

Race, Sports and Culture

MMC 6936, section 1195, spring 2018
12:50 to 3:50 p.m., Wednesdays, 3020 Weimer Hall

- Draft Syllabus -

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Course Summary

From Chris Lamb's "From Jack Johnson to LeBron James Sports Media and the Color Line": The most significant and publicized stories in the campaign for racial equality in sports have reflected and affected the quest for equal and civil rights in the United States.

College and professional athletics have long been integrated, but race continues to play a major role in sports, Lamb states. Sports journalists once ignored racial issues, he said, but they now contribute to the public's evolving racial attitudes on matters both at and away from where the contests are played.

This course will examine the century-long relationship of sports and media and how it not only accelerated the pace of integration in America, but also reinforces social values; sometimes challenges social norms; and draws on race, class and gender to identify sports values with cultural values.

We will also consider what happens when race, religion and sports collide; issues involving sports, race, gender, sex and sexuality; how matters related to race, criminal justice, politics, patriotism and militarism affect audience perceptions of athletes; and stories of athletes using their public roles to not only overcome adversity, but also to advocate for broader social justice and self-determination.

Looking back at each decade of the 20th century and at current events, we will explore how sports have helped to elevate our culture and society and yet, as noted author and culture critic Nelson George wrote 25 years ago, how and why "despite all the innovation, flair and magic" that black athletes have brought to basketball (and presumably other sports), "racism and self-delusion still bedevil them."

Course Objectives

Students in this graduate-level course will learn, understand, develop and or describe:

1. How mainstream media coverage of race, sports and culture evolved during the 20th century.
2. How sports have affected cultural views on race, class, social justice, criminal justice, religion, etc.
3. How sports and race have affected cultural attitudes on gender equality, sex and sexuality.
4. How athletes have used their sports platforms to advocate for a more diverse and tolerant world.
5. How sports and race have been relayed across cultural mediums (TV, film, books, social media, etc.)

Noteworthy

Each student is responsible for:

1. Reading, understanding and abiding by this syllabus and its contents and directives.
2. Abiding by any announcements or directives the lab instructor sends to the class via University of Florida email, or our course Canvas or social media platforms. For example, expect to see Canvas postings and or emails concerning relevant matters that will be discussed at our next gathering.
3. Completing all assigned readings as class participation will affect grading.

Each student should know that:

1. Emails to the instructor are welcomed, but should be short, course related and necessary.
2. Email responses from the instructor will be short and sweet and as soon as possible.

Required Texts

- “From Jack Johnson to LeBron James: Sports, Media and the Color Line” © 2016 by Chris Lamb
- “When Race, Religion & Sport Collide: Black Athletes at BYU and Beyond” © 2016 by Darron T. Smith
- “Ways of Grace: Stories of Activism, Adversity & How Sports Can Bring Us Together” © by 2017 James Blake with Carol Taylor
- “The Revolt of the Black Athlete: 50th Anniversary Edition” © 2017 by Harry Edwards

Other Reading and Viewing

Related academic journal articles, book chapters, magazine and newspaper articles and other website stories, not to mention various audio and video matter, will be assigned throughout the semester, both per the syllabus and as issues and reports arise in the media and society. Students should make every effort to stay up to date on current events as they relate to race, sports and culture. That means regularly perusing websites of major daily newspapers and influential sports magazines; sports websites including but certainly not limited to ESPN.com and TheUndeclared.com; TV sports and TV sports news, etc.

Students With Disabilities

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with disabilities and who have registered with the UF Dean of Students Office. This office will provide relative documentation to the student, who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodations.

UF Disability Resource Center: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

Counseling Center

Personal or health issues such as depression, anxiety, stress, career uncertainty and or relationships can interfere with your ability to function as a student. UF’s Counseling and Wellness Center (CWC) offers support for students in need. CWC is located at 3190 Radio Road and open each weekday from 8 to 5.

UF Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc>

Attendance, Attention, Deadlines, Extra Credit

Attendance and Lateness

Students are to show respect for one another and for the instructor. Those who come to class each session and on time will be rewarded. Each absence will result in a 10-point penalty toward the class participation portion of your grade (see page 5 of this syllabus). Lateness or unwarranted disruptions may likewise result in up to a 5-point penalty, per each occasion. Students absent from or late to class are responsible for learning about any missed material by consulting another student, or visiting the instructor during office hours. Such matters shall not be handled via email. Which brings us to ...

Life Happens

Students have been known to miss class because of temporary illness, oversleeping, travel, hangovers, job interviews, family matters, weddings, mental health, etc. Some of these excuses may be legitimate and others not. An absence is an absence and this instructor's policy is to simply note that the student missed class. Regardless of why he or she was absent, a student who misses too many classes risks not mastering the coursework. In such a case, he or she may be withdrawn from the course per UF policy.

UF Attendance Policies: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Mobile Devices

Mobile devices must be out of sight and unused during class unless the instructor directs them to be used for class purposes. Do not check text messages, social media, email, etc., during class, as this is rude. Give your full and undivided attention to anyone who is speaking in class, including your classmates. Anyone seen checking social media or any other sites unrelated to the immediate topics discussed in class may incur penalties ranging from a warning (first offense) to grade deduction.

Deadlines

Late assignments are not accepted unless an emergency can be documented. This means that an assignment submitted late is graded as a zero. If an illness or a personal emergency prevents you from completing an assignment on time, advance notice and written documentation are required. If advance notice is not possible because of a true emergency, written documentation will be mandated ASAP.

Generally speaking, we will function as if working in a professional workplace: You don't show up for work (on time) or don't do your work (on time) you risk losing your job. In other words, students who don't come to class and or miss deadlines will suffer consequences. As Kevin Blackstone relevantly puts it: What happens when you turn in your fantasy football lineup late? Same concept?

Extra Credit

No work for "extra credit" shall be accepted.

Each student is expected to do the same amount of work (and to improve progressively) and achieve the same outcomes (including getting published). This proves to be fair when considering that students have different circumstances unrelated to class. Those students, for example, who must work three jobs don't have as much time to do extra credit as those who don't have to work. The instructor will not grade according to effort as it's the outcome that matters. He will, however, be mindful of whether a student's work is trending forward or backward when the time comes for midterm or final grades.

Academic Integrity

The College of Journalism and Communications is committed to upholding the university's academic honor code. Academic dishonesty of any kind shall not be tolerated in this course. The university's guidelines provide additional details, which each student is expected to understand. To be certain, academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to using any work done by another person and submitting it for a class assignment; submitting work done for another class; copying and pasting text written by another person without quotation marks and or without complete attribution, which usually includes a link to the original work; using images produced by someone else without explicit permission by the creator. Attribution is not the same as permission. Most images found online are not free to use.

UF Student Honor Code: <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code>

Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the final weeks of the semester. Students will be given specific dates when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.

Resources

Students will have access to tutorials (video-based and otherwise) from which to learn outside of class time certain software and equipment needed to accomplish various required tasks this semester.

In addition, the University of Florida offers an abundance of resources that can help students throughout their academic career. Each student is encouraged to make use of these resources, which include but are not limited to the library, tutoring, career resource center, etc.

UF Student Resources: <http://ufadvising.ufl.edu/student-resources.aspx>

Writing Assignments

All writing assignments should be turned in:

- On white paper, with 1-inch margins (top, bottom, left, right) and 12-point Times Roman font.
- With the file named as either studentlastname_topicname.doc or studentlastname_topicname.docx.
- With your name, class name and date all single-spaced in the top left corner.
- With the text in double-spaced, block format (no indented paragraphs).
- With one-inch margins on all four sides, and with Format<Paragraph spacing set at zero, zero (ask).
- All field assignments must be submitted or posted by the specified deadline.
- Keep electronic copies of all written assignments. Email a copy of each one once completed along with your notes to yourself. Don't get caught having to say your only copy is on the lab computer.
- Failure to abide by these expectations will result in grade penalties.

Preliminary Assignments and Grading

The instructor will judge each assignment through the lens of professional communications as it pertains to accuracy, craftsmanship, effort and enterprise, not to mention abiding directives, instruction and feedback. An A indicates superior performance; B, highly competent, above-average work; C, average; D, below average; E, unsatisfactory. Use your time efficiently. You will be rewarded for results, not simply for effort. Steady improvement, however, will earn additional equity. Reminder: Per the college's graduate committee, a C+ or better is required to earn credit for this course.

Final grade calculations: 930-1,000, A; 929-900, A-; 899-870, B+; 869-830, B; 829-800, B-; 799-770, C+; 769-730, C; 729-700, C-; 699-670, D+; 669-630, D; 629-600 D-; 599 and below, E.

Class Participation (200 total points)

- Let's aim for vibrant discussion worthy of any sports talk show. Let's not be any less afraid to address sensitive issues as we would express our fanaticism about our favorite player or team. We will reflect on assigned readings and endure lectures, but ideally enjoy barbershop/sports bar conversations you initiate. At all times, we want a healthy exchange of ideas. Strongly held views are welcomed, but disagreement shall be appreciated and or respected. Disrespect will not be tolerated.

Essays (300 total points)

- Students will compose and submit four 1,000-word essays each focused on an instructor-provided question related to the intersection of race, sports and culture. The essays should cite all of the relevant assigned reading, but also include sources beyond the course material.
- **Essay No. 1 (75 points): Due Feb. 7**
- **Essay No. 2 (75 points): Due Feb. 28**
- **Essay No. 3 (75 points): Due April 4**
- **Essay No. 4 (75 points): Due April 18**

Final Paper (500 total points)

- Students will complete a 25- to 30-page research paper that provides critical analysis of (ideally) one of the five course objectives from the first page of the syllabus.
- **Due: Feb. 14.** A 500-word (two-page, double-spaced) abstract (100 points) shall cogently explain your choice for your final paper and earn the approval of the instructor.
- **Due: March 28.** An annotated bibliography (100 points) shall be the foundation for your final paper. It shall include at least 12 sources – primary and secondary – that are not among the assigned readings, and could be used in your final submission. Each source is to include a one-paragraph annotation summarizing its contents and value to the final paper. You may decide not to use one or more of these sources, and add others, as your research continues.
- **Due: April 25.** Final paper (250 points), including updated annotated bibliography, that is supported by your primary and secondary sources, and concludes with your findings.
- **Due: April 25.** Presentation to class (50 points) of findings stemming from your final paper.

Missing or Late Work

- Assignments not completed or submitted on time shall be penalized accordingly.

Preliminary Course Schedule

This syllabus represents our current plans and objectives. As we go through the semester, these plans may change based on developing news or learning opportunities. Such changes which shall be communicated in class, via email, Canvas or social media are unforeseen and should be expected.

Another possible consideration: The unplanned availability of relevant guest speakers in person or remotely who would enhance our experience. We would adjust our schedule accordingly.

WEEK ONE: Jan. 10

- Course introduction and review of recent events.

WEEK TWO: Jan. 17

- Sports, media and the color line Part 1

WEEK THREE: Jan. 24

- Sports, media and the color line Part 2

WEEK FOUR: Jan. 31

- Sports, media and the color line Part 3

WEEK FIVE: Feb. 7

- Sports, media and the color line Part 4

WEEK SIX: Feb. 14

- Sports, race, gender, sex and sexuality

WEEK SEVEN: Feb. 21

- Sports, race, culture and aesthetics

WEEK EIGHT: Feb. 28

- Sports, race, politics, nationalism and identity

WEEK NINE: March 7

- No class spring break

WEEK TEN: March 14

- TBA

WEEK ELEVEN: March 21

- Sports, race and religion

WEEK TWELVE: March 28

- Sports, race, role models and criminals

WEEK THIRTEEN: April 4

- Sports, race, Little League, high school and college

WEEK FOURTEEN: April 11

- Sports, race, television, documentaries, movies

WEEK FIFTEEN: April 18

- Sports, race, adversity, activism and advocacy

WEEK SIXTEEN: April 25

- Final presentations