

SPORT & POLITICS: CLASSICAL FOUNDATIONS TO MODERN SPORT & POLITICS



Fall 2017
Tuesday & Thursday, 4-4:50
Social Sciences 6104

Instructor: Michael Promisel
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

From the dawn of Ancient Greece to 21st century global society, sports and politics have been intimately and precariously entwined. This course examines the classical origins of sport, its relationship to political thought and community, and the legacy of the ancient sporting tradition in our own times. We will ask several thematic questions: what is the relationship between sports and political life? What is the role of virtue in sport and society? How does sport produce cultural heroes and models for education? Finally, how do lessons from ancient sport and political life apply to our own times? These questions will be addressed by examining ancient texts to study how athletics and events like the Olympics, hunting, and other competitions relate to the political realm.

This course has four units. The first introduces the Homeric world, the close ties between sport and warfare, and the central place of honor and heroes in Ancient Greece. The second unit examines the close relationship between Greek sports, philosophy, and education by examining the work of Xenophon and Plato. The third unit brings us to Italy where sports become spectacles and scenes of conflict between the imperial, religious, and political forces of the Roman Republic and Empire. The final unit concludes our course by examining the place of sports in contemporary American politics and culture. We will investigate how and where the ancient traditions of sport influence modern notions of competition and politics.

* Image: *Diagoras porté en triomphe par ses fils*, by Degeorge (1814).

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- 1) To facilitate constructive reflection and dialogue concerning the nature of sport and politics
- 2) To introduce students to the historical and philosophical “modes of thought”
- 3) To explore the importance of sports, culture, and education in the theory and practice of politics
- 4) To carefully read primary sources and learn how historical and philosophical texts can inform our perspectives on contemporary questions

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Donald G. Kyle, *Sport and Spectacle in the Ancient World, 2nd Edition*. (Blackwell Publishing, 2015). ISBN: 978-1118613566.
- Stephen G. Miller, *Arete: Greek Sports from Ancient Sources, 2nd Edition*. (University of California Press, 2004). ISBN: 978-0520241541
- Allen Guttmann, *A Whole New Ballgame: An Interpretation of American Sports*. (University of North Carolina Press, 1988). ISBN: 978-0807842201
- Josef Pieper, *Leisure: The Basis of Culture*. (Ignatius Press, 2009). ISBN: 978-1586172565

Recommended (Not-Required) Texts

- Schall, James V, *A Student's Guide to Liberal Learning, 2nd Edition*. (Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2000). ISBN: 978-1882926534.
- Huizinga, Johan, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*. (Angelico Press, 2016). ISBN: 978-1621389996.

Students must purchase the exact editions of the required texts above. A text-based class will not succeed if we are not on the same page, literally and metaphorically. Students must bring the text under consideration to both lecture and discussion.

CLASS EXPECTATIONS

Reading: Lecture and discussions will not summarize the content of the readings, but seek to understand them more deeply through analysis and conversation. This will be most fruitful when students are prepared to analyze and engage with others in a meaningful way. Thus, this course is grounded in *careful reading* before each session.

Technology Policies: Computers and tablets are permitted, but must be used with great discretion. Wi-Fi must be turned off. No cell phones may be used during class time. Infringements will result in reduced participation grades.

Assignments:

Students will write three, one or two-paged single-space essays (12 pt. Times New Roman font) over the course of this class. More specific directions and requirements for each paper will be distributed a week before the assignment is due.

A longer, 5-6 page paper will be due in place of a mid-term exam. Prompts and directions will be distributed 2 weeks in advance.

Final Exam: The final exam is a 6-8 page paper due at the end of the scheduled final (9:45AM, December 16th). Proposals for the final exam will be due on December 5th and constitute 10% of the final exam grade.

Late Work: Late work will be penalized for all assignments. A letter grade will be deducted from late work for each 24-hour period passed since the due date. Please reach out to me or your teaching assistant at least 24 hours in advance of due dates under extenuating circumstances.

McBurney VISA: Students with a McBurney Center VISA should contact me immediately to arrange specific accommodations for assignments or exams.

Plagiarism: Don't. All cases of plagiarism will be investigated and reported to the Dean's Office. No exceptions.

GRADES

Participation -----	15%
Short Essays -----	3 x 10%
Mid-Term Paper -----	20%
Final Exam -----	35%*

*(Proposal = 10%
Final Essay = 25%)

CLASS OVERVIEW

Honor and Athletics in Homeric Greece

Thursday, 9/7	Course Introduction Reading: " On the Meaning of Sport ," James Schall.
Tuesday, 9/12	Ancient Sports Overview Reading: <i>Sport and Spectacle</i> , Introduction & Chapter 1
Thursday, 9/14	Sport and Honor in Homeric Greece Reading: <i>Sport and Spectacle</i> , Chapter 3; <i>Arete</i> , selections 1-2*
Tuesday, 9/19	Archaic Greek Athletics Reading: <i>Sport and Spectacle</i> , Chapter 4; <i>Arete</i> , 3-5, 28, 119, 136, 216, 219, 221, 229-231
Thursday, 9/21	Ancient Greek Olympics Reading: <i>Sport and Spectacle</i> , Chapter 6; <i>Arete</i> , 37-38, 44-50, 67, 90

* Note: Readings from *Arete* are listed by reading #, not page #

Tuesday, 9/26 The Cult of Heroes
Reading: *Sport and Spectacle*, Chapter 10; *Arete*, 110-113, 118, 248-252

Thursday, 9/28 Women in Greek Sport
Essay 1 Due **Reading:** *Sport and Spectacle*, Chapter 11; *Arete*, 149-162

Sports and Education in Greek Philosophy

Tuesday, 10/3 Spartan Sport & Education
Reading: *Sport and Spectacle*, Chapter 9; Plutarch's *Life of Lycurgus* (PDF)

Thursday, 10/5 Hunting, Suffering, and Education
Reading: Xenophon's *On Hunting* (PDF)

Tuesday, 10/10 Plato's Politics
Reading: *The Laws of Plato* (PDF)

Thursday, 10/12 Cultivating the Mind and Soul
Reading: *The Laws of Plato* (PDF)

Tuesday, 10/17 Aristotle's & Human Good
Reading: Aristotle's *Ethics* (PDF)

Thursday, 10/19 Aristotle's Politics
Essay 2 Due **Reading:** Aristotle's *Politics* (PDF)

Roman Sport and Spectacle

Tuesday, 10/24 Games and Festivals in the Roman Republic
Reading: *Sport and Spectacle*, Chapter 13

Thursday, 10/26 The Rise of Augustus
Reading: Suetonius' *Augustus* (PDF)

Tuesday, 10/31 Augustus (cont.)
Reading: Suetonius' *Augustus* (PDF); *Arete* 194-198, 201, 203

Thursday, 11/2 Roman Spectacles and Gladiators
Reading: *Sport and Spectacle*, Chapter 14 (**only** p. 279-285), Chapter 15 (entire)

Tuesday, 11/7 The Outsiders: Slaves and Christians
Reading: [The Spartacus Revolt](#) (Section C); [The Martyrdom of Sts. Perpetua and Felicity](#) (Sections 1-6, 9-10, 14-21); St. Augustine, *Confessions* (PDF)

Thursday, 11/9 Gladiator Movie
Mid-Term Due

Modern American Sport and Politics

- Tuesday, 11/14 Pre-Colonial & Colonial Sport
Reading: Allen Guttman, *A Whole New Ballgame*, Chapters 2 & 3
- Thursday, 11/16 America's Pastime
Reading: Allen Guttman, *A Whole New Ballgame*, Chapter 5; Grantland Rice, "Game Called," Stanley Woodward, "One Strike is Out" (PDF)
- Tuesday, 11/21 Sport and Identity
Essay 3 Due
Reading: Allen Guttman, *A Whole New Ballgame*, Chapters 9; Gary Smith, "The Chosen One" (PDF)
- Thursday, 11/23 THANKSGIVING
- Tuesday, 11/28 The Political Significance of Sport
Reading: *How We Play the Game*, Chapter 1 & 2 (PDF)
- Thursday, 11/30 Team Allegiances
Reading: *How We Play the Game*, Chapter 3 (PDF); Dick Young, "Obit on the Dodgers" (PDF)
- Tuesday, 12/5 The Re-Emerging Hero Cult?
Final Exam Proposal Due
Reading: *How We Play the Game*, Chapter 5 (PDF)
- Thursday, 12/7 Leisure: The Basis of Culture?
Reading: Pieper, *Leisure: The Basis of Culture*
- Tuesday, 12/12 Conclusion
Reading: Pieper, *Leisure: The Basis of Culture*
- FINAL EXAM
Saturday, 12/16 **Final essays due @ 9:45AM**