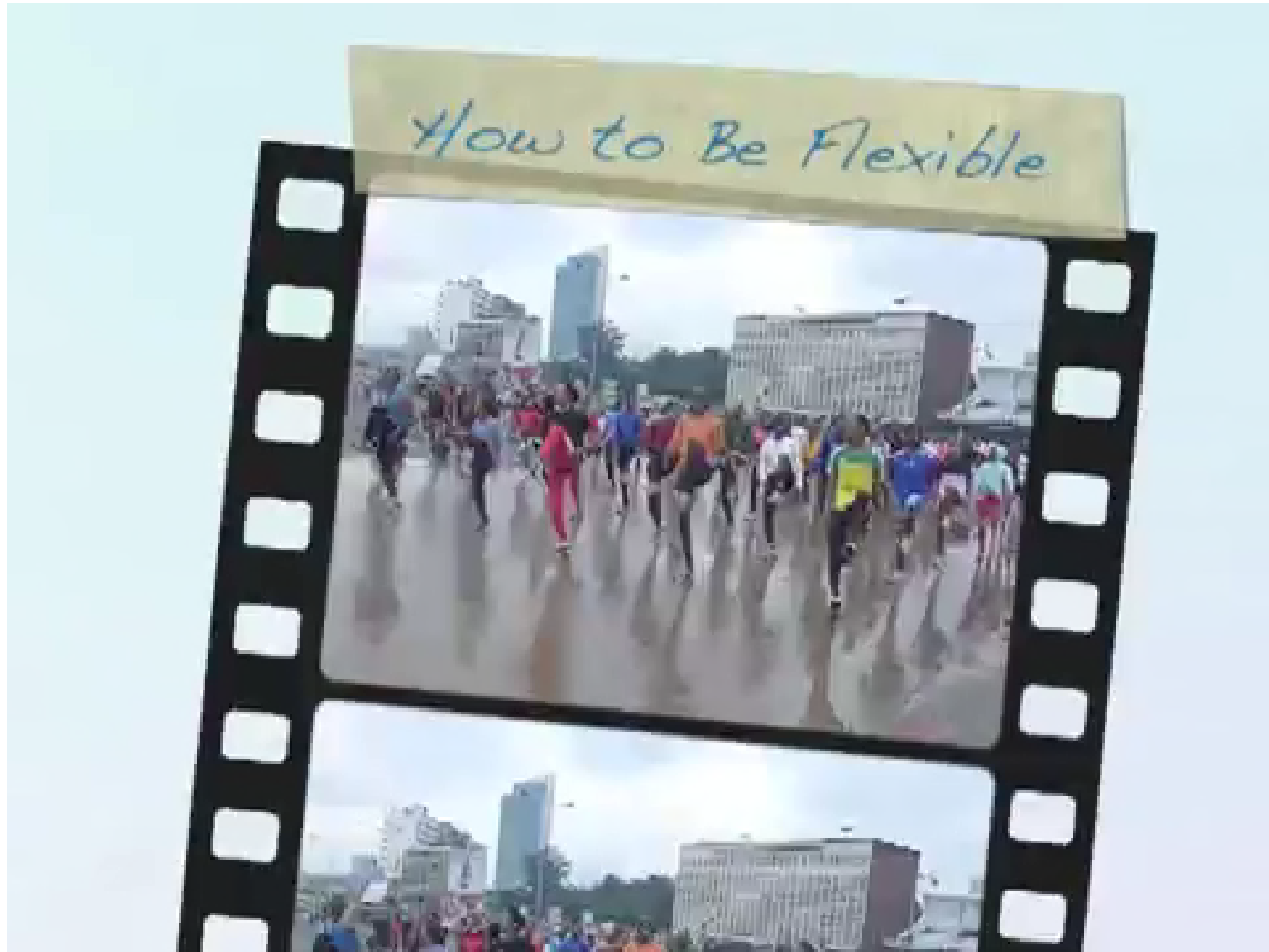


Men's 10,000m Race: London 2012

[See Video Clip 1](#)



# The Pleasure of Physical Culture?



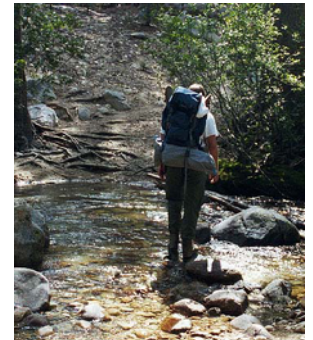
Off season training, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

[See Video Clip 2](#)

# **Theme 3:**

## **Sport as Physical Culture**

While much of this course will focus on the “prolympic” understanding of sport, it is important to recognise that some important and highly popular physical activities do not fit within this narrow definition...



These are **FITNESS** and **WELLNESS**, **HEALTH**, **LEISURE**, and **RECREATION** based physical activities which cannot be discounted.

So, SPORT is--according to the  
“**loose definition**” used within  
this course--a collective noun  
used to describe the various  
**culturally sanctioned** aspects of  
**PHYSICAL ACTIVITY** practiced  
within a given society.

Evidently PHYSICAL CULTURE represents an:

**ONTOLOGICALLY  
MIXED  
ENTITY**

(there are diverse ways of *being* physical)



**Movement/  
Dance**



**Sport**



**Physical  
Culture**



**Exercise/  
Fitness**



**Physical  
Education**

**Recreation/  
Leisure**



**Health/  
Wellness**



**The BODY, and  
more specifically, the  
ACTIVE BODY (the  
body in movement)**

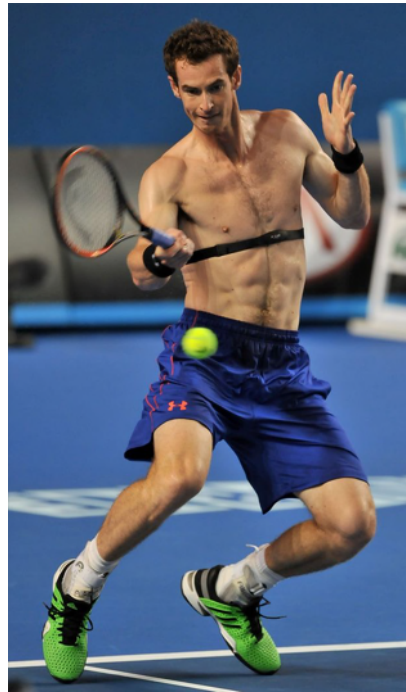
The **ACTIVE BODY** is the  
internal **INSTRUMENT** (with  
regard to participation) and  
the external **OBJECT** (with  
regard to spectating)  
of **PHYSICAL CULTURE.**





**The Active Body as Physical Instrument**





**The Active Body as Physical Object**

# Range of Sporting Involvement

**Work**



**Occupational  
Participation**



**Professional  
Participation**



**Wellness/Leisure  
Participation**



**Active  
Spectating**



**Passive  
Spectating**

**Play**

However, as with other **CULTURAL FORMS** (music, food, media), the sporting practices and preferences of a society are **NEVER GUARANTEED**, they are always likely, and subject, to change.

**Just as society changes, so sport culture is in a perpetual state of flux.**

**Sport is constantly changing, and being changed by, the changing nature of societal existence.**





Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937)

Gramsci's notion of culture as a:

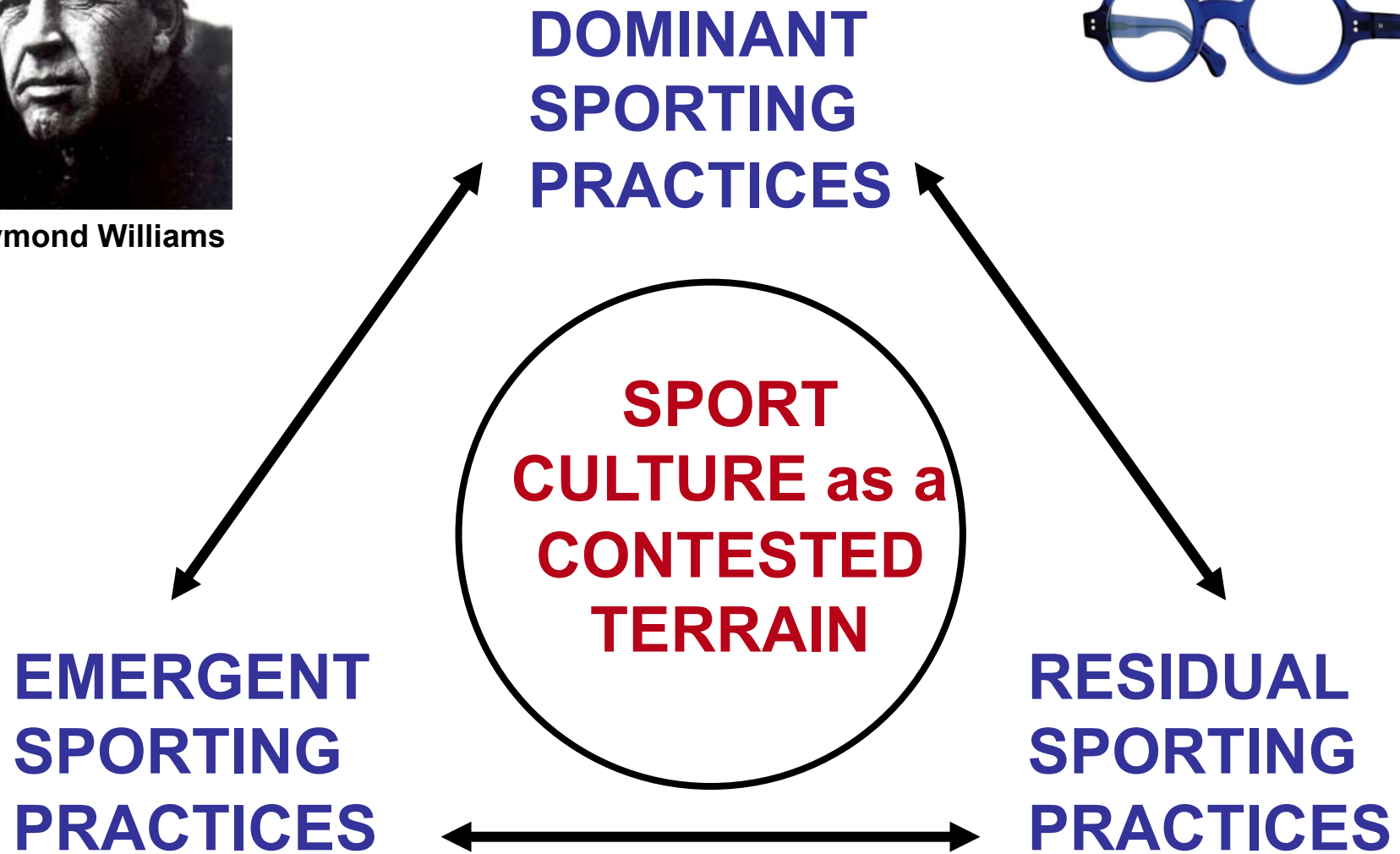
**“CONTESTED  
TERRAIN”**



**Dominant** cultural practices and meanings constantly struggle for their position of ascendancy against **residual** and/or **emergent** practices and meanings...



Raymond Williams



# DOMINANT **AMERICAN** SPORTING PRACTICES?



The Big 3.5?



# EMERGENT **AMERICAN** SPORTING PRACTICES?



**Cricket?**

# EMERGENT **AMERICAN** SPORTING PRACTICES?



**Ultimate Frisbee: Future Olympic Sport?**

# EMERGENT **AMERICAN** SPORTING PRACTICES?



**Esports/E-Sports**



# RESIDUAL **AMERICAN** SPORTING PRACTICES?



**Cock Fighting?**



# RESIDUAL **AMERICAN** SPORTING PRACTICES?



**Baseball?**

# Sport as a Site for Cultural Contestation



For more information, visit:  
**RedskinsFacts.com**

**See Video Clip 3**

# **Theme 4:**

## **Toward a Sporting Sociological Imagination**

**SPORT IS NOT  
SUBSTANTIAL...**

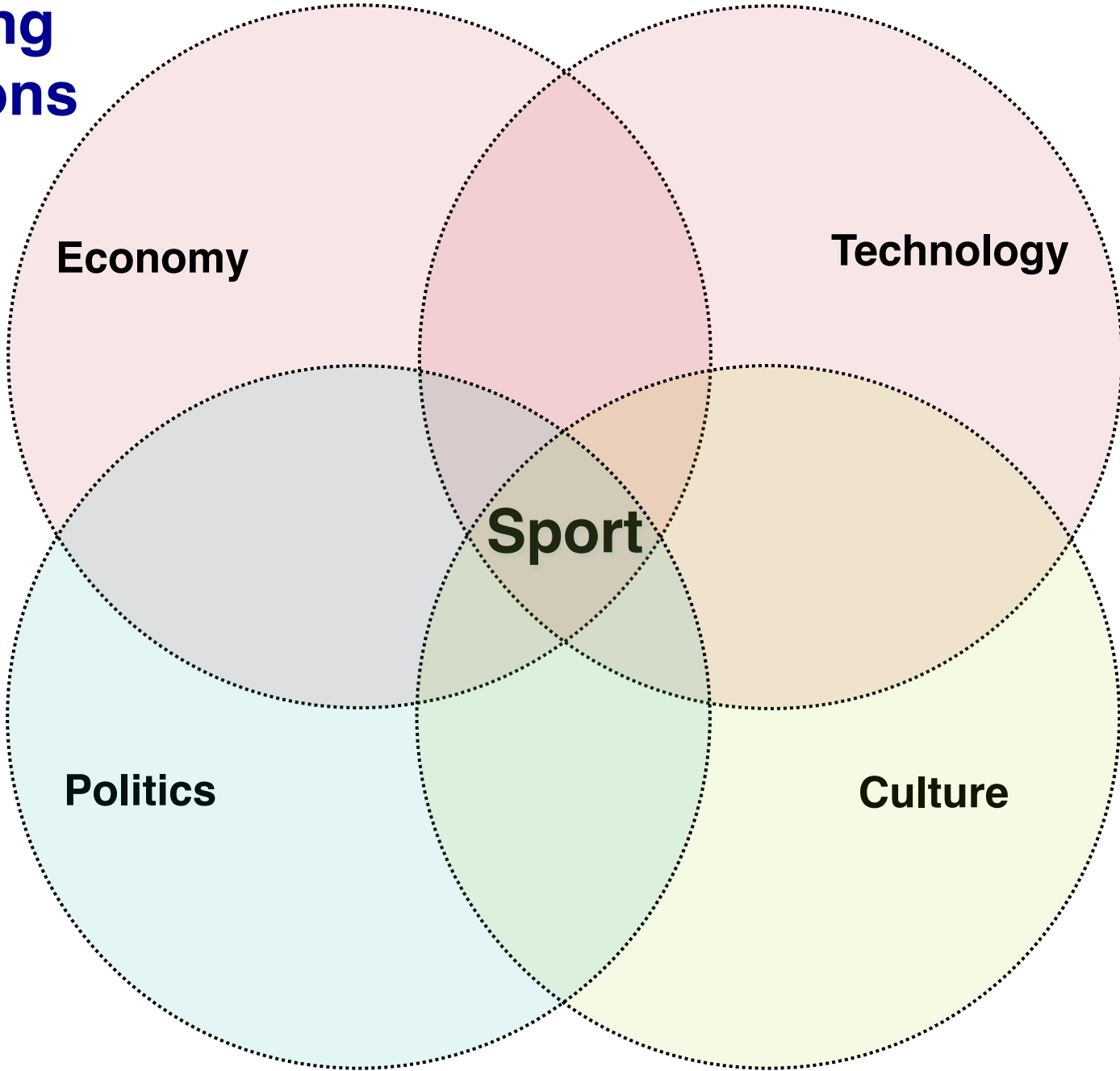
**...IT IS**

**RELATIONAL**

**(make sure you understand what this  
means)**



**Sporting  
Relations**



**and  
Interconnections**

**But, how do we begin to  
think contextually/relationally  
about sport?**

**How do we engage sport as a  
sociological phenomenon?**

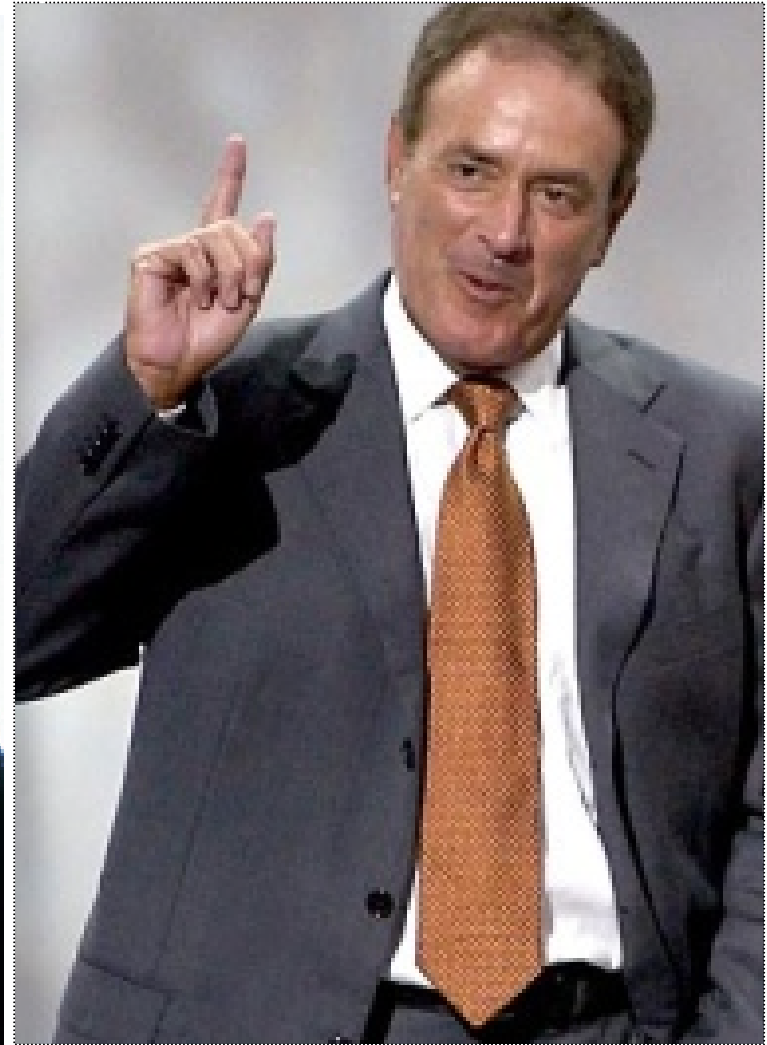
# 1. Sport as a World in and of Itself

(The “What Relationship?” Thesis)



Separate and Mutually  
Exclusive Entities

## Costasitis/Michaelitis



**SPORTING FETISHIZATION**

# **SPORTING FETISHIZATION**

**Treating sport as if it is somehow divorced from the various forces and relations which shape its very constitution; as if it is an entity, in and of itself, and not a product of a particular cultural and historical moment.**

**In other words, not questioning why our sporting lives (our activities, bodies, even our fantasies) are as they are. Instead, simply:**

## **TAKING THEM FOR GRANTED**

**However, sport is a:**

**SOCIETAL CONSTRUCT**

**Whose form and function speaks to  
the nature of the society in which  
we live.**

## 2. Sport as a Mirror of Society

(The Reflection Thesis)



One-Way and Determining  
Relationship Between  
Entities



That  
'70's  
Show



**For a truly a contextual understanding of sport, it is important to develop what C. Wright Mills (onetime professor at the University of Maryland) characterized as a:**

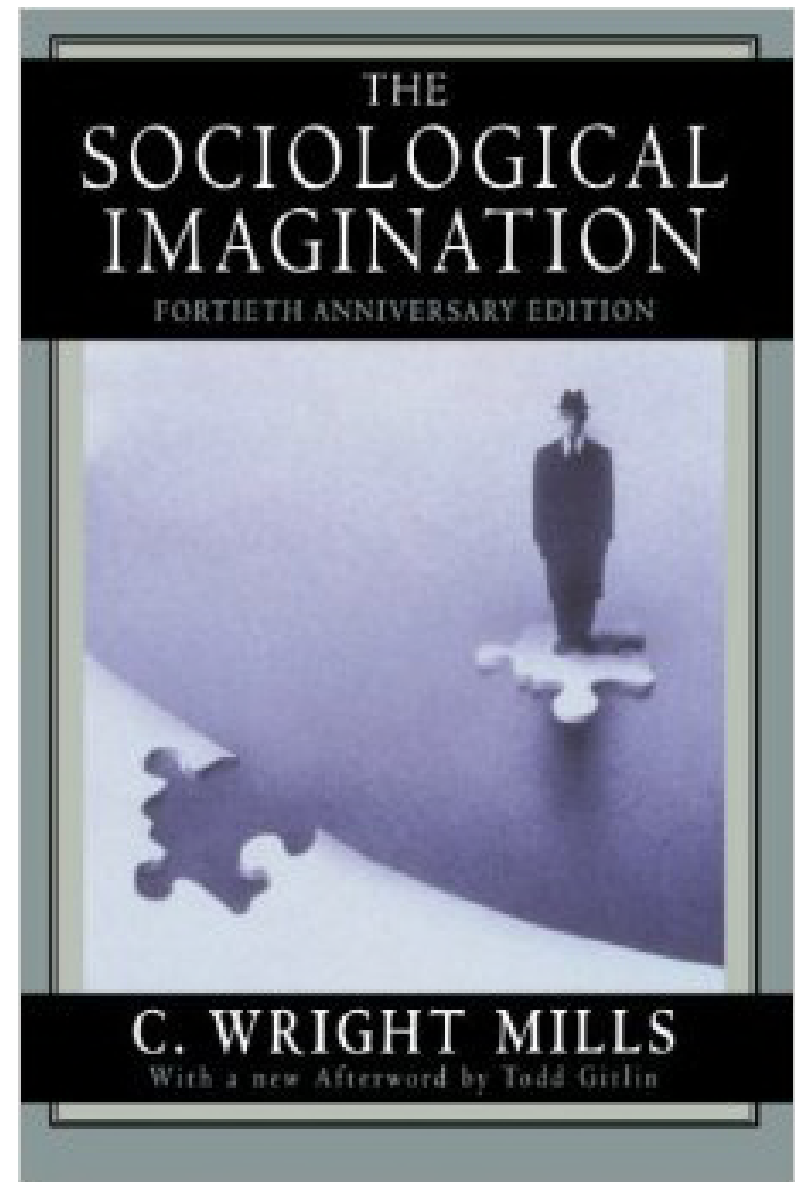
## **SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION**





**C.W. Mills**

**“The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society.”**



**C. Wright Mills (1959)**

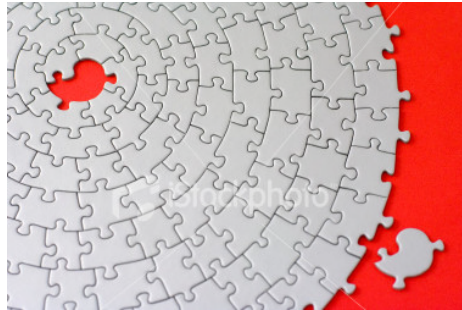


Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both.

*C. Wright Mills*

# **The Jigsaw Analogy:**

**An individual piece of a jigsaw is relatively meaningless in and of itself...**



**It can only be understood in relation to the other pieces with which it combines to constitute the jigsaw as a whole...**

**A sociological imagination encourages the recognition that as they live out their lives, individuals contribute:**

**“however minutely, to the shaping of... society...even as he [the individual] is made by society and by its historical push and shove.”**

**Mills, C. W. (1959). *The sociological imagination*. London: Oxford University Press.**



## **A Sporting Sociological Imagination**

**“any adequate account of sport must be rooted in an understanding of its location within society. The essence of sport is to be found within the nature of its relationship to the broader stream of societal forces of which it is a part”.**

**Sage, G. H. (1998). *Power and ideology in American sport: A critical perspective* (Second ed.) (p. 14). Champaign: Human Kinetics.**

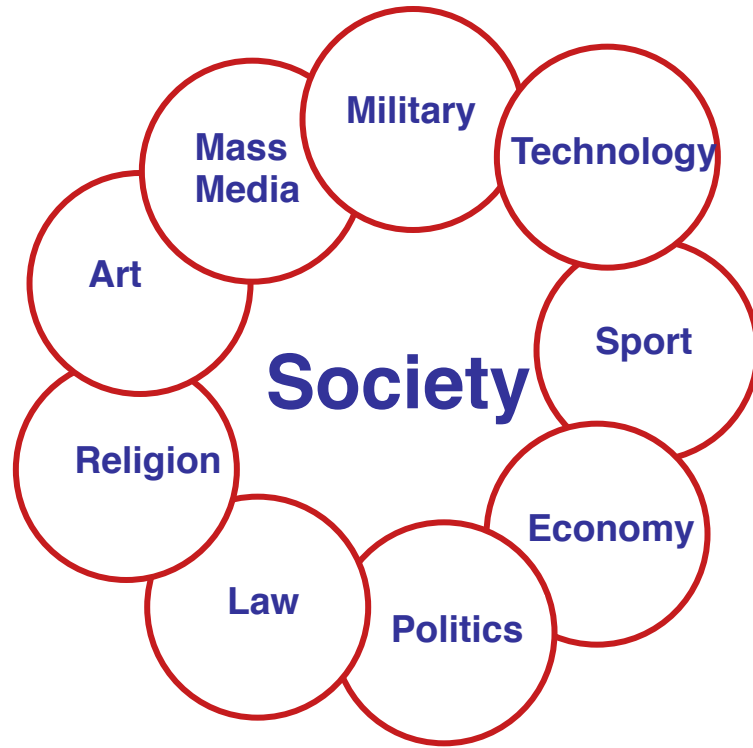
### 3. Sport as Product and Producer of Society

(The Dialectic Thesis)



Two-Way and Mutually  
Reinforcing Relationship  
Between Entities





**Developing a sporting sociological imagination demands that we think about the relationship between sport culture and the societal context out of which it emerged, and which it simultaneously helps to constitute.**

# **Theme 5:**

## **SPORT MAPPING: Utilizing the Sporting Sociological Imagination**

**We must begin to identify and  
understand the**

**INTERRELATIONSHIPS or  
INTERCONNECTIONS**

**Between SPORT and SOCIETY**

# **Sport as Product and Producer of Society**

**(The Dialectic Thesis)**



**Two-Way and Mutually  
Reinforcing Relationship  
Between Entities**



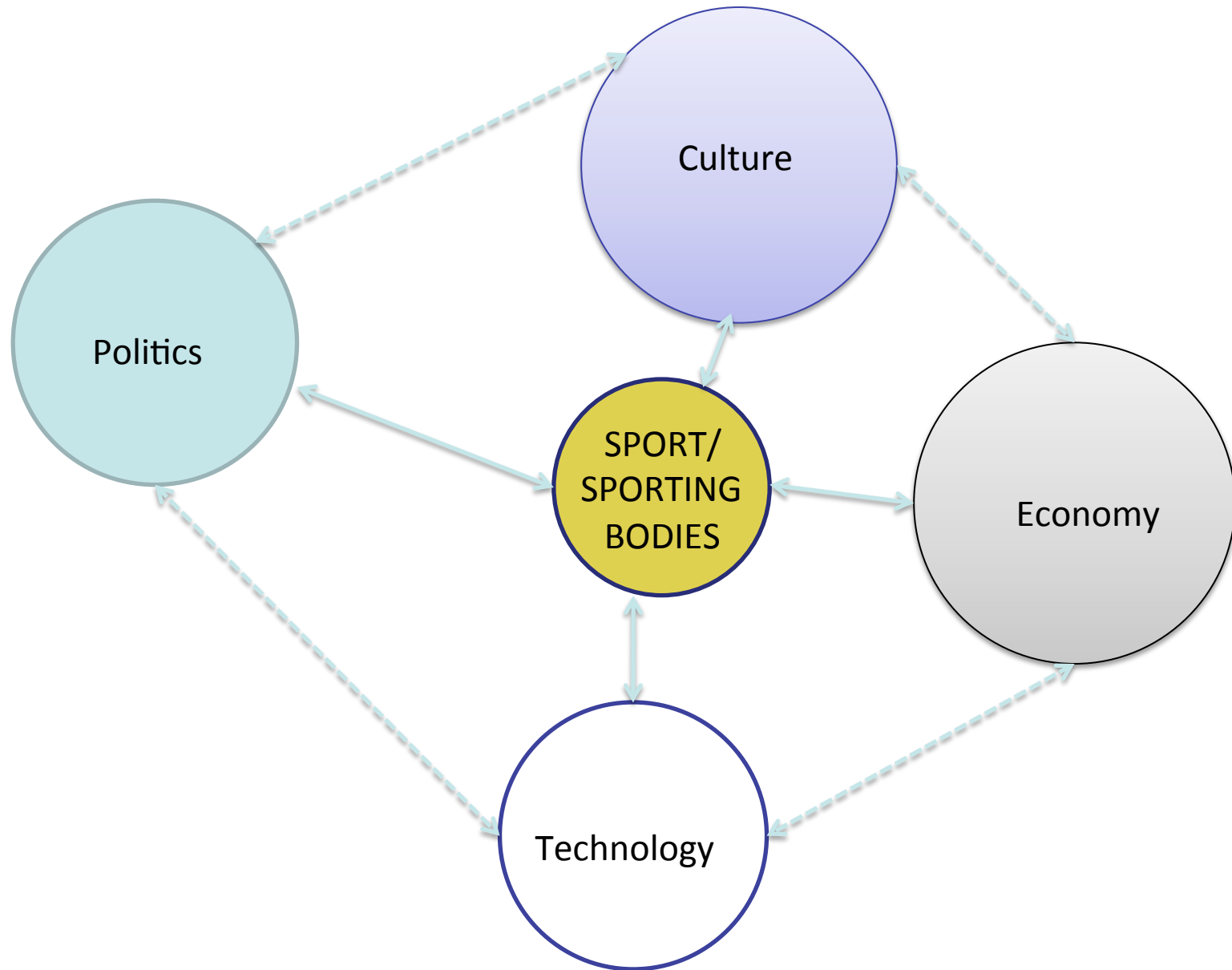
Our goal within this course, as Sage summarized it, is therefor to identify and examine:

**“What are the interconnections between sport and other aspects of American society?”**

**What type of American society do we live in?**

**And, how is this broader American society linked to the structure of contemporary sport culture?**

# Mapping Sport-Society Interconnections



**What does sport tell us about society, and vice versa?**

# CONTEXTUALIZING SPORTING BODIES I



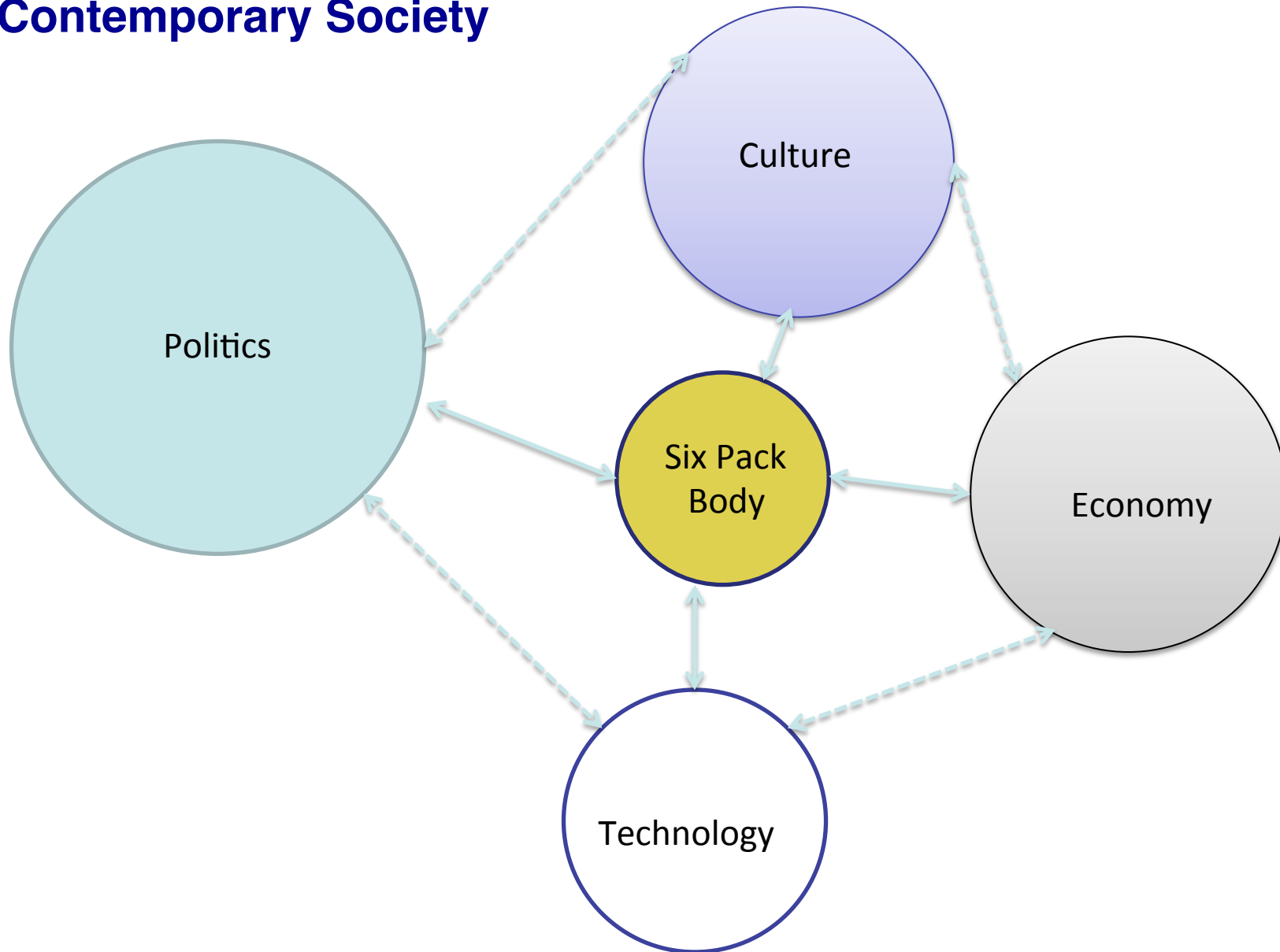
**The Six Pack**

# The Male Body as Cultural Construct



Video Clip 4

## Mapping the Six Pack Body as a Product and Producer of Contemporary Society



**What do six pack bodies tell us about contemporary society, and vice versa?**



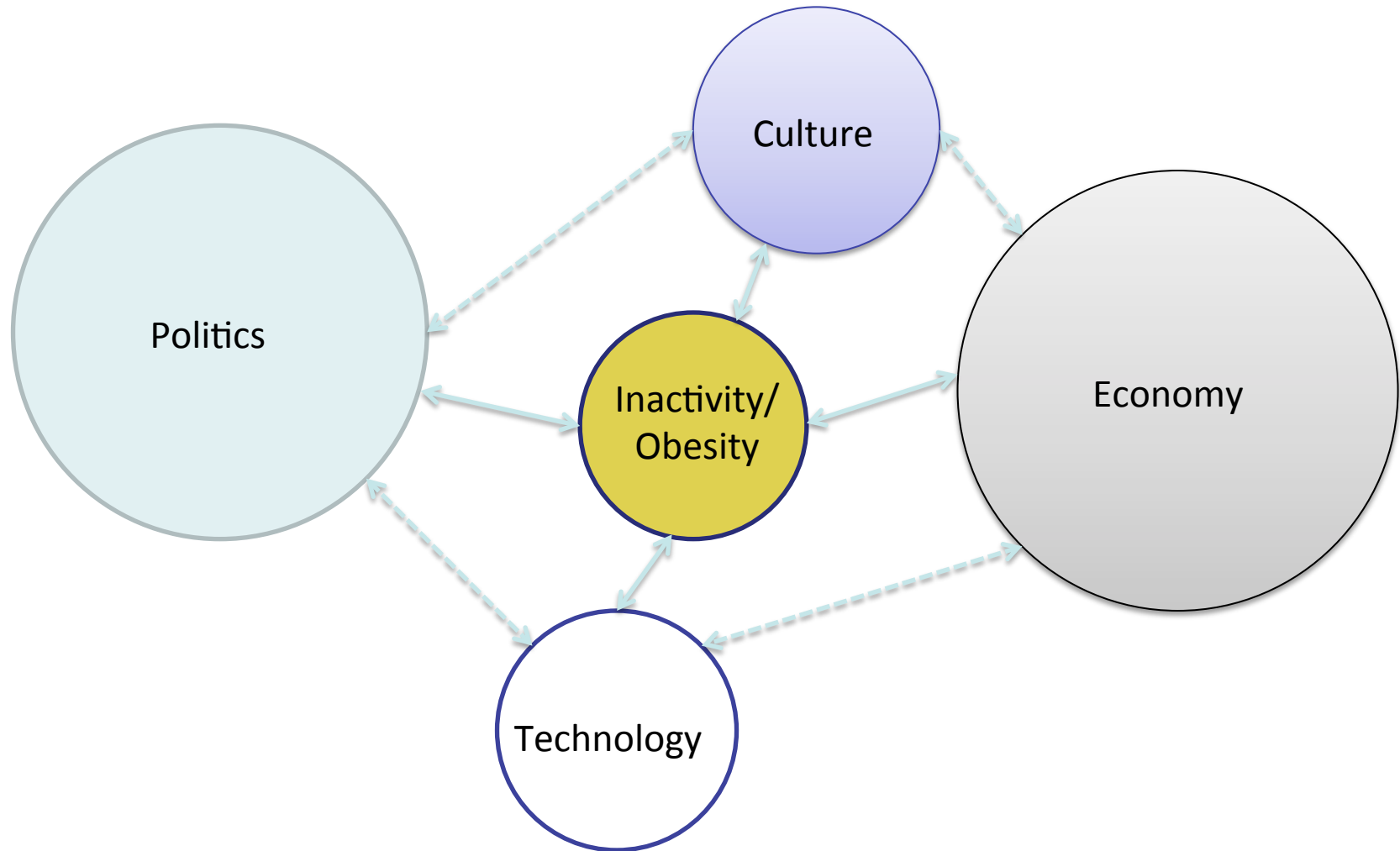
## CONTEXTUALIZING SPORTING BODIES II



**The Inactive and Obese Body**



# Mapping the Inactivity/Obesity “Crisis” as a Product and Producer of Contemporary Society



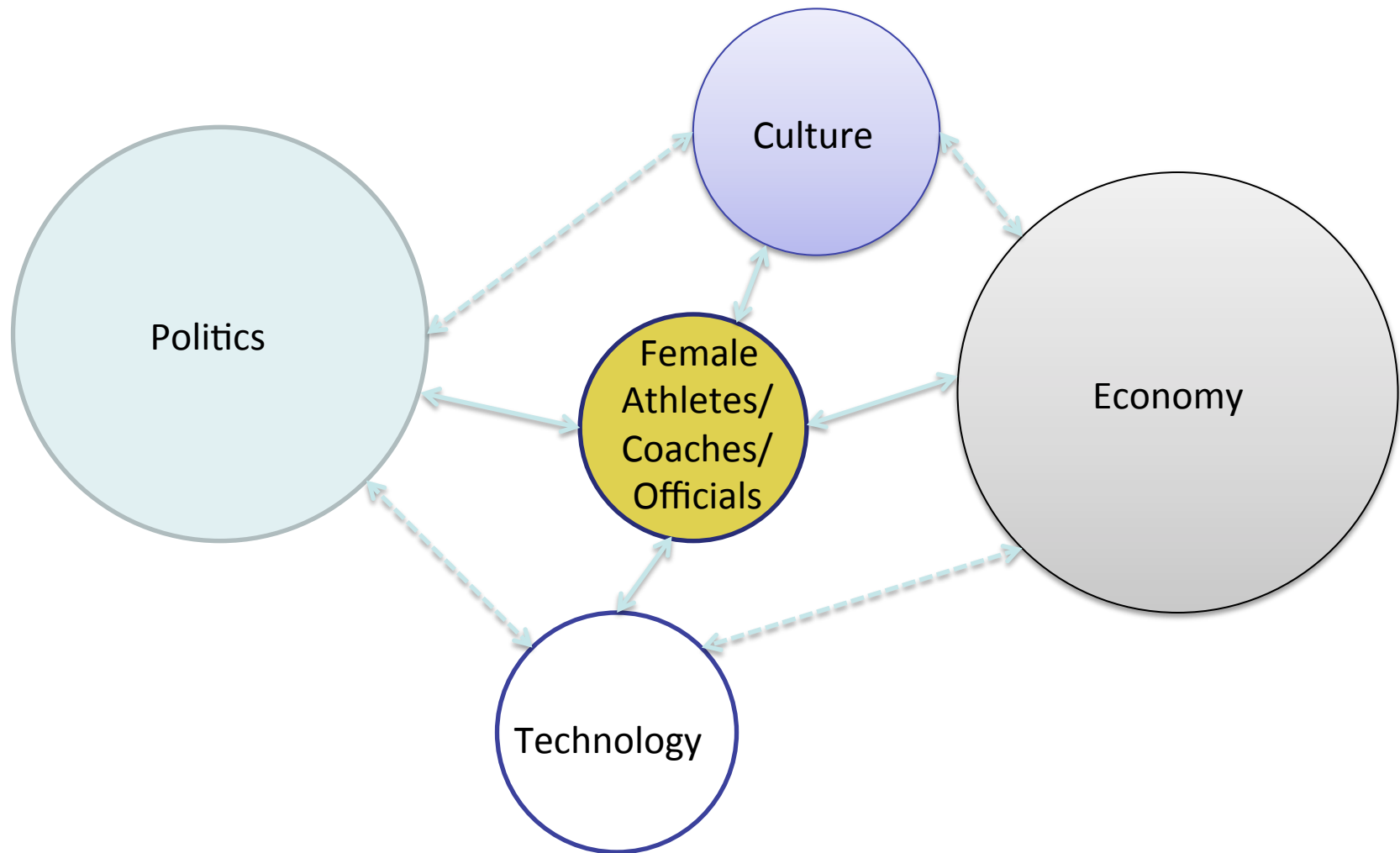
**What does the the obesity/physical inactivity issue tell us about contemporary society, and vice versa?**

# CONTEXTUALIZING SPORTING BODIES III



**The Rise of Female Athletes/Coaches/Officials**

# Mapping Rise of Women in Sport as a Product and Producer of Contemporary Society



**What does the Rise of Women in Sport tell us about contemporary society, and vice versa?**

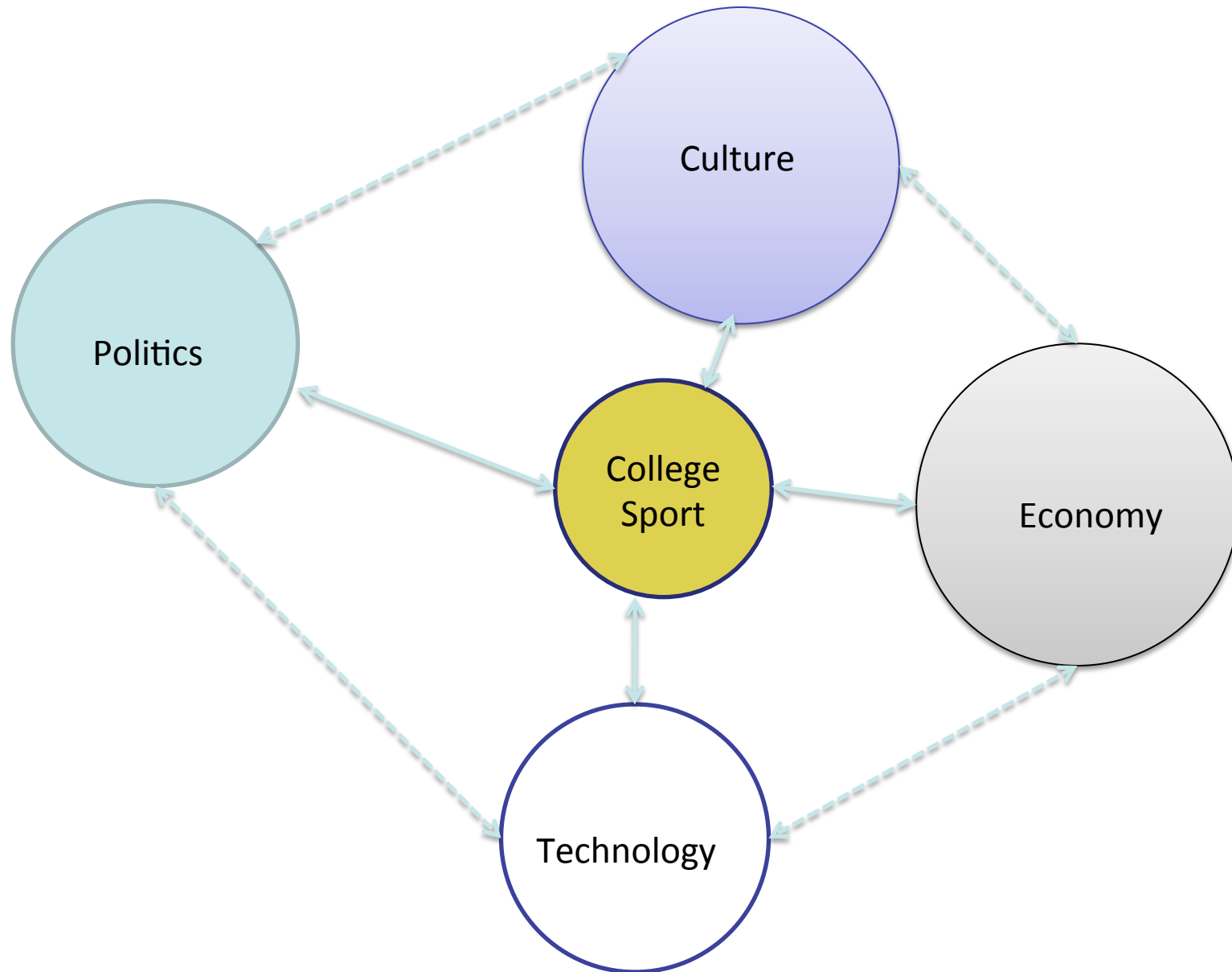


# CONTEXTUALIZING SPORTING BODIES III



**Student-Athlete Bodies**

# Mapping College Sport-Society Interconnections

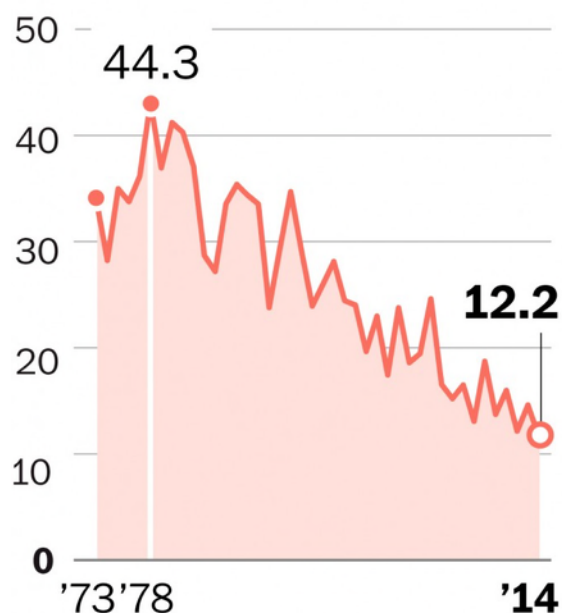


**What does sport tell us about society, and vice versa?**

# CONTEXTUALIZING SPORTING BODIES III

## Fewer fans – and they're getting older

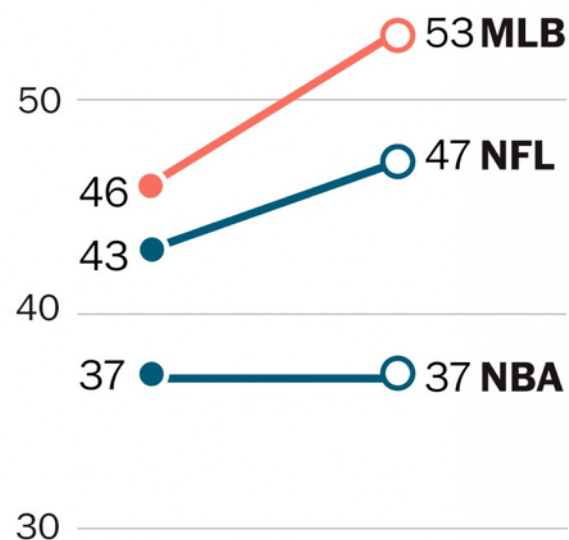
WORLD SERIES VIEWERSHIP  
In millions of viewers



Note: The 1994 World Series was canceled due to a players strike.

Sources: Baseball Almanac, ESPN

MEDIAN VIEWER AGE, ESPN  
2004      **2014**

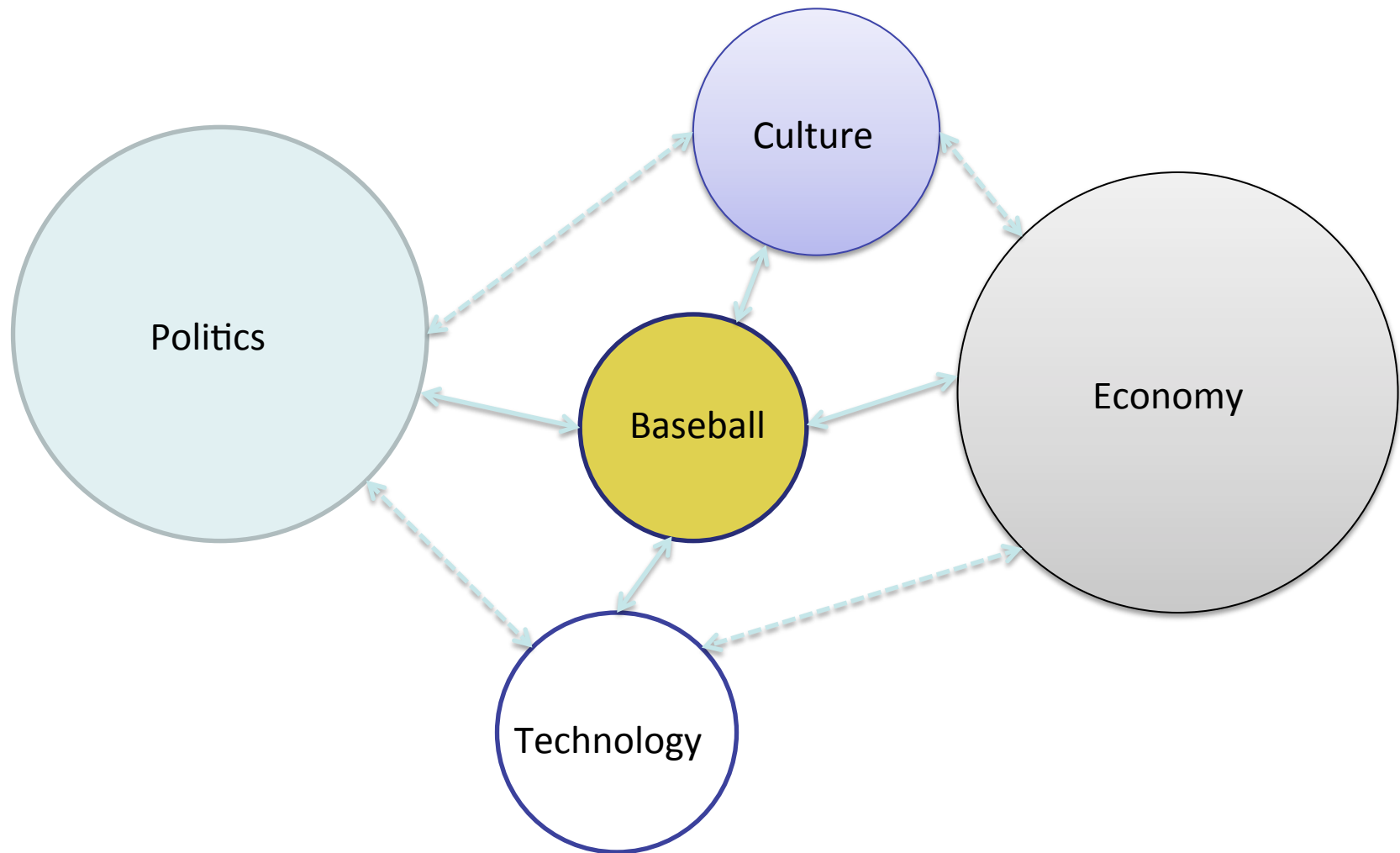


THE WASHINGTON POST

## The Decline/Aging of Baseball?



# Mapping Baseball's Decline as a Product and Producer of Contemporary Society



**What does the decline/aging of baseball tell us about contemporary society, and vice versa?**

# SPORTING INTERCONNECTIONS VIII



**Esports/E-Sports**

**See Video Clip 5**

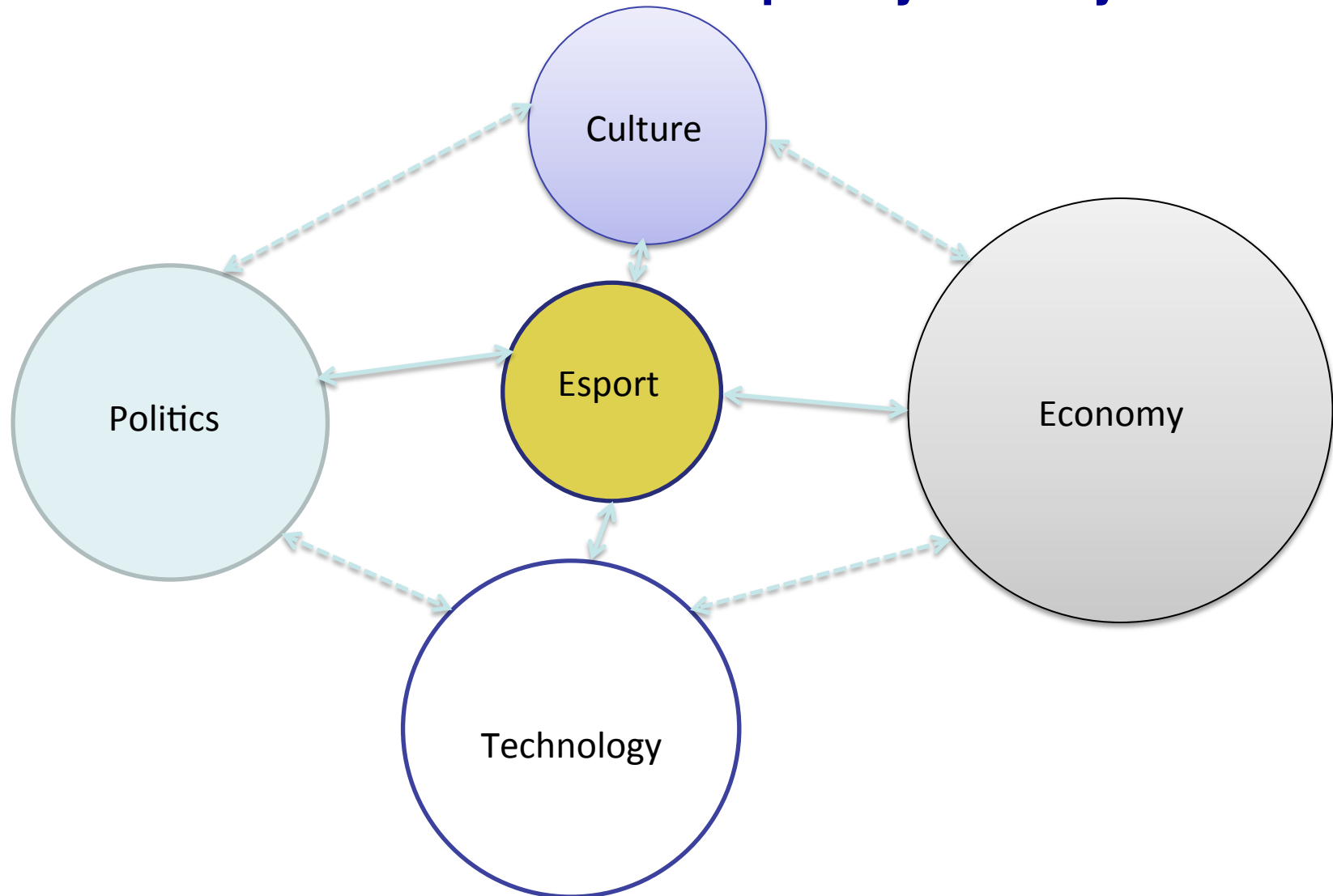


**CYBERATHLETE**  
PROFESSIONAL ★ LEAGUE



**“The Rise of the Professional Cyber Athlete”**

# Mapping the Emergence of Esport as a Product and Producer of Contemporary Society



**What does the the emergence of Esport tell us about contemporary society, and vice versa?**

**Evidently, sport represents an important **WINDOW** into understanding the structure and experience of the society we live in.**

**Thus, a major aim of this course is to develop your:**

**SPORTING  
SOCIOLOGICAL  
IMAGINATIONS**

**To MAP the complex and  
DIALECTIC relationships  
between sport and society**



**See course website for  
related required readings,  
video clips, key concepts,  
thematic review questions,  
and essay question.**