

THE BLACK ATHLETE

PROFESSOR: Dr. Cat M. Ariail

CLASS AND CONTACT INFO:

Date/Time: MWF 9:00-9:50

Email: cat.m.ariail@gmail.com

Office Hours: MW 10:00-11:30 or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

In this course, we will use the experiences of black athletes in the U.S. as a lens to analyze the struggles, successes, challenges, and contributions that have characterized the black experience in the U.S., from the end of the Civil War to the present-day. Our approach will be interpretive. Rather than recounting who did what, where, and when, we will focus on what black American athletes can tell us about the broader historical developments and dynamics. We will complete these explorations through class sessions that feature a short lecture combined with small group and class-wide discussions, viewings of film clips, examinations of primary source documents, and other activities.

The journeys of Major Taylor, Jesse Owens, Althea Gibson, Michael Jordan, Serena Williams, and others will allow us to analyze the ways in which racial identity has determined black individuals' opportunities and achievements in the U.S., not only in sport but also in other cultural, political, and economic arenas. We also will use the stories of black athletic icons to interrogate the ways in which racially-based expectations and limitations intersect with those based on gender, sexuality, class, and ethnicity. Key questions we will answer include:

- How have black athletes influenced U.S. sport? How have black American athletes influenced U.S. culture, politics, and economics?
- How has sport encouraged racial equality? How has sport reinforced racial exclusions?
- What has sport meant for the black community in the U.S.?
- What can the experiences of black athletes tell us about gender and sexuality in the black community in the U.S.? What can the experiences of black athletes tell us about the relationship between race, gender, and sexuality in U.S. society?
- What can the experiences of black athletes tell us about ethnicity in the black community in the U.S.? What can the experiences of black athletes tell us about the relationship between race and ethnicity in U.S. society?

COURSE OUTCOMES:

- Students will be able to analyze sport as a text that reveals the operation of political, social, cultural, and economic ideas and realities in US history.
- Students will be able to clearly convey original ideas and arguments in spoken and written forms.

- Students will be able to conduct primary source research.

GRADING:

Participation: 25%

Mid-Term: 20%

Book Review: 15%

Primary Source Exploration: 15%

Final Paper Project: 25%

COURSE MATERIALS:

This class's primary text, which all students are expected to purchase, rent, or borrow, is:

- David K. Wiggins, ed., *Out of the Shadows: A Biographical History of African American Athletes* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2006).

Students also are responsible for purchasing, renting, or borrowing the book they choose to read for their book review. Choose ONE of the following options:

- Theresa Runstedler, *Jack Johnson, Rebel Sojourner: Boxing the Shadow of the Global Color Line* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012).
- Donald Spivey, “*If You Were Only White*”: *The Life of Leroy “Satchel” Paige* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2012).
- Rita Liberti and Maureen M. Smith, *(Re)Presenting Wilma Rudolph* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2015).
- Aram Goudsouzian, *King of the Court: Bill Russell and the Basketball Revolution* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010).

All readings and other materials are posted to the class page on Blackboard. These readings are denoted with **.

CLASS SCHEDULE:

Students should complete readings, as well as any other listening or viewing assignments, before class. Completing readings is essential for students successfully to participate in class and online discussions.

WEEK 1:

The What and Why of Sport History

WEEK 2:

Sport and Struggle Under Slavery

- Kevin Dawson, “Enslaved Swimmers and Divers in the Atlantic World,” *The Journal of*

*American History***

Isaac Murphy, Major Taylor, and the Making of the Black Athlete

- Andrew Ritchie, “Marshall ‘Major’ Taylor: The Fastest Bicycle Rider in the World,” *Out of the Shadows*

Writing Workshop I: Book Review

WEEK 3:

Race in the Ring

- Louis Moore, “Fine Specimens of Manhood: The Black Boxer’s Body and the Avenue to Equality, Racial Advancement, and Manhood in the Nineteenth Century,” *MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the U.S.***

The Negro Leagues and the National Pastime

- Read ONE of the following chapters from *Separate Games*:
 - Leslie Heaphy, “Cuban Giants: Black Baseball’s Early Sport Stars”**
 - Rob Ruck, “The East West Classic: Black America’s Baseball Fiesta”**
- Listen to “How the Negro Leagues Worked,” *HowStuffWorks***

Physical Education and the Making of the Black Woman Athlete

- Martha Verbrugge, excerpt from *Active Bodies***

WEEK 4:

Jesse Owens and the Black Auxiliaries

- Mark Dyreson, “Jesse Owens: Leading Man in Modern American Tales of Racial Progress and Limits,” *Out of the Shadows*

The Brown Bomber and the Black Athlete in the Era of WWII

- Anthony O. Edmonds, “Joe Louis, Boxing, and American Culture,” *Out of the Shadows*

“Bates Must Play” and the Integration Battles in College Athletics

- Donald Spivey, “‘End Jim Crow Sports’: The Leonard Bates Controversy and Protest at New York University, 1940-1941,” *Sport and the Color Line***
- Listen to “The Game that Changed the South....Sort Of” (12:11), *BackStory Radio***

WEEK 5:

Afro-Latinos and the Integration of Major League Baseball

- Adrian Burgos, “Left Out: Afro-Latinos, Black Baseball, and the Revision of Baseball’s Racial History,” *Social Text***

Adversity and Excellence: Alice Coachman, Jackie Robinson, and Althea Gibson

- Read ONE of the following chapters from *Out of the Shadows*:

- Jennifer Lansbury, “Alice Coachman: Quiet Champion of the 1940s”
- Michael E. Lomax, “Jackie Robinson: Racial Pioneer and Athlete Extraordinaire in an Era of Change”
- Mary Jo Festle, “‘Jackie Robinson without the Charm’: The Challenges of Being Althea Gibson

Black Athletes, Cold War

- Damion Thomas, “‘Spreading the Gospel of Basketball’: The Harlem Globetrotters, the State Department, and the Minstrel Tradition, 1945-54,” *Globetrotting***
- Listen to “Sports and National Pride” (5:20), *BackStory Radio***

WEEK 6:

MIDTERM EXAM ON MONDAY

The Effort to Integrate the Links

- Watch *Uneven Fairways: The Story of the Negro Leagues of Golf***

The Trials and Triumphs of the Tennessee State Tigerbelles

- Carol Van West, “The Tennessee State Tigerbelles: Cold Warriors of the Track,” *Separate Games***

WEEK 7:

He Shook Up the World: The Emergence of Muhammad Ali

- Gerald Early, “Muhammad Ali: Flawed Rebel with a Cause,” *Out of the Shadows*
- Listen to “Re-Remembering Muhammad Ali,” *Code Switch***

OPHR and the 1968 Olympics

- Dave Zirin, “The Explosive 1968 Olympics,” *International Socialist Review***
- Listen to “The Black Power Salute?,” *BackStory Radio***

Abdul-Jabbar and Ashe: Alternative Representations of the Black Athlete

- Damion Thomas, “‘The Quiet Militant’: Arthur Ashe and Black Athletic Activism,” *Out of the Shadows*

BOOK REVIEW DUE FRIDAY

Please email your review to the professor by 8 PM.

WEEK 8:

Jim Brown, Curt Flood, and the Black Athlete’s Quest for Economic Power

- J. Thomas Jable, “Jim Brown: Superlative Athlete, Screen Star, Social Activist,” *Out of the Shadows*

Cheryl Miller and Black Women’s Basketball After Title IX

- Pamela Grundy and Susan Shackelford, excerpt from *Shattering the Glass***

The Making and Unmaking of O.J. Simpson

- Ta-Nehisi Coates, “What O.J. Simpson Means to Me,” *The Atlantic***

WEEK 9:

The Meaning of Michael Jordan

- Douglas Hartmann, “Bound by Blackness of Above It?: Michael Jordan and the Paradoxes of Post-Civil Rights American Race Relations,” *Out of the Shadows*

The Rise and Fall of the Black Woman Sprinter

- Maggie Jones, “What Makes Marion Jones Run?,” *The New York Times Magazine***

Writing Workshop II: Final Paper

PRIMAY SOURCE EXPLORATION DUE FRIDAY

Please email your project to the professor by 8 PM.

WEEK 10:

Discussions of Primary Source Explorations: Black Athletes in the Massachusetts

WEEK 11:

LeBron James, the Decision, and Black Athletic Agency

- Yago Colás, “The Myth of the Man, July 8, 2010,” *Ball Don’t Lie***

Queen Serena

- Claudia Rankine, “Graphite Against a Sharp White Background: How to Be a Successful Black Tennis Player,” *Slate***

The Resurgence of the Revolt of the Black Athlete

- Rembert Browne, “Colin Kaepernick Has a Job,” *Bleacher Report***

WEEK 12:

Final Paper Discussions

FINAL PAPER DUE ____ BY 5 P.M.

A hard-copy should be submitted to the professor’s office.

A copy also should be emailed to the professor.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Participation (25%):

Students are encouraged to attend all classes. Students also are expected actively to engage in and contribute to in-class discussions, as well as online conversations on the class blog.

Each week, the professor will post a series of questions on the class blog that relate to that week's readings. During the course of the semester, students are expected to respond to the professor's questions 8 times. The professor will post the questions for the coming week by Sunday at 5 PM before that week's classes. If they chose to respond to that week's questions, students must post their response before class on that Friday. During the course of the semester, students are also expected to provide comments on the projects produced by their fellow students (explained below).

Mid-Term Exam (20%):

The mid-term exam will be held on Monday of Week Six. It will be an open-ended essay question that will allow students to demonstrate the knowledge they have gained from readings, lectures, and any other materials reviewed. Students can make a 3-page study guide to use during the exam.

Book Review (15%):

Students will write a book review of one of the following critical biographies of a black American athletic icon:

- Theresa Runstedler, *Jack Johnson, Rebel Sojourner: Boxing the Shadow of the Global Color Line* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012).
- Donald Spivey, “*If You Were Only White*”: *The Life of Leroy “Satchel” Paige* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2012).
- Rita Liberti and Maureen M. Smith, *(Re)Presenting Wilma Rudolph* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2015).
- Aram Goudsouzian, *King of the Court: Bill Russell and the Basketball Revolution* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010).

In their reviews, students not only should consider whether the book succeeds in informing the reader about the historical importance of the particular athlete, but also what the particular athlete's life story reveals about the black experience, both in sport and beyond, in the U.S. in the particular historical moment.

On Friday of Week Two, we will hold a Writing Workshop that will prepare students to write a successful review. Students can turn in their review any date before the Friday of Week Seven. Reviews must be emailed to the professor by 8PM on Friday of Week Seven.

The professor then will post all reviews to the class website. Students must comment on the

reviews of 6 of their fellow students, selecting 2 reviews about each of the 3 books that the student did not read and review. In their comments, students should share what they learned about the athlete from the review, as well as at least one lingering question they have about the athlete and his/her historical significance. Students will not receive a grade on their review until they comment on 6 other reviews.

Primary Source Exploration (15%):

Primary sources form the core of historical research. They allow us to understand an individual or event in its time and place. Examining primary sources is especially critical for sport history. The popular history of athletes and events often is based on memories, which change over time. We want to understand the significance of athletes and events in their moment.

A folder containing the 5-7 documents that compose each Primary Source Exploration Module will be posted on Blackboard. Students will read their selected set of documents to determine what the documents reveal about race and sport in the respective historical moment. Students also will determine what the set of documents suggests about the broader black experience in relation to gender, sexuality, ethnicity, economics, politics, or other social issues.

Students are expected to address all documents in their analysis. Students can present their analysis through a traditional essay of approximately 1,000 words. However, students are encouraged to use another presentation format, such as an approximately 5-10-minute podcast or video. Students can also use various digitally-based software, such as Prezi or History Pin, to present their ideas. Students are encouraged to meet with the professor to propose other alternative presentation forms.

Students can complete their project at any point in the semester. The final due date is Friday of Week Nine. Students should email their final project to the professor.

The professor will then post all student projects on the class blog. Students are responsible for viewing the projects of their fellow students. Students are required to comment on at least 5 of the fellow students' projects before class on Monday of Week 10. During Week 10, we will discuss the projects. Students will not receive a grade for their project unless they comment on their fellow students' projects and participate in the class discussion.

Final Paper (25%):

For the final paper, students will complete a critical, biographical essay of a black athlete of their choice. Students can select an athlete from across the late-nineteenth through the early twenty-first centuries. World-famous, as well as overlooked or underappreciated athletes in any field of sport, recreation, or fitness are encouraged. Students, however, should not select an athlete discussed extensively in class.

Using a combination of primary and secondary sources, students will engage in a critical examination of their chosen athlete. Students should not merely recount their athletes' life story. Instead, students should consider the significance of their athlete. What does the athlete's story

add to the understanding of the black experience, both in sport and beyond, in their historical moment? Students should consider their athlete's significance in terms of race, as well as gender, sexuality, ethnicity, economics, politics, and/or other social issues.

Students' final paper will be at least 1500 words with Chicago Style citations. The final paper should include at least 12 sources, with at least 3 different types of sources. The paper will be evaluated for strength of assertions, clarity of writing style, and correctness of citations.

On Friday of Week Nine, we will hold a Writing Workshop to prepare students to collect their primary and secondary sources, craft their argument, and follow Chicago Style conventions. Students should have selected the athlete they will research by this date. Students also are encouraged to work with the professor in developing their Final Paper both before and after the Writing Workshop.

The Final Paper is due _____ by 5 PM. Students should submit a hard-copy to the professor's office and a digital-copy to the professor via email.

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 professor. 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 professor with any questions, comments, or concerns about assignments or other class matters. All emails will be answered within 24 hours.

ADDRESS:

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