

History 3838 6.0 FW 2020-21
Social History of Modern Sport, 1850-2000

Dr. Kathryn McPherson
Department of History

Class Times:

Wednesdays, 2:30-5:30 -- Material Presented Remotely in a Flexible Format**

Instructors:

Course Director -- Dr. Kathryn McPherson
142 Founders College
Kathryn@yorku.ca

Course Description:

This course examines the social history of sport from the early 19th century to the present. Using the established categories of social history -- especially gender, race/ethnicity, class, sexuality age and ability -- the course explores sport as a social and cultural practice that has been integral to larger political, economic and social changes. The course will introduce students to the major changes that have occurred within the definition and organization of sport(s), and will consider the ways that sport has been used to express powerful cultural and political values in the modern era -- values like nationalism, imperialism, militarism, racism and sexism. The course will explore how sports and athletes have become valuable commodities, shaping corporate interests and consumer demand. At the same time, "ordinary people" have used sport to express locally-held ideals and to create bonds of community. Activists have also used sport to demand social change, such as the American civil rights movements, in decolonization movements around the globe, in feminism, and in the disability movement. At the close of the twentieth century, new debates about technologies in sport (whether performance-enhancing drugs or speed-enhancing equipment) and about gender-identity have raised new questions about the foundational definitions of what is human and what is sport.

Rather than see the history of sport as a narrative of progress -- wherein athletes and their teams have got bigger, stronger and faster over time -- this course uses sport history as a lens on wider social and cultural changes of the modern era. It interrogates who has set the terms of sporting activity and what social and cultural values that activity has expressed. The course uses a comparative and global framework: it is interested in what well-known and high-profile athletes and organizations can tell us about the past, but also in the complexities of lesser-known local events and examples. Children, women, disabled athletes, and minority athletes are as vital to the course material as are highly-celebrated sports heroes. The course will use evidence produced by organizations and athletes -- including biographies and memoirs --- but will also consider how sports and athletes have been represented by the media and in popular culture since 1850.

Course Organization:

Course material will be presented through a blend of formal lectures, large group workshops, and smaller group discussion, as well as assigned readings and on-line discussion posts. This course will use a Flexible Format **. This means there will be content delivered during the Monday 2:30-5:30 assigned time, but students will be able to elect to access that content at other times during the week, to suit their schedule. My goal is to use remote learning tools to offer the course in as close to the “in person” format as possible, while also recognizing that student accessibility to on-line material will vary and they will need to be accommodated.

Course Goals:

History 3838 aims to introduce students to the rich and fascinating scholarship in the history of sport. The course focuses on the 19th and 20th centuries and explores sport on all continents. Mid-term tests and the final exam will measure student knowledge of course material. Written assignments are aimed at honing student skills of presenting arguments in clear prose, as well as building student skills of using “primary” sources to understand the past. Class participation is organized to strengthen students’ extemporaneous speaking skills.

Assignments and Grade Breakdown

Comparative Analysis	15%
Primary Document Analysis	10%
Research Paper	20%
First Term Test	15%
Final Examination	20%
Participation – on-line posts and extemporaneous speaking	20%

Tentative List of Assigned Texts

Bloom, John and Michael Nevin Willard, eds. Sports Matters: Race, Recreation and Culture. New York: NYU Press, 2002.

The following journals are available digitally, through the journal website or through York University Library: Journal of Sport History, International Journal of Sport History, Sport History Review and Canadian Journal of History of Sport/Revue canadienne de l’histoire es sports.

Weekly Lecture Topics

First Term

Week 1	Course Introduction – Pre-modern Leisure, Sport and Games
Week 2	Rewriting the Rules: Education and the Amateur in the 19th Century
Week 3	Professionals Strike Back: Gender and Class in the 19th Century
Week 4	The Business of Sport – Baseball
Week 5	Sport and Colonialism
Week 6	The Birth of Sports Journalism
Week 7	Spectacular Bodies – Gender, Sexuality and Health
Week 8	The Modern Olympics
Week 9	Telling Stories About Sport -
Week 10	Race, Class and the Manly Modern – Boxing’s Jack Johnson
Week 11	Nationalism, Imperialism and the First World War
Week 12	Class and Community in the 1920s

Second Term

Week 13	Leagues of Nations: Nationalism and Politics in the Interwar Years
Week 14	Researching Sport History – Primary Source Workshop
Week 15	Cold Wars
Week 16	Imperialism and Resistance
Week 17	PARTICIPACTION
Week 18	Title IX? Rethinking Gender, Fitness and Physical Education
Week 19	Cyborg Athletics: Technology, Therapy and Genetics in an Era of Capitalized Sport
Week 20	Film and Popular Culture
Week 21	Gay Games: Festival and Competition in the Late Twentieth Century
Week 22	The Right to Play? Global Histories, Local Histories and the Future of Sport
Week 23	Fans and Heroes: Sport and the Modern
Week 24	Course Conclusion