New York University College of Arts and Sciences First-Year Seminar - Fall 2020
Course Number: FYSEM-UA 777

Beyond Athletics: Sports, Politics and Belonging in Europe and the U.S.

Instructor: Dr. Jasmine Samara (email contact: js11335@nyu.edu)
Course meeting time: Wednesdays, 2-4:30pm
Office hours: Fridays, 10am-12noon. Please note: Due to the ongoing COVID situation, office hour meetings will take place remotely via Zoom. Other times are available by appointment; please email me if you would like to meet.

Note on course location: Please note that this is a “blended” course, meaning that it will consist of a mix of online and in-person sessions (though students may opt to attend remotely at any time).
- In late August, a detailed scheduled indicating which days are “in-person” or “remote” for students will be posted on the course website.
- Participants joining online can access the class will be via a Zoom software link (links will be emailed to students at their NYU email account)
- In-person classes will be held at the classroom listed on the NYU Albert site.

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 sprinters to football player Colin Kaepernick’s activism. Drawing on these cases, this course asks: How are cultural norms and systems of power re-inscribed 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 – in particular, we will explore the legal and bureaucratic construction of categories of race, gender and religion
- 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) [15%] 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 writing assignments and activities may be used to assess participation.

- 1-page response papers: Each week (starting from Week 2 of class), to prepare students to participate actively in the class discussion, students are required to submit a short (250 word) response 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.

i. NOTE: 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. [20%]

3) Student presentation on readings [10%] (Starting in week 4, each student will be assigned one 5-7 minute presentation on that week’s readings, in which they will serve as the host for launching the class discussion of one of the articles. A signup sheet will be shared in class in Week 2 to allow students to select a week in which to present.)

4) Midterm Paper: Case study on Classification (6 pages) [25%]

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?

In week 7, you will present a draft or outline of this midterm paper to your peers for peer feedback – the final draft is due to the class dropbox in Week 8)

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 10)
   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 11)
   c. Submit a draft abstract/summary of your paper for peer review (Week 13)
   d. 10-minute oral presentation of your argument and findings in class (Week 14)
   e. Final Paper (due date TBD, to be confirmed by instructor)

Note on library research support:
In addition to research resources discussed in class, NYU Bobst Library has research subject specialists available to help you with your research. Please go to this site to make an individual appointment: https://library.nyu.edu/services/teaching-learning/research-help/

**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, assignments and course expectations. I will 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? What are the different types of actors and institutions that monitor these boundaries, through what processes? What are the stakes of this boundary-drawing?

   In this first class, students will be invited to introduce themselves, and we will watch an excerpt from a short video on basketball player Giannis Antetokounmpo.

2. **Introduction to nationalisms and citizenship: Sports as “War Minus the Shooting”? (Week Two)**

   
   
   c. 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)
   
   d. “Fast-tracking” citizenship and dual citizenship

   In-class discussion on sports and national loyalty, including the “Tebbit cricket test” of national loyalty (In-class reading: Aminatta Forna, “Your Nationalism Can’t Contain Me”)

   Supplementary (optional) reading: Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis, “Women and the Nation-State” (excerpt)
   
   George Orwell, “The Sporting Spirit” (2 pages)
3. The legal and bureaucratic construction of identity and the body: regulating and contesting identity classifications in the U.S. (Week Three)
   b. Blood and belonging – blood as substance, metaphor, system of power
      ii. Adrienne Keene, “Love in the Time of Blood Quantum” (11 pages)
   c. Bureaucracy and population classifications
      i. Cassius Adair, “Licensing Citizenship: Anti-Blackness, Identification Documents, and Transgender Studies” (26 pages)
      ii. Susan Pearson, “Birth Certificates Have Always Been a Weapon for White Supremacists” (approx. 2 pages)

4. Politics of Sports, Race and Gender in the Cold War (Week Four)
   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): section on “Sex Testing and the Cold War”, from Niko Besnier et. al, *The Anthropology of Sport* (pp. 129-134; 5 pages)

5. Defining Gendered Belonging: histories of “gender verification” tests in sports (Week Five)
   a. Kathryn Henne, “The ‘Science’ of Fair Play in Sport: Gender and the Politics of Testing” (26 pages)
   c. Katrina Karkazis, “The Misuses of Biological Sex” (2 pages)
   e. Case studies:
      i. Maria Jose Martinez-Patino
      ii. Caster Semenya
   f. Susannah Locke, interview with Sarah Richardson, “What Your Science Teacher Told You About Sex Chromosomes is Wrong” (approx. 2 pages)
   g. In class reading: Maria Jose Martinez-Patino, “Personal Account: A Woman Tried and Tested” (1 page)
6. **Defining National Belonging: Soccer, Immigration and Multiculturalism in Europe** (Week Six)
   a. Jacqueline Gehring, “Race, ethnicity and German identity: a media analysis of the 2010 world cup men's national soccer team” (20 pages)
   b. Case studies:
      i. Zinedine Zidane and the 2006 World Cup “head-butting” incident [review excerpt of video commentary and coverage in class]
   c. Case study on citizenship and statelessness: Giannis Antetokounmpo, the Milwaukee Bucks’ “Greek Freak”
      i. In-class viewing of 15-minute excerpt of documentary, “Finding Giannis”
      ii. Article by Stefanos Triantafylllos, “Heated Debate Around Antetokounmpo’s Home Reflects Rift in the Birthplace of Democracy” (approx. 1 page)

7. **Nation, state, rupture: sports teams, sectarianism and ethnic/religious conflict** (Week 7)
   a. Danyel Reiche, “War Minus the Shooting? The politics of sport in Lebanon as a unique case in comparative politics” (17 pages)
   b. In-class viewing of 20-minute excerpt 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. 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)

8. **Olympics, race and protest** (Week Eight)
   a. Jesse Owens
      i. Louis Moore, “Jesse Owens Ran the Wrong Race: Athletes, Activism and the 1960s” (approx. 2 pages)
      ii. Rhonda Evans, “Jesse Owens & Athletes Who Protest (or Don't)” (approx. 2 pages)
   b. 1968 Olympic Protests
      i. Mal Whitfield, “Let’s Boycott the Olympics”, *Ebony*, March 1964 (approx. 5 pages)
      ii. Douglas Hartmann, *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); also short excerpt from Chapter 5 (on Lew Alcindor)
   c. Anti-Apartheid protests
9. **The cultural politics of athletes’ 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, Ben Carrington, “Postmodern blackness and the celebrity sports star: Ian Wright, ‘race’ and English identity” (22 pages)
   e. The “Salah effect”? - Ala’ Alrababa’h et. al., “Can Exposure to Celebrities Reduce Prejudice? The Effect of Mohamed Salah on Islamophobic Behaviors and Attitudes” (31 pages)

    a. Marc Lamont Hill, *Nobody: Casualties of America’s War on the Vulnerable, from Ferguson to Flint and Beyond*: Forward (8 pages); Preface; Chapter 1: 30 pages)
    b. News articles on recent developments (selection may be updated prior to class; page lengths are approximate):
       i. Michael Rosenberg, “What do you think of Colin Kaepernick now?”, Sports Illustrated online (3 pages)
       ii. “How a ‘rogue’ employee forced NFL, Goodell into new Black Lives Matter stance” (2 pages)
       iii. Kurt Streeter, “W.N.B.A. Star’s Role in Freeing Man From Prison Shows Female Athletes at Forefront” (4 pages)
       iv. John Branch, “The Anthem Debate is Back. But it’s Now Standing That’s Polarizing” (4 pages)
       v. NBA-approved social justice jersey messages – “Season restart: Team-by-team social justice messages on jerseys” (1 page); Liz Roscher, “NBA wouldn't let Jimmy Butler wear a no-name jersey, had to change before game” (3 pages)

11. **Religion, politics and the regulation of speech, symbols and clothing (Week Eleven)**
    a. Pentecostal Christianity on the global sports stage and the regulation of expression on the soccer field
       i. Carmen Rial, “The Devil’s Egg: Football Players as New Missionaries of the Diaspora of Brazilian Religions” (25 pages)
    b. Women soccer players and FIFA’s hijab ban
12. Sports and gender equity: pay equity and beyond (Week Twelve)
   a. Honey Campbell, “Superior Play, Unequal Pay: U.S. Women’s Soccer and the Pursuit for Pay Equity” (26 pages)
   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” (16 pages), and Ch. 8, “Boys on Girls’ Field Hockey Teams” (23 pages)
   e. Case studies:
      i. U.S. Women’s World Cup soccer team
      ii. Serena Williams

13. Fan cultures in Europe – nationalism, sectarianism and violence (Week Thirteen)
   a. Football and fascism in Italy:
      i. Gary Armstrong and Umberto Testa, Football, Fascism and Fandom: The UltraS of Italian Football – Introduction (12 pages); Chapter 1 (4 pages); Chapter 2 (11 pages); Chapter 7 (18 pages)
   b. Thomas Fletcher and Karl Spracklen, “Cricket, drinking and exclusion of British Pakistani Muslims?” (19 pages)
   c. Case study: 2012 Scottish legislation aimed at preventing sectarian violence at football matches
      i. The Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Act 2012 (8 pages)
      ii. Nick McKerrell, “Why Scotland’s Football Bigotry Law Was Shown The Red Card” (approx. 3 pages)

14. Final student presentations (Week Fourteen)

Course policies

Please note: In this course we will read and discuss what may be difficult and potentially upsetting material. If you have any questions or concerns about the material, particular assignments or themes that might be addressed, please speak with the instructor.

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 writing assignments, as the purpose of these assignments is to prepare students to participate actively in the class discussion each week.

**Professionalism**

Class members 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: http://www.nyu.edu/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 or circulated 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