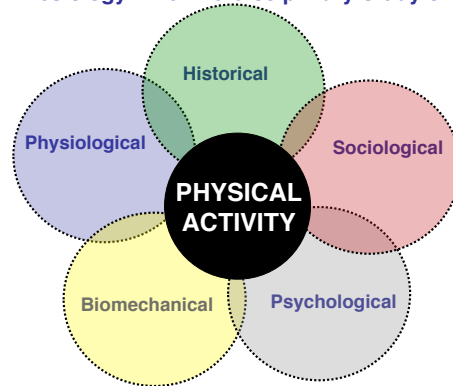


“Sport and the Sociological Imagination”

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



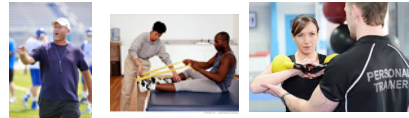
Kinesiology: The Interdisciplinary Study of....



Who Are You? Who Are You Going To Be?

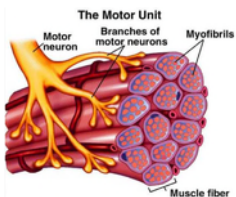
Physical Therapy
Occupational Therapy
Physicians Assistant
Personal Trainer
Coach
Graduate School
Medical School
PE Teacher
Sport Management/Marketing
Other

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 AND 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...**

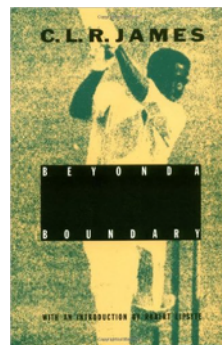
What this course isn’t?

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

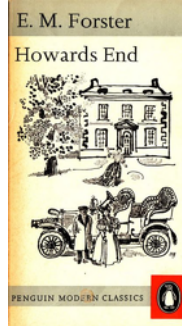
What this course is?

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)



E.M Forster (1910)

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

CONNECT SPORTING BODIES...



...TO THE SOCIAL CONTEXT 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!”

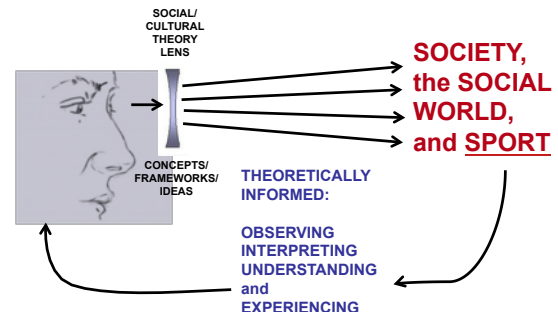
The WORDS are the:

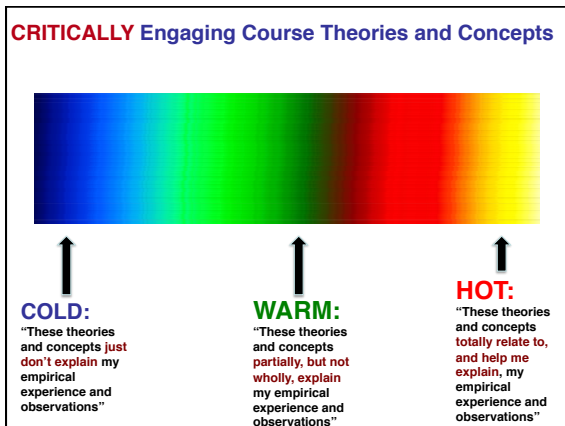


Theories, concepts, and ideas through which you interpret and understand sport/physical culture in American society.

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

The Social and Cultural Theory Lens





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...



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.

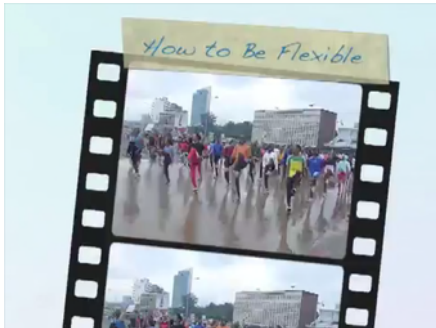
Donnelly, P. (1996). Prolympism: Sport monoculture as crisis and opportunity. *Quest*, 48, 25-42.

Sport: An Affective Domain



Men's 10,000m Race: London 2012 [See Video Clip 1](#)

The Pleasure of Physical Culture?



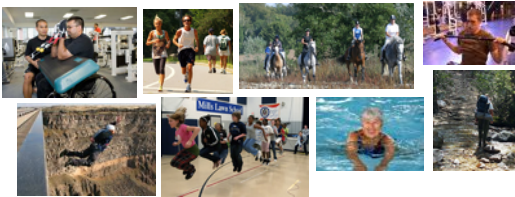
Off season training, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

[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)



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



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.

Gramsci's notion of culture as a: **"CONTESTED TERRAIN"**

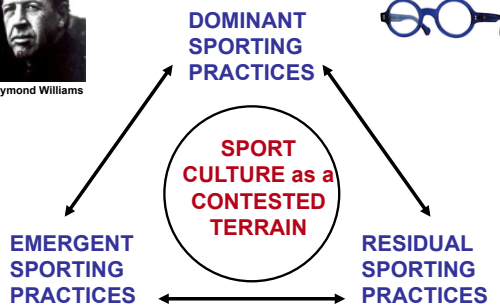


Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937)

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



See Video Clip 3

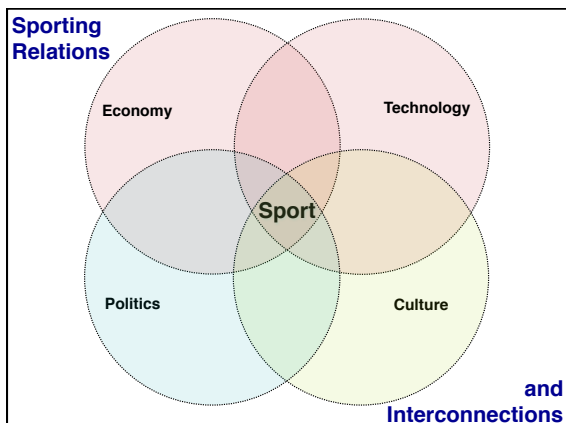
Theme 4:

**Toward a Sporting
Sociological Imagination**

**SPORT IS NOT
SUBSTANTIAL...
...IT IS**

RELATIONAL

(make sure you understand what this means)



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

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



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)



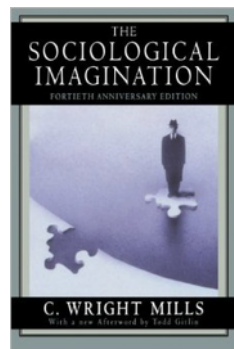
For a truly a contextual understanding of sport, it is important to develop what C. Wright Mills (onetime professor at the University of Maryland) characterized as a:

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.

meetville.com

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”.

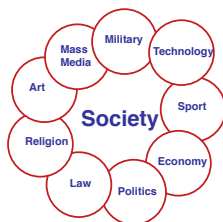
Sage, G. H. (1998). *Power and ideology in American sport: A critical perspective* (Second ed.) (p. 14). Champaign: Human Kinetics.

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

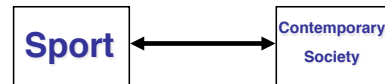
We must begin to identify and understand the

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

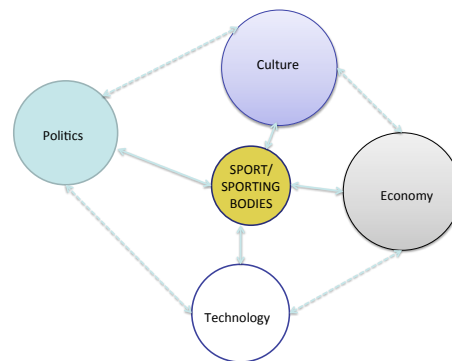
Our goal within this course, as Sage summarized it, is therefore to identify and examine:

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

What type of American society do we live in?

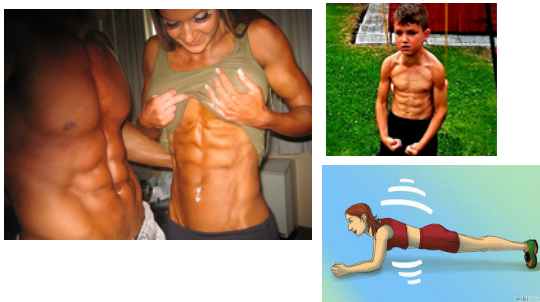
And, how is this broader American society linked to the structure of contemporary sport culture?

Mapping Sport-Society Interconnections



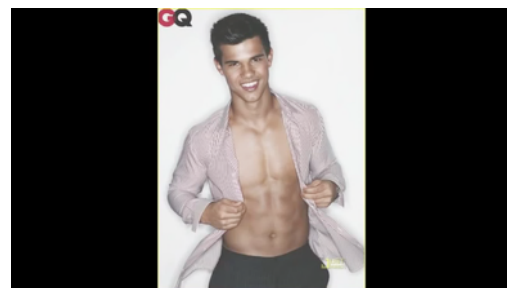
What does sport tell us about society, and vice versa?

CONTEXTUALIZING SPORTING BODIES I



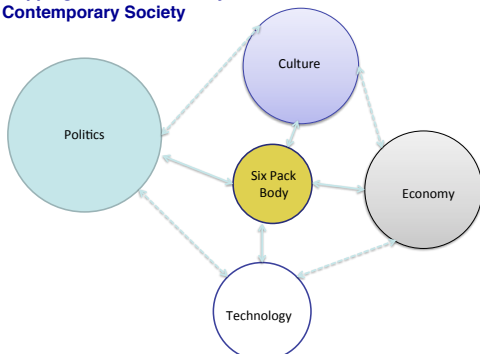
The Six Pack

The Male Body as Cultural Construct



Video Clip 4

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



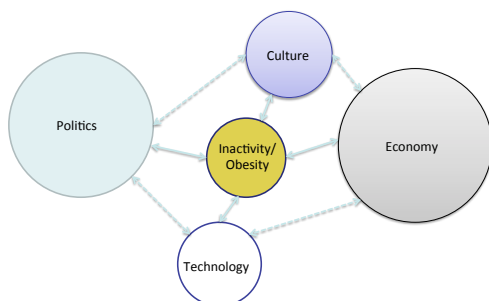
What do six pack bodies tell us about contemporary society, and vice versa?

CONTEXTUALIZING SPORTING BODIES II



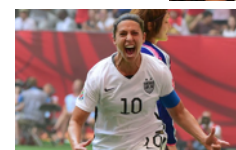
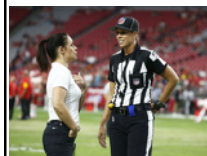
The Inactive and Obese Body

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



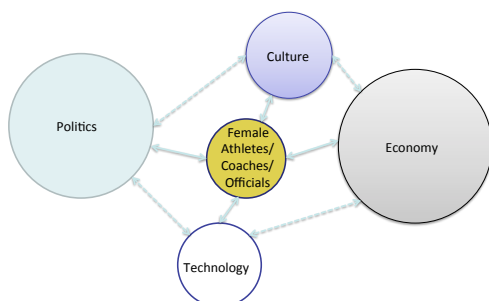
What does the the obesity/physical inactivity issue tell us about contemporary society, and vice versa?

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



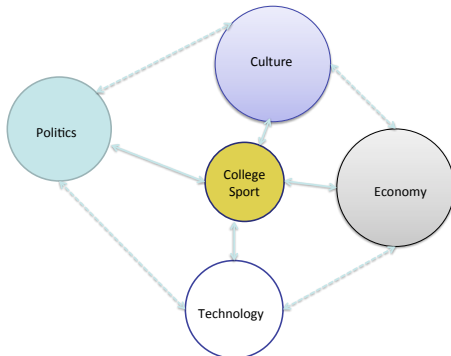
What does the Rise of Women in Sport tell us about contemporary society, and vice versa?

CONTEXTUALIZING SPORTING BODIES III



Student-Athlete Bodies

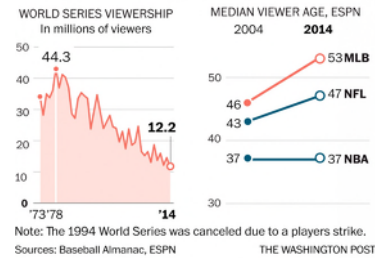
Mapping College Sport-Society Interconnections



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

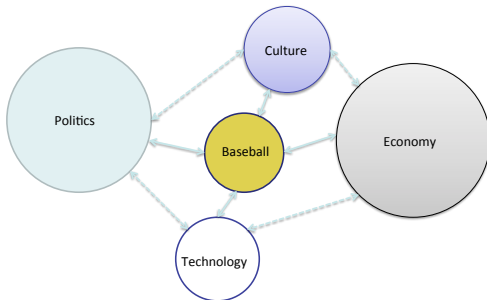
CONTEXTUALIZING SPORTING BODIES III

Fewer fans – and they're getting older



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

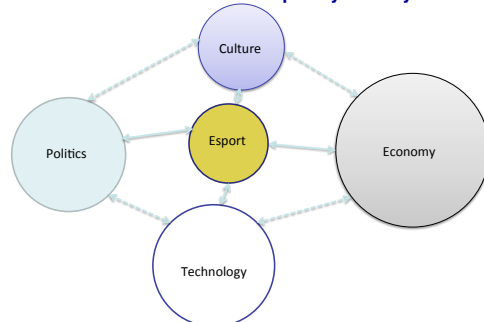


Esports/E-Sports

[See Video Clip 5](#)



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.