Sports and Culture  
ANTH2390/UGEC2664  
Spring Term 2020

** Updated Syllabus due to COVID-19 Outbreak’s Term Rearrangements - 13Feb2020**

Lecture: Thursday 10:30 – 12:15 (NAH114)  
Tutorial: Thursday 12:30 – 13:15 (NAH114)  
Lecturer: Marco Montagner    montagner.hk_at_gmail.com  
Office hours: Thursday and Monday, by previous appointment (NAH411)  
Zoom Meeting ID: 896 228 2226

Course Description:
Why millions of people all over the world play sports? Why different countries have different popular sports? What is it about sports that attract so many people and money? Has it always been this way? Sport captures the minds and bodies of billions of people around the world and has an immense significance in our everyday lives. This course engages different cross-cultural examples of sport and introduces students to the relationship between sport and its sociocultural setting.

Sports inform and create certain lifestyles and values: they are about cooperation, inclusion and fair play. But they are also about competition, inequality, and violence. Sports are highly structured, and yet at the same time totally unpredictable. Sports transmit moral principles and shapes attitudes to life, but might also undermine authority and contribute to social instability. Sport can both unite and divide teams, groups of people, and even entire nations. Sports are not only shaped by society, but sports themselves shape society. This is because sports are dynamically intertwined with various sociocultural aspects (like morality, class, gender, ethnicity, nationalism, globalization, political economy and so on).

Students will explore different cross-cultural examples of sports from all over the world, introducing the role and importance of sports in the present and the past, in “modern” and “traditional” societies, seeing the relationship between sports and their sociocultural setting, and how sports are never played in a cultural vacuum. This course draws on a variety of disciplines including sociology, gender studies, history, and cultural studies, but it will use the anthropological approach, focusing on the experience of those participants (whether practitioners, spectators or consumers).

By the end of the course, students will be able to critically question sports, reflecting on how sports are much more than an activity merely for health and leisure, and understanding the roles that sports play in modern societies.

Learning outcomes:
Students will be able to:
1. see and understand sports in an anthropological way, analyzing and appreciating different kinds of sports.
2. understand the roles that sports play in “modern” and “traditional” societies.
3. understand the complexity and interrelatedness of sport and sociocultural life.
4. learn to critically reflect on their own engagement with sport, as practitioners or spectators.

Course Assessment:
a) Class and Tutorial participation: 20%  
b) Two Reflection Papers (min 3, max 5 pages each): 15% + 15% = 30%  
c) Final Ethnographic Paper, including mini presentation (min 8, max 10 pages): 50%

a) Class and tutorial participation:
Although I am not strict with attendance, every student is expected to regularly attend and participate in class discussions, even if conducted through zoom.us software. An high participation score comes with good attendance and active, thoughtful, consistent participation, showing interest as well as preparation and engagement with class materials. Class participation is a fundamental part of the class, and some of the discussion and guest visits cannot be replaced otherwise. Attendance sheets won’t be used, but I will track participation bonuses at every lecture/tutorial starting from week 2. Participation, not simple attendance, it’s the key for courses like this; Remember that when you care/show care, the teacher also will care. Students might be also asked to prepare questions or videos to engage with others during tutorials.

b) Two Reflection Papers:
1) Pick a recent news report (from whatever media) about a sport event or sport phenomenon. Describe what it is and then reflect and comment on it with reference to one or several of the course topics. Raise questions and points of discussion (don’t just summarize the event). DUE by Week 8 (March 19th, Thursday 10am)
2) Choose a current/former professional athlete/personality and gather some information about the person (i.e. consult news reports, biographies, autobiographies, documentaries etc.). Describe who she/he is, what sport she/he is or was practicing and provide a short and critical analysis with reference to one or several of the course topics. Don’t be too general. You can pick one specific aspect of the athlete and relate it to the course material. DUE by Week 11 (April 16th, Thursday 10am).

- Students should submit the reflection papers at my email, choosing anytime they like within the maximum due dates indicated. Each paper should be minimum 3 and maximum 5 pages long, double-spaced. Two formats are required: Microsoft Word/Open Office and PDF. Attach also your VeriGuide receipt.

c) Final (possibly Ethnographic) Paper:
Choose a sport or a body movement practice that you are interested in, attend a related event and write an ethnographic paper about it. You can be a member of the audience or a direct participant (player, referee..). You can write about a sport that you know well, or one that is new to you, which means you can either be an informed insider, or a newly arrived outsider. Both roles have their own advantages. The paper should include your field observations, a few interviews, and a critical discussion of some of the course topics with reference to some of the assigned readings. Instead of merely describing your field observations or summarizing the readings, you should try to use the ideas learned in this course to analyze the event. If you use other people’s ideas or words in the paper, remember to cite the sources and list them under “References” at the end. I am always available to discuss your topics starting from Week 1, both for methodology and ideas.

Update: Depending on the scenario on the current COVID-19 outbreak, we will discuss possibilities for your final paper during lectures (such as: how sport practices are changing due to the ongoing epidemic, how your practice has been afflicted, the resilience of training practices routines and some sports gatherings in time of danger and so on).

- The final paper should be 8 to 10 pages long, double-spaced. The final paper is DUE by May 14th, Thursday 10am. Please submit a soft copy at my email. Two formats are required: Microsoft Word/Open Office and PDF. Attach also your VeriGuide receipt (The university requires all papers to be checked by VeriGuide: https://academic.veriguide.org/academic/login_CUHK.jspx).

Course Breakdown

Under "Additional materials" I listed a longer number of readings for your own reference, in case you want to explore more in depth that week's topic, or in case you missed a class and would like to keep track of the arguments discussed.

Week 1 (January 9): Course Introduction
Required readings:
> No required readings for the first week, but please have a look at the additional materials.

Additional materials:

Week 2 (January 16): The Importance of Sports
Required readings:

Additional materials:
- Graeber, David. 2014. “What’s the Point If We Can’t Have Fun?”, The Baffler, no. 24, January.

Week 3 (January 23): The Creation of Modern Sports
Required readings:

Additional materials:
From January 30th to February 13th: CLASSES CANCELLED
Extended Spring Festival Holidays due to COVID-19’s outbreak: No class/tutorial

Week 4 (February 20): The Rituals of Sports and Sports as Ritual
Required Readings:

Additional materials:

Week 5 (February 27): Sport, Ethics and Moral Education
Required Readings:

Additional materials:

Week 6 (March 5): Sports, Gender and Sexuality
Required readings:

Additional materials:
Week 7 (March 12): Sports, Body Politics and Bodily Regimes
(Guest: Dr. Elena Nichini, Anthropologist and Yoga Teacher, on Yoga Camps and Certifications)
Required readings:
Additional materials:

Week 8 (March 12): Sports, Power and Violence
Required Readings:
Additional materials:
  - Kath. Woodward. 2009. Embodied Sporting Practices; Regulating and Regulatory Bodies. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan. (only the uploaded sections)

Week 9 (March 26): Sports, Social Class and Ethnicity
(TBC guest: Eric Roberts from Parkour Practice Group)
Required Readings:
Additional materials:

From March 30th to April 3rd: Reading Week
CUHK’s Reading Week: no class/tutorial

Week 10 (April 9): Case Study on Kabaddi
(Guest special lecture by Prof. Tang Wyman, Anthropologist)
Required Readings:
Additional info:
(In the case usual lectures would be resumed) This class will be half lecture and half Kabaddi practice (New Asia Concource). Please carry some sportswear for today!! Prof. Tang will discuss mainly three points: a) How
Week 11 (April 16): Sports, National Identity, Nationalism and Politics

**Required Readings:**

**Additional materials:**

Week 12 (April 23): Sports and Globalization (passing through Colonialism)

**Required Readings:**

**Additional materials:**

Week 13 (April 30): Imagining the Future of Sports

(TBC guest: Andres Vesga, Movement advocate, and part of Ido Portal’s mentorship program)

**Required readings:**

**Additional materials:**
Week TBC: Students’ Ethnographic Project mini-presentations
The presentations should last around 5 minutes, followed by a brief Q&A. They should include 5 slides: 1) one photo and the title 2) what is the topic and why it interests you? 3) what is the broader relevance or the connections of your project? 4) A brief description of your “fieldsite”: where and how is it? 5) A few methodological hints: How are you gonna study it?

**Final due on/by Thursday, May 14th.**
Please submit a soft copy at montagner.hk_at_gmail.com by our usual lecture time.