SPORTS AND MEDIA

Film S188 Summer Session B (July 12 - August 13)
Monday/Wednesday: 6:00 - 10:30 pm.
Class meeting are on line using Zoom and other platforms.
Note: The actual seminar will meet from 6 to 8:20. (8:30 to 10:30 is a screening slot but there will be multiple options for screenings).

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This course develops critical thinking about sports in contemporary media culture. The social aspect of playing, watching, and talking about sports has always involved media; media likewise inflect the meaning of athletic events. "Media" here designates cinema, television, radio, print, and social media. We will analyze the ways mass media and sports have shaped identity: gender, race, class, age, geography, and ideology. The background for considering these social phenomena is a general understanding of the commercial and civic nature of major sports, although some attention will also be paid to amateur media and alternative sports. Our scope will extend from the U.S. toward the globe, observing how international networks (Olympics, World Cup) act in specific national cultures. Classroom meetings 6:00-8:20 pm, Film screenings are on your own time. Principal readings are articles drawn from recent scholarship on Sports and Media, and criticism of films - all available on classes*v2 or as online books. Historically significant and contemporary films will introduce the history of sports in media culture, from the Crockett-Courtney Fight (1894) to Rocky, Paper Lion, The Armstrong Lie, Invictus, Venus and Serena, and Chariots of Fire. Classroom activities will include mini-lectures, discussion, group analysis of texts, and brief student presentations.

Assessment
1) Written Responses for each class, Participation (talking and listening)—not the first class, however.
2) Each student will give a brief presentation (5-7 mins) about a non-mainstream sport (one not otherwise covered in the course).
3) Write a 4-to-5-page analysis, comparing some aspect two films shown in class. That is, write an interpretation of the films that is sensitive to the way style shapes and creates meaning.
4) A final paper of 8 to 12 pages. This can deal with any aspect sports and media but should build on the work done in class. It is assumed that this paper will involve some additional reading, screening and research and you will discuss your proposed paper with the instructor.
Readings and Viewings
All readings are either in PDF form on Canvas or there is a link to the appropriate webpage.
As many films will be available through Course Reserves, through the Yale Library or online. In some cases students may have to rent the film on Amazon or the like.

Policies
http://yalecollege.yale.edu/content/general-conduct-and-discipline Contact college dean (or equivalent authority) and myself regarding any abnormalities or issues. Academic Honesty: Be honest, especially when in difficulty. Models of essay writing will be presented and followed by class discussion to address issues of academic honesty. It is important to stress individual contribution and acknowledging scholarly credit. Special needs - please contact me (in advance, if applicable)

Syllabus

Week 1. Introduction: Media and Culture

July 12. Sports & Nostalgia
Screen in advance: Eight Men Out (John Sayles, 1988) before class.
Clips screened in class: Team Spirit (Errol Morris, 2012)
   The Bingo Long Traveling All-Stars & Motor Kings (John Badham, 1976)
   Chris Rock’s Take on Blacks in Baseball Real Sports (HBO)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OFHQqQ6Va3A&t=11s
   A League of Their Own (Penny Marshall, 1992)
   Angels in the Outfield (William Dear, 1994)

This class meeting offers an introduction to the concerns of the course. We will discuss the role of sports in society and what sports tell us about society—about the ways in which race, class and gender and national identity are constructed through sports. We will also consider notions of fairplay and honesty. In the United States, baseball has long been considered the “national sport”—though plenty of people think it is slowly dying or at least in trouble. With Sayles’s Eight Men Out, we explore the relationship between “our national pastime” and the media, particularly the daily newspapers, in the first decades of the 20th century. Of course, this films and other films about sports are themselves important media manifestations.

July 14: The Early History of Sports and Media: Boxing
Screen in advance: Rocky (1976) with Sylvester Stallone.
Musser: short presentation on a marginal sport (Curling)
**Readings:**

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rocky

**Students will read one of the following and present/defend what it has to say about Rocky in class as if you were the author—four groups, each with a team leader:**

**Clips:**
- *Corbett-Courtney Fight* (1894)
  - *Boxing Cats* (1894)
  - Bob Fitzsimmons vs James J. Corbett –excerpt (1897)
  - Jack Johnson vs Tommy Burns (December 26, 1908)
  - Jack Johnson Vs. James J Jeffries (July 4th, 1910)
  - Muhammad Ali vs Chuck Wepner Round 15 (final round) 1975
- *The Killers* (1946)
- *Rocky II* (1979)

The relationship between sports and the media was always fundamental. In the 19th century top boxers made most of their money sparring on the stage—or appearing in skits or plays. Motion pictures—the production of boxing films—put boxing on a new commercial basis and made it a big business. Of course, television eventually took over. The changing dynamics involving boxing, movies and race are key to understanding American culture and society. *Rocky* won an Academy Award and was a box office hit. It has been a controversial film in terms of its art and its politics from the beginning. How are media used and presented in this film?

**Week 2. Race, Sport & Documentary**

**July 19: Muhammad Ali**

**Screen in advance:** *When We Were Kings* (Leon Gast, 1996)

**Readings:**


https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/When_We_Were_Kings

**Clips:** from *The Trials of Muhammad Ali* (Bill Siegel, 2014) and selections from various televised heavyweight championship fights: *George Foreman vs Muhammad Ali* (Oct. 30, 1974) *Laila Ali vs Jacqui Frazier* (June 8, 2001)

As a witty, dynamic and immensely talented Black Muslim heavyweight boxer in the Vietnam War Era, Muhammad Ali became a focal point for racial, social and political controversy. From Civil Rights to Black Power and Black cultural nationalism, boxing became much more than a blood sport. What does *When We Were Kings* and our readings tell us about this era? And about the media?

We are thinking a lot about race and masculinity but what about 21st century efforts to bring women into the sport?

**July 21: Ethnography, Post-colonialism and Cricket**

**Screening in advance:** *Trobriand Cricket: An Ingenious Response to Colonialism* (Leach, 1976)

-Fire in Babylon* (Stephan Riley, 2010)

**Readings:**


**Clips:** *various*

Cricket—a sport that Great Britain successful exported to many of its colonies—is seen as an alternative to American baseball. We explore the ways colonialism, race and culture shaped the sport in the Trobriand Islands, New Guinea, and the West Indies—and vice versa. Always useful to compare and contrast the two films and the two different responses to the colonizers’ game.

**Week 3: World-wide Sports: The Olympics and Bicycling Racing**

**July 26: Cycling and the Myth of the Pure American**

**Screening in advance:** *Breaking Away* (Peter Yates, 1979)

-The Armstrong Lie* (Gibney, 2013)
Readings:

Clips -- Nike commercials with Lance Armstrong (YouTube)

Lance Armstrong was eight when *Breaking Away* went into theater.

July 28: Olympics and Nationalism

Screening in advance: *Chariots of Fire* (UK 1981)


Clips: *Olympiad* (Riefenstahl, 1936)

*Personal Best* (Towne, 1982)
*Munich* (Spielberg, 2005)

mid-term paper due

Week 4: Football

August 2nd: American Football & The Amateur Sports Writer

Screenings: *Paper Lion* (1968)

Readings:

Clips: *Plimpton! Starring George Plimpton as Himself* (2012)

*Hearts and Minds* (1974)


August 4: Rugby: Myth and Allegory

Screening in advance: *Invictus* (Clint Eastwood, 2009)
Readings:
Clips: Bend It Like Beckham (UK 2002)

Week 5: Race and Gender

August 9: Race, Aspiration and Basketball
Screening in advance: Hoosiers (David Anspaugh, 1986)
Hoop Dreams (Steven James, 1994)
Clips

August 11: Women and Sports
Screening: Legacy (Kristi Wagner, 2015)
Venus and Serena (Maiken Baird and Michelle Major, 2013)
http://hdl.handle.net/10079/bibid/11649427
Clips:

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