

Weber State University
Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Sociology 4990
Seminar in Sociology of Sport
TTh 12:00 – 1:15 PM
Rm. SS 44
Fall 2014
On Canvas through Student Portal

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WHAT IS A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF SPORT?

Perhaps the most compelling reason for the sociological study of sport is its pervasiveness. Sport sociologist D. Stanley Eitzen suggests just how pervasive it is in American society (*Fair and Foul*, 2nd ed., pp. 3-4):

Participation rates are high. Most children are involved in organized sport at some time in their lives. Sport is the subject of much conversation, reading material, leisure activity, and discretionary spending. Over one-tenth of the *World Almanac* is devoted annually to sport, more than is allotted to politics, business, and science. *USA Today*, the most widely read newspaper in the United States, devotes one-fourth of its space to sport. Even the *Wall Street Journal* has a weekly sports page. Several cable television networks provide twenty-four-hour coverage. Almost one-fifth of major network time is devoted to sport. Annually, the most watched television event in the United States is the Super Bowl. The amount of sports betting is staggering, with unknown billions waged legally and illegally.

As Eitzen further points out, sports fans know a great deal about sports from following their favorite teams and athletes in the media. They know about point spreads, statistics, and biographical information on athletes and coaches. As children, many of us learned sports information, memorizing incredible amounts of trivia. Moreover, most of us play sports, as individuals or on teams, throughout our lives. Yet many fans and participants have a superficial, uncritical attitude toward sport. They cannot separate the hype from the reality. They don't question the way that sport is organized.

Sociologists are prone to examine all social arrangements critically. Thus, this course will address questions such as: How does sport really work? Who has power and who does not? Who benefits under the existing social arrangements and who does not? These types of questions scrutinize conventional ideas and official dogma; the answers should enable you to truly understand sports as social phenomena.

While organized sports competition has a history going back to ancient civilizations, the past century has seen a growth in participation and spectator interest that is unprecedented. Sociologists have only recently become interested in the social significance of sports.

Sports have made an enduring impact on the social world in which we all live. It is a taken for granted aspect of our everyday lives – whether that entails watching “Sportscenter” five times in one day or noticing that every single major newspaper contains a “Sports” section that is as long if not longer than any other section. Yet there is more to sport than just what we see on a daily basis. The organization of

the sports we play and the sports we love is a reflection of the organization of society, thus by critically studying sports we will gain a greater understanding of society.

Hence, the goal of this class is to apply a sociological lens to the world of sports and athletics (a distinction that will be examined) through the incorporation of academic writing, popular media, and personal experiences and observations. Specifically the class will consist of FOUR major sections.

First Quarter

An introduction to sociological theories and a brief history of sport will set the stage for understanding sport as a microcosm of society.

Second Quarter

An examination of the process of socialization through sport will serve as the focus for the second quarter of this “game.” Organized sports and youth, the media and the use of symbols in sports will all be explored.

Third Quarter

The third section will tackle issues of excess in sports. Primarily we will attempt to explore five topics: 1) overzealous athletes, parents, and coaches; 2) deviance; 3) performance-enhancing drugs; 4) college sports; and 5) money in the sports industry.

Fourth Quarter

The fourth area examines structured inequality in sport as it relates to: 1) race and ethnicity; 2) gender; and 3) sexuality. Through our readings, community engaged learning experiences and observations, as well as class discussions we will better understand how race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality shape and are shaped by sports in contemporary society.

THE PLAYBOOK

Eitzen, D. Stanley (ed). 2012. Sport in Contemporary Society. 9th edition.

Guest speakers and videos

SKILLS TO BE ACHIEVED

I hope you will walk away with a set of new/improved skills that you can directly apply to discussions of sport, future classes, personal research, volunteerism, and your life.

- Critically analyze and evaluate sports from a sociological perspective.
- Be able to appreciate and learn from the views of others as well as understanding the limitations of one’s own perspective.
- Effectively use written and oral forms of communication to make an objective argument, synthesize material from various sources, and explore intellectual problems.
- Hone your civic skills and civic values while volunteering in sports and recreation programs at Youth Impact.

KEEPING SCORE

Your course grade is based upon oral presentations, written assignments, a community engaged learning experience with Youth Impact, and contributions in class.

1. Oral Presentations (10%)

Current Events Presentations (2 per student)

Due: Throughout semester – sign-up

Each student must complete two current event short presentations throughout the semester. Each week class will be initiated by a student current event presentation. On the day the student current event is due, the student will make a brief five minute presentation to the class which includes a brief synopsis of the current event, how the current event relates to that particular class, and a brief personal response to the current event.

2. Written Assignments

Sports Socialization Autobiography (25%)

Due: September 23, 2014, by midnight

Prepare a written (approximately 3 +/- pages) sports autobiography. Begin by thinking back to your earliest experiences of playing childhood games and sports. Specifically, consider the relationships, if any, between these experiences and your gender, age, social class, race, family situation, neighborhood and/or community. Also consider the significant people and events associated with these formative sporting experiences.

Sport sociologist Jay Coakley has observed that for adolescents, junior high and high school sporting experiences have a profound effect on whether a person continues to participate in sport and physical activity. An individual's gender plays a significant role along with his or her self-perceptions. Specifically, adolescents are influenced by how athletically talented, skilled and capable they see themselves....and by how they see themselves fitting in with a sport or team.

How did these and other conditions affect your involvement in sport? How did you see yourself? How do you see yourself today? To what extent do you see yourself as an athlete? a non-athlete? a sports spectator? a sports critic? To what extent have you experienced gender, racial or other forms of discrimination in sport? To what extent did your gender influence the sports in which you participated? To what extent did your parents and family influence your sports participation or non-participation?

You may address all of these questions or focus only on those that are most significant to your sporting experiences. Feel free to come up with issues all of your own. Make this a thoughtful and reflective narrative.

Youth Impact Participant Sports Socialization Biography (25%) Due: October 21, 2014, by midnight

Prepare a written (approximately 5 +/- pages) sports biography of a Youth Impact participant with whom you have become friendly. You will need to spend some time with this individual getting to know them and earning their trust so you can eventually interview them for this assignment.

You will need to craft interview questions to illicit information regarding their experiences (or lack thereof) with sports as well as how they think their gender, age, social class, race, family situation, neighborhood and/or community, specific events, and significant individuals/role models influenced their sports experiences.

How did these and other conditions affect their involvement in sport? How do they see their self today?

To what extent do they see their self as an athlete? a non-athlete? a sports spectator? a sports critic? To what extent have they experienced gender, racial or other forms of discrimination in sport? To what extent did his/her gender influence the sports in which they participated? To what extent did his/her parents and family influence their sports participation or non-participation? What role does Youth Impact play in their sports biography?

After reporting the sports biographical information of the Youth Impact participant, compare and contrast their sports story to your sports story. Why are they similar or different? What sociological influences or factors help to explain these similarities or differences and how?

Position Paper Assignment (25%)

Due: December 11, 2014, by midnight

You will defend one side—yes or no— to one of four questions listed below. You must consult references in addition to the assigned reading to see how the question has been answered by social scientists and social commentators. Additionally, you need to utilize information shared by guest presenters in class. All sources utilized need to be listed on a “Works Cited” page at the end of your paper. No fewer than five sources should be cited. You will submit a 3 page +/- paper that clearly states your position, evidence supporting that position, and evidence explaining why the counter argument is not satisfactory. This is your final assignment of the semester.

1. Is Title IX unfair to men’s sports?
2. Is African American athletic success harmful to African American youth?
3. Do varsity sports programs contribute to the educational mission of colleges?
4. Should public funds be used to build stadiums and arenas for professional sport teams?

3. Community Engaged Learning Experience with Youth Impact (10%)

Everyone is required to be involved with participants in the Youth Impact program for a minimum of 25 hours over the course of the semester. These hours must be completed over a minimum of 5 weeks and must be recorded in the WeberSync tracking system no later than the last day of class, December 4th.

Tracking Your Project Hours through the CCEL on WeberSync

This course is a CEL – Community Engaged Learning – course through the Center for Community Engaged Learning (CCEL). As such, this course uses a university-wide hours tracking system called WeberSync to record the hours you complete in the community as required by the assignments in the class.

You have already been pulled into my WeberSync portal and placed in the Sociology of Sport group. This will allow you to record and view the hours you’ve completed in the community. If this is your first time interfacing with WeberSync, you will be prompted to set up a user profile. Once you do so, you never have to set up your profile again for the duration of your college career.

All of your hours will be recorded electronically. Simply use your WSU Wildcard to swipe in and out of Youth Impact. This will automatically time stamp your participation at the organization.

I will monitor the hours you are contributing to this project throughout the semester via WeberSync. If you do not record your hours of community engaged learning via WeberSync, you will not receive credit

for the community engaged learning project assigned in this class. **All hours must be complete and recorded via WeberSync no later than December 4, 2014.**

Note: Recording your hours in the community through WeberSync is beneficial to you for this class but also for future employment and/or graduate school admission. Through WeberSync, you are able to generate a co-curricular transcript documenting the experiences you've had outside the classroom that have contributed to your learning. The hours you've contributed to the community through this CEL designated course, and others like it, will be recorded on this co-curricular transcript.

In-class Reflection (8%)

You will also be reflecting on your experiences at Youth Impact as they relate to the sociology of sport twice during the course of the semester. These two reflection sessions are noted on the class schedule below. You must be present and contribute in order to receive credit. Each reflection is worth 4% of your overall grade.

Attend at least one of two WSU sporting events with Youth Impact participants (2%)

Two WSU sporting events, softball and football, will be attended by you and Youth Impact participants.

Oct 1 (Wed) WSU Softball vs. Salt Lake CC, 4 pm (with Youth Impact)

Nov 1 (Sat) WSU Football vs Northern Arizona, 1 PM Stewart Stadium (with Youth Impact)

You must attend at least one of these two events with Youth Impact participants. The time you spend at this event should be recorded as part of your community engaged learning hours.

This will provide an opportunity to interact with Youth Impact participants at a sporting event. Observe their interest levels, participation, comments, etc. while you are there.

4. Contributions to Class (5%)

One of the class goals is active learning; thus, part of your overall grade will be determined by your active involvement in class and group activities and discussions.

Rules of the Game
1. Attendance You must be present at least 80% of the class time. Unexcused absences exceeding 20% of class will result in forfeiting the class participation grade; this is a 10% reduction of your final grade.
2. Professionalism and soft skills Taking this course comes with a set of expectations: Timeliness – Class will start and end on time. You are expected to come to class on time and submit all assignments on time. Technology – You may use a laptop for note-taking, but should you misuse this privilege (facebook, chats, movies, etc.), you will be asked to put away the computer and continue taking notes by hand. Furthermore, cell phones (incl. texting) and earphones do not belong in class. You will be asked to take ear phones off/put cell phone away or leave the classroom.
3. Late assignments and papers All assignments and papers must be handed in on the due date. Late papers and assignments accrue a penalty of -5% for each late day (24-hr. period) including weekends.

<p>4. Extra credit There is no planned extra credit in this class.</p>
<p>5. WSU Student Code Students are expected to be familiar with the WSU Student Code and abide by it. The Code may be reviewed on line at http://www.weber.edu/ppm/Policies/6-22_StudentCode.html. All necessary steps will be taken to enforce the Student Code to guarantee fairness to all students.</p>
<p>6. Academic Dishonesty As specified in PPM 6-22 IV D, cheating and plagiarism violate the Student Code. Plagiarism is “the unacknowledged (uncited) use of any other person’s or group’s ideas or work.” Students found guilty of cheating or plagiarism are subject to failure of a specific assignment, or, in more serious cases, failure of the entire course. WSU subscribes to TurnItIn.com, an electronic service that verifies the originality of student work. Enrollment in this course may require you to submit some or all of your assignments to it this semester, and documents submitted to TurnItIn.com are retained, anonymously, in their databases. Continued enrollment in this course constitutes an understanding of and agreement with this policy.</p>
<p>7. Emergency Closure If for any reason the university is forced to close for an extended period of time, we will conduct our class via Canvas. Look for announcements on Weber e-mail. Code Purple is a good way to be alerted to campus closures, and you are encouraged to sign up for it.</p>
<p>8. Syllabus Modification This syllabus is intended to give the student guidance in what will be covered during the course, and will be followed as closely as possible. However, the instructor reserves the right to modify, supplement and make changes as course needs arise.</p>
<p>9. Note to Students with Special Needs Any student requiring accommodations or services due to a disability must contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) in room 181 of the Student Service Center. SSD can also arrange to provide course materials (including this syllabus) in alternative formats upon request. Please refer to SSD's website for more information: http://weber.edu/ssd</p>

Game Schedule
(subject to change)

1ST QUARTER – SPORT AS A MICROCOSM OF SOCIETY

Week 1	Introduction
Aug 26	Syllabus and Assignments and getting to know each other
Aug 28	Sociological Perspective on Sport
Sept 2	Youth Impact and Community Engaged Learning Robb Hall gives an overview and tour of Youth Impact <i>Meet at Youth Impact – 2305 Grant Ave, Ogden</i>

Weeks 2 & 3 Sport as a Microcosm of Society
Sept 4-11 Readings #2 & 3 pp. 8 – 21, #36, p. 312-316

Sept 9 *2nd Annual Allen Holmes Diversity Symposium*
Wade Allen Davis, II, (former WSU football player and retired football player for the NFL and the European leagues), has a compelling story to share in his presentation, **Out Athletes: Hidden in Plain Sight**. As the first NFL football player to publicly share his identity as a gay man, Wade is positioned to provide critical insight into some relevant issues.

Two sessions for the symposium:
Tuesday, September 9, 2014
10:30 AM to 11:45 AM
Wildcat Theater

6:30 PM to 7:30 PM
Union Ballroom C

Week 4 Historical Context of Sport
Sept 16 – 18 *The Real Olympics: A History of Ancient and Modern Olympic Games* – video
Reading #1 pp. 3-8

2ND QUARTER – SPORT AND SOCIALIZATION

Week 5 Organized Sports and Youth
Sept 23 Robb Hall – Youth Impact and Sports: Why and how sports are part of the program
Sept 25 Readings #4, 5, and 6 pp. 25-55

Week 6 The Mass Media
Sept 30 Sports Coverage in the Newspaper and Television
Randy Hollis, Sports Writer & Editor
Rod Zundel, Sports TV Reporter
Oct 2 Readings #7 & 8 pp. 57-77

Oct 1 (Wed) WSU Softball vs. Salt Lake CC, 4 pm (with Youth Impact)

Week 7 Symbols
Oct 7 Readings #9, 10 & 11 pp. 79-97
Oct 9 Language, Gender and Sport – Teri Bladen, Campus Recreation Director

3RD QUARTER – PROBLEMS OF EXCESS

Week 8 & 9 Overzealous Athletes, Parents, and Coaches
Oct 14 – 23 Readings #12, 13, 14, & 15, pp. 99-122
Oct 21 The Physical & Emotional Consequences for Athletes

Oct 23 Athletic Training Professor, WSU
In-class Reflection on your experiences at Youth Impact thus far – meet at Youth Impact

Week 10 Sport and Deviance and Performance-Enhancing Drugs

Oct 28 Readings #16 & 17, pp. 123-146

Oct 30 Readings #18, 19 & 20, pp. 147-165

Nov 1 (Sat) WSU Football vs Northern Arizona, 1 PM Stewart Stadium (with Youth Impact)

Week 11 Big-Time College Sport

Nov 4 Readings #21, 22, 23 & 24, pp. 167-208

Nov 6 Weber State Athletics – Panel

Jerry Bovee, Athletic Director

Chuck Wight, WSU President

Student Athlete

Week 12 Sport and Money

Nov 11 Readings #25, 26, 27, pp. 209-235

Nov 13 The Economics of Sport

Mike Vaughan, WSU Provost & Economics Professor

4TH QUARTER – STRUCTURED INEQUALITY

Week 13 Sport and Race/Ethnicity

Nov 18 *The Leaders Breaking Racial Barriers in the NFL* – video

Reading #30, pp. 250-255

Nov 20 Readings #28, 29 & 31, pp. 237-249 and pp. 256-260

Week 14 Sport and Gender

Nov 25 Readings #32, 33 & 34, pp. 263-291

Dec 2 Title IX Discussion

Amy Crosbie, Senior Woman Administrator, WSU

Molly Smith, Human Performance Management Professor, WSU

Week 15 Wrap-Up and Reflection

Dec 4 Final Reflection on Youth Impact Experience – in class

You must be present to complete assignment and earn credit

Week 16

Dec 11 Final Paper Due – Position Paper on one of four topics