Beyond Athletics: Sports, Politics and Belonging in Europe and the U.S. (Fall 2020)

Instructor: Dr. Jasmine Samara
Course meeting time: Wednesdays, 2-4:30pm, at the Center for European and Mediterranean Studies (CEMS), King Juan Carlos Center, 3rd floor East, Room 324
Office hours: Tuesdays 10am-12noon or by appointment

Course description:

This course explores how sports have emerged as a site for debating questions of identity, rights, and citizenship across Europe and the U.S. Sports have long been a site for the expression of national ideals and for negotiating changing boundaries of citizenship and belonging. From Greek NBA superstar Giannis Antetokounmpo - born in Athens to Nigerian immigrants and excluded from citizenship for much of his youth - to the “multicultural” French and German World Cup soccer teams with players of Arab and African heritage, athletes have found themselves political symbols at the center of public debates on immigration, ethnicity, and national identity. Soccer player Karim Benzema’s comment - “If I score, I’m French. If I don’t, I’m Arab” - suggests the fluid, contextual nature of belonging and exclusion. Meanwhile, studies investigating whether the popularity of Egyptian-born soccer player Mohamed Salah has reduced anti-Muslim attitudes and hate crimes in the UK seek to quantitatively measure how athletes impact social change. And legal procedures to “fast-track” changes of citizenship for athletes before major sporting events like the Olympics continue to spark debates on how “authentic” citizenship should be assessed and regulated.

Sports can also reinforce or challenge gender norms: for example, debates on participation of intersex athletes and hormone testing as a condition of participation in gender-segregated competitions can help us study how ideas about culture and biology intersect with the legal and bureaucratic regulation of identity. Meanwhile, the U.S. women’s soccer team’s 2019 World Cup victory highlighted patterns of unequal pay for female and male athletes. Athletes have attempted to use celebrity status as a platform to protest injustice, from the 1968 Olympics protest by African-American track stars to the activism of football player Colin Kaepernick. Drawing on these cases, this course asks: How are cultural norms and systems of power reinscribed or challenged through sports? How should we understand the potential and limits of sports as a site for rights activism?

In this course, as we study how sports intersect with citizenship and belonging in the nation, we will also examine sports as a tool of international relations. From African-American sprinter Jesse Owens’ participation in the 1936 Olympics in Nazi Germany to Cold War competitions and boycotts, sports enable political performances of ideological loyalty and boundary-drawing. Cold War-era U.S. sports coverage casting doubt on the “true” sex of Eastern European women athletes suggests how gender and politics intertwine, while narratives of identity and belonging in sports such as cricket help us explore ongoing impacts of European colonization. To explore how sports operate as a site of politics, we will examine a variety of materials, including autobiographical accounts, news coverage, documentaries, op-eds, and scholarship in history and anthropology. Critically examining these texts, we will pay close attention to strategies of representation, arguments, framing and evidence.
Course objectives

In this course, students will gain familiarity with:

- Anthropological methods of studying how identities are formed and the politics of identity
- Key concepts in the study of nationalism, including how ideas about the nation intersect with gender roles and ideas of masculinities and femininities, and how the body becomes an object of nationalist ideologies
- How processes of law and bureaucracy intersect with social norms and practices to classify populations, including through categories such as gender, race, or nationality
- Twentieth-century European political history and the history of nationalism, including the Cold War and histories of European imperialism and ethnic conflict
- Upon completing this course, students should demonstrate the ability to analyze claims about identity and belonging from multiple perspectives, informed by approaches from the study of history and anthropology.

Assignments and Grading Criteria

1) Participation (including in-class activities and weekly 1-page response papers) [20%] The participation grade reflects active engagement with the course discussion as well as attendance. Students in this course are expected to contribute to a positive learning environment by coming to class prepared to discuss the readings; contributing to group discussion; respecting colleagues’ right to have an opportunity to express their views; and avoiding use of electronics unrelated to class. In addition to scheduled in-class activities listed below on the syllabus, unscheduled in-class short assignments and activities may be used to assess participation.
   a. **1-page response papers**: Each week, to prepare to participate actively in the class discussion, students are required to submit a 1-page paper responding to a specific prompt or question posed by the instructor about that week’s readings. The response papers are due for submission to the online course dropbox by 11pm on the Tuesday before class. These papers do not receive a letter grade, but are marked pass/fail, with these points counted towards the participation grade.

2) **Media analysis** (2 pages) *(due on Week 4)* – Select two news articles that present a sports-related political controversy or incident from two different perspectives. Closely analyze the text and images used in these articles and write an analysis comparing and contrasting the language, assumptions and evidence that each of these articles uses to tell a story. [15%]

3) **Student presentation on readings** [15%] (Each student will be assigned one 10-minute presentation)

4) **Midterm Paper: Case study on Classification** (6 pages) *(due on Week 8)* [20%]

A key concept in the course is classification: i.e., through what processes, and in what situations, are people classified as belonging into particular group categories (such as race,
gender, or nationality)? By whom? And what are the legal and social effects of that classification? This writing assignment ask students to select and analyze a case study that will allow them to explore processes of classification through the close study of particular events, as well as athletes’ accounts describing how they viewed their own identity. Through this, we seek to explore: who claims authority to determine belonging in a particular group, based on what criteria? For example, how was Giannis’ Antetokounmpo’s Greekness or Zinedine Zidane’s Frenchness determined in different contexts, based on what factors and what stories about national belonging? Or, how was male or female competition eligibility determined in a particular sporting competition? In your analysis of the case you have selected, consider this question: What were the consequences of using these particular criteria (and not others) to determine belonging?

5) Final project and presentation on the topic of sports, activism and justice (10 pages) [30%]. This project will be broken down into steps along the following timeline:
   a. Present your topic idea to class for peer feedback (Week 9)
   b. Submit an annotated bibliography (describing 5-7 of your most important sources and what their argument, significance or limitations are – further instructions to be provided in class) (Week 10)
   c. Submit a draft abstract of your paper for peer review (Week 11)
   d. 10-minute oral presentation of your argument and findings in class (Week 14)
   e. Final Paper (due date to be confirmed by instructor)

Topics and course schedule

Note: Course readings will available on reserve at NYU Bobst library or will be posted on the course website via NYU Classes.

1. Introduction and class overview (Week One)

   In class, the instructor will review the syllabus and course expectations, and introduce anthropological approaches to studying the concept of nationalism in relation to identity, including race, gender and ethnicity. In our discussion, we will begin to consider: How do sports operate as a site for drawing group boundaries, whether these are gender boundaries or the boundaries of the national community?

2. Introduction to Nationalisms: Sports as “War Minus the Shooting”? (Week Two)
   a. George Orwell, “The Sporting Spirit” (2 pages)
   b. Niko Besnier et. al., The Anthropology of Sport, Ch. 7, “Sport, Nation and Nationalism” (30 pages)
   d. Patrick McDevitt, “‘May the Best Man Win’: Sport, Masculinity, and Nationalism in Great Britain and the Empire, 1880-1935”
      i. Chapter 1: “Gender and Imperial Sport” (13 pages)
      ii. Chapter 2: “Strong Men, Free Men: Gaelic Team Sports and Irish Masculinity” (23 pages)
e. Supplementary (optional) reading: Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis, “Women and the Nation-State” (excerpt)

3. Politics of Sports, Race and Gender in the Cold War (Week Three)
   c. Anne Blasche, “Running the Cold War: Gender, Race and Track in Cultural Diplomacy, 1955-1975” (19 pages)
   d. Optional (from next week’s reading): “Sex Testing and the Cold War”, from Niko Besnier et. al, *The Anthropology of Sport* (pp. 129-134)

4. Defining and Gendered Belonging: histories of “gender verification” tests in sports (Week Four)
   a. Kathryn Henne, “The ‘Science’ of Fair Play in Sport: Gender and the Politics of Testing” (26 pages)
   c. Maria Jose Martinez-Patino, “Personal Account: A Woman Tried and Tested” (1 page)
   d. Katrina Karkazis, “The Misuses of Biological Sex” (2 pages)
   e. Katrina Karkazis et. al., “Out of Bounds? A Critique of the New Policies on Hyperandrogenism in Elite Female Athletes” (14 pages)
   f. Case studies:
      i. Maria Jose Martinez-Patino
      ii. Caster Semenya

5. Defining National Belonging: Soccer, Immigration and Multiculturalism in Europe (Week Five)
   a. Jacqueline Gehring, “Race, ethnicity and German identity: a media analysis of the 2010 world cup men's national soccer team” (20 pages)
   b. Laurent Dubois, *Soccer Empire: The World Cup and the Future of France*, Chapter 1, “A Beautiful Harvest” (23 pages), and Chapter 2, “Caribbean France” (23 pages)
   d. Case studies:
      i. Zinedine Zidane and the 2006 World Cup “head-butting” incident
      ii. The “Tebbit cricket test” of national loyalty
      iii. The “Salah effect”? (see Ala’ Alrababa’h et. al., “Can Exposure to Celebrities Reduce Prejudice? The Effect of Mohamed Salah on Islamophobic Behaviors and Attitudes”)
6. Immigration and Multiculturalism in Europe (Part II) (Week Six)
   a. Case study on citizenship and statelessness: Giannis Antetokounmpo, the Milwaukee Bucks’ “Greek Freak”
      i. In-class viewing of documentary, “Finding Giannis”
      ii. Stefanos Triantafyllos, “Heated Debate Around Antetokounmpo’s Home Reflects Rift in the Birthplace of Democracy”
   b. “Fast-tracking” citizenship and dual citizenship

7. Nation, state, rupture: sports teams, sectarianism and ethnic conflict in Europe (Week Seven)
   a. Dario Brentin and Dejan Zec, “From the Concept of the Communist ‘New Man’ to Nationalist Hooliganism: Research Perspectives on Sport in Socialist Yugoslavia” (17 pages)
   b. In-class viewing of documentary: “Once Brothers” (directed by Michael Tolajian) (chronicling the relationship between Vlade Divac of Serbia and Dražen Petrović of Croatia who formerly played together on the Yugoslav national team)
   c. Danyel Reiche, “War Minus the Shooting? The politics of sport in Lebanon as a unique case in comparative politics” (17 pages)

8. Olympics, race and protest (Week Eight)
   a. Jesse Owens
      i. Mark Dyreson, “American Ideas about Race and Olympic races in the era of Jesse Owens: Shattering Myths or Reinforcing Scientific Racism?” (20 pages)
      ii. Louis Moore, “Jesse Owens Ran the Wrong Race: Athletes, Activism and the 1960s”
      iii. Rhonda Evans, “Jesse Owens & Athletes Who Protest (or Don't)”
   b. 1968 Olympic Protests
      i. Douglas Hartman, Race, Culture, and the Revolt of the Black Athlete: The 1968 Olympic Protests and Their Aftermath (Preface, “Sports, race and a decade of disruption” (14 pages) and Chapter 1, “Unforgettable Fists” (26 pages)

9. The cultural politics of celebrity status (Week Nine)
   b. David C. Ogden and Joel Rosen, Eds., Reconstructing Fame: Sport, Race, and Evolving Reputations, “Introduction: Examining Reputations Within a Cultural
Context” (9 pages) and Jack Lule, “Afterword: The Globalization of Vilification; The Localization of Redemption” (6 pages)
d. David Andrews and Steven Jackson, Eds., Sport Stars: The cultural politics of sporting celebrity, Introduction (19 pages) and Ch. 6, “Postmodern blackness and the celebrity sports star: Ian Wright, ‘race’ and English identity”

10. The Black Lives Matter Movement in the U.S. (Week Ten)
   a. Documentary (excerpt to be viewed in class, to be confirmed - 13th or Slavery by Another Name)
   b. Case Study: Colin Kaepernick

11. Sports boycotts (Week Eleven)
   c. Case study: NBA & China

12. Sports and gender equity (Week Twelve)
   b. Bonnie Tsui, “Labors of Love” (8 pages)
   c. Adrienne Milner and Jomills Henry Braddock II, Sex Segregation in Sports: Why Separate is Not Equal, Chapter 6, “The Elimination of Sex Categories in Sport: Benefits in Athletics and Beyond” (21 pages)
   d. Sarah Fields, Female Gladiators: Gender, Law and Contact Sport in America, Ch. 1, “The History of American Woman in Sport, Society and Law”, and Ch. 8, “Boys on Girls’ Field Hockey Teams”
   e. Case studies:
      i. U.S. Women’s soccer team
      ii. Serena Williams

13. Fan cultures in Europe – far-right soccer teams, sports violence, and alcohol (Week Thirteen)
   a. Thomas Fletcher and Karl Spracklen, “Cricket, drinking and exclusion of British Pakistani Muslims?” (19 pages)
   b. Gary Armstrong and Umberto Testa, Football, Fascism and Fandom: The UltraS of Italian Football (excerpt) (alternate reading: Tobias Jones, Ultras (excerpt))

14. Final student presentations (Week Fourteen)
**Course policies**

*Late Assignments and Extensions*

For longer written assignments, each student may use **“grace days” (5 days total for the semester)** to allow work to be submitted late when circumstances prevent them from submitting the assignment by the deadline. Grace days are similar to self-granted extensions in that each student decides how to distribute them across the semester, and if/when to use them for particular assignments. Late days are counted in 24-hour increments, so an assignment submitted an hour late, for example, will use up the student’s first grace day (leaving 4 days remaining for the rest of the semester). Extensions outside of the 5 grace days for the semester are only granted under extraordinary circumstances such as documented emergencies. Work submitted late after the student’s grace days have been used up will receive reduced grades, and an assignment may receive a grade of zero if submitted more than 1 week (7 days) late.

**Note:** Grace days do not apply to the weekly 1-page assignments, as the purpose of these assignments is to prepare students to participate actively in the class discussion each week.

*Professionalism*

Students are expected to treat one another respectfully at all times. When assignments require providing feedback on other students’ works, this should be done in a constructive and respectful manner. Draft writing submitted for feedback in class is not to be circulated outside of class without the author’s express consent.

*Academic Integrity*

Academic integrity means the work you submit is original. Use of another person’s ideas or words without properly citing them constitutes plagiarism and will be grounds for an “F” on the assignment as well as other disciplinary proceedings. Submitting a purchased or downloaded term paper is also prohibited. If you are unsure of proper citation techniques, please ask the instructor for help. More information on academic integrity guidelines is available at: https://cas.nyu.edu/content/nyu-as/cas/academic-integrity.html

*Accommodations*

Students requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

NYU’s Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities
726 Broadway, 2nd Floor New York, NY 10003-6675
Telephone: 212-998-4980
Web site: http://www.nyu.edu/csd
Email: mosescsd@nyu.edu

For students who would benefit from assistive technology but don’t wish to register with Moses CSD, please see additional resources available here: https://www.nyu.edu/students/communities-and-groups/students-with-disabilities/at.html
Electronic Etiquette Policy
This course requires active participation in the class discussion, and the use of electronic devices for texting, email, or other forms of social media during course time is not permitted. Using laptops for taking notes or participating in class is acceptable. However, devices should be silenced, and you will be asked to close them if it appears they are creating a distraction for yourself or fellow students. Please note that I routinely reduce participation grades for the use of electronics unrelated to class, including internet surfing and texting. If a particular situation requires you to be reachable by phone during class, please speak with me about this beforehand. The classroom should be a forum where participants feel comfortable speaking, and course lectures and discussions may not be recorded unless prior approval is obtained from the instructor and/or guest lecturer.

Additional Support - Please also note the following student wellness services and resources: https://www.nyu.edu/students/health-and-wellness/counseling-services.html

Additional mental health resources are available through NYU Wellness Exchange, 212-443-9999