

# MYTHOLOGIES OF SPORT, MYTHOLOGIES OF GENDER

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**PROFESSOR:** Dr. Cat M. Ariail

**CLASS AND CONTACT INFO:**

Date/Time: T/TR 3:30-5:00

Email: [cat.m.ariail@gmail.com](mailto:cat.m.ariail@gmail.com)

Office Hours: W 10:00-12:30 or by appointment

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course uses the myths of American sport as lens to study the making and re-making of gender ideologies in the twentieth-century U.S. We will examine the popular mythologies of athletes, teams, and sport developments since the late-nineteenth century. We then will interrogate how and why their stories, both in their historical moment and in historical memory, have contributed to the production and perpetuation of gender expectations. We particularly will use the stories of sport to explore understandings of intersectional gender identities, analyzing the making of white femininity, white masculinity, black masculinity, and black womanhood. When we engage in these inquiries, we also will situate the athletes, teams, and sporting developments in context with the political, social, and/or cultural conditions of the historical moment in which the athlete, team, or sporting development emerged. Through this process, we also will consider the possibilities and limitations of using the popular mythologies of U.S. sport to study gender ideologies in the U.S.

Students should be prepared to read a book a week, in addition to often viewing an accompanying film. Tuesday's class will most often feature a lecture combined with group work or other activities. Thursday's class will primarily be devoted to discussion of that week's book and film.

**GRADING:**

Participation (in-class and online): 15%

Discussion Post and Presentation: 15%

Film Review: 25%

Final Paper Proposal: 10%

Final Paper Presentation: 10%

Final Paper: 25%

**COURSE MATERIALS:**

Students are responsible for purchasing, renting, or borrowing the following texts:

- *Patriotic Games: Sporting Traditions in the American Imagination, 1876-1926*, S.W. Pope
- *I Fight for a Living: Boxing and the Battle for Black Manhood, 1880-1915*, Louis Moore

- *Active Bodies: A History of Women's Physical Education in Twentieth-Century America*, Martha H. Verbrugge
- *Learning to Win: Sports, Education, and Social Change in North Carolina*, Pamela Grundy
- *Playing America's Game: Baseball, Latinos, and the Color Line*, Adrian Burgos, Jr.
- *(Re)Presenting Wilma Rudolph*, Rita Liberti and Maureen M. Smith
- *Not the Triumph but the Struggle: The 1968 Olympics and the Making of the Black Athlete*, Amy Bass
- *Strong Women, Deep Closets: Lesbians and Homophobia in Sport*, Pat Griffin
- *Ball Don't Lie!: Myth, Genealogy, and Invention in the Cultures of Basketball*, Yago Colás
- *Qualifying Times: Points of Change in U.S. Women's Sport*, Jaime Schultz
- *Where Men Win Glory: The Odyssey of Pat Tillman*, Jon Krakauer

All other readings, as well as links to films, will be posted on Blackboard (denoted with \*\*).

## **CLASS SCHEDULE:**

*Students should have completed that week's reading and viewing assignments by the beginning of class on Thursday.*

### Week One:

#### **Introduction**

- "Taking Sports Seriously," Elliot J. Gorn and Michael Oriard, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*\*\*
- "Cultural Studies and Sport History," Daniel A. Nathan, *The International Journal of the History of Sport*\*\*
- "About Turns: Reflecting on Sport History in the 1990s," Catriona M. Parratt, *Sport History Review*\*\*

### Week Two:

#### **Making American Sport**

- S.W. Pope, *Patriotic Games: Sporting Traditions in the American Imagination, 1876-1926*

### Week Three:

#### **Boxing and Black Masculinity**

- Louis Moore, *I Fight for a Living: Boxing and the Battle for Black Manhood, 1880-1915*
- *Unforgivable Blackness: The Rise and Fall of Jack Johnson* (2004)\*\*

### Week Four:

#### **Exercising Bodies, Engendering Difference**

- Martha H. Verbrugge, *Active Bodies: A History of Women's Physical Education in Twentieth-Century America*

#### Week Five:

##### **Schooling Sport, Socializing Gender**

- Pamela Grundy, *Learning to Win: Sports, Education, and Social Change in North Carolina*

#### Week Six:

##### **The Integration of Baseball**

- Adrian Burgos, Jr., *Playing America's Game: Baseball, Latinos, and the Color Line*
- *The Clemente Effect* (2016)\*\*

**Thursday is the final date for students to submit their Final Paper Proposal.  
Proposals should be submitted to the professor by email by 5 PM.**

#### Week Seven:

##### **Wilma Rudolph**

- Rita Liberti and Maureen M. Smith, *(Re)Presenting Wilma Rudolph*
- *Wilma* (1977)\*\*

#### Week Eight:

##### **The Black Athlete**

- Amy Bass, *Not the Triumph but the Struggle: The 1968 Olympics and the Making of the Black Athlete*
- *When We Were Kings* (1996)\*\*

#### Week Nine:

##### **The Closet and Community**

- Pat Griffin, *Strong Women, Deep Closet: Lesbians and Homophobia in Sport*
- Excerpt from Anne Enke, *Finding the Movement: Sexuality, Contested Space, and Feminist Activism*\*\*
- *Personal Best* (1982)\*\*

#### Week Ten:

##### **Mythologies of Basketball and Manhood**

- Yago Colás, *Ball Don't Lie!: Myth, Genealogy, and Invention in the Cultures of Basketball*

**Thursday is the final date for students to submit their Film Reviews.**

**Reviews should be submitted to the professor by email by 5 PM.**

Week Eleven:

**The Materialization and Modernization of Women's Athleticism**

- Jaime Schultz, *Qualifying Times: Points of Change in U.S. Women's Sport*
- *Branded* (2013)\*\*

Week Twelve:

**9/11 and American Manhood**

- *Where Men Win Glory: The Odyssey of Pat Tillman*, Jon Krakauer

**FINAL PAPER IS DUE\_\_\_\_\_.**

**A copy should be submitted to the professor's office.**

**A copy also should be emailed to the professor.**

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

Participation (15%):

Students are expected to attend all classes, actively engaging in and contributing to activities and discussion. Students should also comment at least once a week on the class blog. Students should post their comment before class on Thursday. A student who misses class remains responsible for commenting on the blog.

Discussion Leader (15%):

Each student will serve as a discussion leader/co-leader for one class period this semester. After completing the week's reading and/or viewing assignments, the student will compose a 500-750-word critical response in which they offer a gendered analysis of that week's sport myth. They will post their response on the class blog by 8 PM on the Monday before that week's class sessions. The blog post provided by the discussion leader/co-leader will serve as a starting point for that Thursday's discussion.

The discussion leader/co-leader is responsible for responding to at least three comments on their post before 8 PM on the Friday of the week in which they served as a discussion leader/co-leader. It is intended that the blog not only encourage a richer in-class discussion, but also provide a venue through which to continue to probe the ideas raised during class.

Film Review (25%):

What is the role of sport films in reinforcing gender ideologies? Or, can films contest the ways in which sport has bolstered the traditional gender order? In an effort to answer these questions, each student is responsible for reviewing an *ESPN 30 for 30* documentary of their choice. Students can find a list of *30 for 30* documentaries at: <http://www.espn.com/30for30/>. Students

will think about their films reveals about gender ideas in the twenty-first century, as well as in the historical moment of the film's subject. Students will also engage in an intersectional analysis, thinking about how the film addresses race, sexuality, ethnicity, class, age, and ability.

Students can write a traditional, approximately 750-word review. Alternatively, students are encouraged to present their review through multimedia formats, such as a 5-7-minute podcast or video review. Students can complete the review at any point during the semester. The final date to submit the review is the Thursday of Week Ten. Students should email their review to the professor before class. At the end of Week Ten, the professor will post all student reviews to the class blog. Students are responsible for commenting on the reviews of at least 10 of their classmates. Students will not receive their grade until they have fulfilled this comment requirement.

### *Final Paper Project:*

For the final project, each student will engage in a critical, gendered examination of an American sport myth of their choice. Using primary and secondary sources, the student will examine why the how the popular memory of an athlete, team, or sporting development has confirmed or contested normative gender ideologies, both in the respective historical moment and beyond. A student can also choose to explore how ideas about gender potentially has prevented the popularization of a particular athlete, team, or development.

### *Final Paper Proposal (10%):*

Students should compose a 500-750-word proposal in which they introduce and explain the sport myth they have chosen to examine. Students should also provide a prospective bibliography, listing at least 8 primary sources (most likely newspaper or magazine articles) and 3 secondary sources (most likely books or films) that they plan to reference in their final paper. The Final Paper Proposal is due by email to the professor by 5 PM on Thursday of Week Six.

### *Final Paper (25%):*

The final paper should be 7,500-8,000 words with Chicago Style citations. The paper should include at least 20 primary sources and at least 10 secondary sources. The student should begin by explaining athlete, team, event, or development they have selected. They then should situate their subject their historical moment to explain the ways in which their subject confirmed or contested gender ideologies. The student should also discuss the persistence (or absence) of the myth beyond its historical moment, considering what the mythologization (or lack thereof) of their subject reveals about broader U.S. society's gender attitudes. The student also should examine the influence changes in U.S. politics, society, and/or culture have had on their gendered sport myth, considering if and how the myth has changed and/or how and why it has (or has not) maintained relevance and resonance.

The paper will be evaluated for strength of assertions, clarity of writing style, and correctness of Chicago Style citations. The Final Paper is due \_\_\_\_\_. Students are responsible for both submitting a copy to the professor's office and emailing a copy to the professor.

**LATE WORK POLICY:**

No late work will be accepted unless the student has administration-approved documentation that explains the emergency or extenuating circumstances.

**GRADE DISPUTE POLICY:**

If a student is dissatisfied with their grade, they should write a grade dispute proposal (approximately 1 paragraph; 5-7 sentences) that details and specifies their complaints or confusion. Students should take the time to carefully and clearly explain their contention. The student should email their grade dispute proposal to the instructor. The professor then will contact the student to schedule a meeting to discuss the complaints and concerns. Only grade dispute proposals received within 2 weeks of the date the assignment is returned will be considered.

**EMAIL POLICY:**

Feel free to email the instructor with any questions, comments, or concerns about assignments or other class matters. All emails will be answered within 24 hours. However, per FERPA, matters related to grades cannot be discussed over email.

**ADDRESS:**

Please the inform the professor of your preferred name, pronoun, and/or other form of address.