

Sports Geography (GEOG -294) – Spring 2024

Tues/Thurs 1:20-2:50 pm, Old Main 010

Instructor

Eric D. Carter

Email

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Office Hours and Location

Wed 9:30-11:30 am, 1:15-4:15 pm

Carnegie 103

Course Description

The goal of this new seminar-style course is to examine the role of sports in society, taking a critical, interdisciplinary, and international approach anchored in human geography while incorporating fields like sociology, history, and media studies. Key themes of the course include identity, embodied experience, and space and place. How do sports instill or reinforce a sense of national identity, especially in international competitions like the Olympic Games or the soccer World Cup? How do some places become "hotbeds" of sporting talent? How does participation in sports reinforce or challenge hierarchies based on race-, gender-, and sexuality-based identities? How do "street sports" such as skateboarding or parkour promote radical engagements with urban public space? Is new stadium development (as we've seen in the Twin Cities in recent years) actually a good economic investment? And how do new stadiums transform local urban spaces? We will explore these questions in intensive class discussions based on academic texts, popular media accounts, and documentaries. We plan (tentatively) to have local field excursions (for example, to learn about local impacts of new stadium development in the Twin Cities and to gather ethnographic data on the gameday spectator experience). Students will have the opportunity to pursue their own sports geography interests more deeply in a final project. Prerequisites: none.

This course counts for major in Geography and the Social Science distribution requirement.

Required Readings

The following **book** is **required**:

Zirin, Dave (2021). *The Kaepernick Effect: Taking a Knee, Changing the World* (The New Press, 2021). Paperback ISBN: 978-1620977859. (available for purchase online).

Other required readings will be available via a course schedule Google Doc. Every week, I will give you specific reading assignments that are not fully detailed in the syllabus.

Class Format

In general, this class will be in a seminar style format, with very few lectures by the instructor. Thus, for most class meetings, my role as instructor is to facilitate a discussion. The purpose of discussion is to facilitate critical analysis of the academic work we're reading. In my opinion, the best discussions are those in which students: (1) listen to and learn from one another and build on what each other is saying;

(2) focus discussion on understanding the main argument of each reading and breaking down and analyzing this argument to see if it makes sense; (3) make connections between readings and other course materials; and (4) relate insight gained from reading and discussion to other texts or real life events. In sum, I want you to approach discussion as an ongoing scholarly debate in which we (as a community of scholars and learners) are attempting to advance our collective knowledge. Most weeks, one or two students from the class will play the role of discussion leader. Especially as the semester moves along, we will devote at least part of our meetings to discussing and working on the final research project.

Most days, I also plan for us to spend at least the first 15 minutes of class on a "warm-up" – showing videos or sharing "found objects" about sports (broadly speaking). This is meant to be fun opportunity to share some of your passion for sports.

Course Management Systems

This course does have a Moodle page, but I will be using Moodle sparingly (e.g., for submission of assignments). Instead, most resources in this class will be made available via Google apps (e.g. Google Docs), with a constantly updated [Course Outline](#) serving as the central node to connect to all the resources you'll need for the class, including readings, assignments, and other materials.

Assignments and Grading

1. **Attendance and Participation.** See below.
2. **Sports in Action essay.** Sometime before Week 11 of the semester, I expect you to attend a sporting event, either as a player or a spectator, and write a reflection essay on it. More details TBA.
3. **Reflection Essays.** On a weekly basis, from weeks 1-10, you will write a brief essay (300-500 words) offering your reflection on the readings and class discussions for the week. These essays will be due by 5 pm each **Friday**. Note that you do not have to write an essay every week, but you must complete **8** of them (out of 10 weeks available). The essays will be graded on content, style, and mechanics.
4. **Research Project.** Building on the themes, concepts, and methods from readings we discuss in class, you will write a medium-length paper (about 10-12 pages, double-spaced). More details TBA soon.

This is the breakdown of your overall course grade:

1. Attendance and Participation	15%
2. Sports in Action essay	5%
3. Reflection Essays (combined)	40%
4. Research Project (all components)	40%
TOTAL	100%

There are no exams in this course, but the final exam time is reserved for oral presentations on your research project.

Course Policies

Attendance and Participation

In this class, 15 percent of your grade derives from attendance and participation.

Attendance plays an essential role in learning, so you are warmly invited and expected to attend all class meetings. Attendance will be important not only for your learning, but also for our ability to build a community together and maintain a sense of connection and commitment to one another. Your presence in class matters. If you will not be in class for any reason, it is your responsibility to inform me in advance, or as early as possible, via email. It is also your responsibility to make up work you missed in your absence. In general, "participation" means speaking up, sharing your thoughts, and making yourself noticed in positive, productive, and supportive ways. It also means listening carefully and respectfully to your fellow students. It is important to remember that we all have different styles of expression. If you have not been able to participate in a class discussion for any reason but want to demonstrate your active engagement, please send me an email after class with a comment or an idea you had that you would have liked to share, but were not able to during class. Students with any concerns, questions, or need for consideration for flexibility should connect with me as soon as possible to determine an appropriate plan.

For this class, there are structured opportunities for you to participate and share your thoughts—in particular, a "warm-up" activity at the start of (almost) every class, where you can share videos or "found objects" that convey your interests in sports.

In-class discussions and anything not accounted for specifically as a graded assignment will be factored into your participation grade. Other ways to boost your participation grade include: coming to visit me in office hours, attending a relevant campus event (and writing a brief reaction paper to it), sending me links to articles or other resources that could be relevant for class, and so on.

Come Prepared!

Being part of this class means being prepared to participate fully in each day's activities. Those activities are spelled out clearly in the course outline and I'll be giving you frequent reminders about what we'll be doing in class on a given day. Please make sure to do the readings or consult other resources before class. The quality of in-class discussion and group work depends on your doing the assigned readings in advance. Do not be surprised if I call on you, unannounced, for your thoughts about an assigned reading. Only occasionally will class periods be taken up by lecture, and even then, you'll have a much better understanding of the material if you put in the work ahead of time.

Academic Integrity

As in every course, you will be expected to follow the college's policies on academic honesty: specifically, "Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of honesty in their college work. Forgery, cheating and plagiarism are serious offenses and students found guilty of any form of academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary action." For more details, see the college's guidelines on Academic Integrity (link [here](#)).

Special Accommodations

If you have a physical or learning disability that will require special accommodations, please contact me to discuss arrangements. All conversations will be confidential. You will also need to meet with a representative from Disability Services, which determines accommodations. They can be contacted here: disabilityservices@macalester.edu .

Communication

You are welcome to come see me during my scheduled office hours. If you can't meet during those times, please send me an email or call my office and we'll schedule an appointment. In general, I answer emails within 24 hours. But I always prefer to discuss important matters in person, not electronically or by phone. Also, make sure that you check your email frequently, because I do send email messages – either from my own email address or via Moodle – frequently to the class.

Use of Electronic Devices in Class

Laptops are permitted in class but only for note-taking and for activities in class when specifically indicated. When we are having a lecture, discussion, student project presentation, or similar activity, I expect everyone's eyes and attention to be focused on that activity. You definitely should not be browsing the web, checking email, doing your homework, and so on during these class activities. **The use of cell phones is strictly prohibited: no calling, texting or other uses of your cell phone during class time.** I am only asking for three hours of your time each week to focus deeply on the course subject matter, so please consider the classroom to be a screen-free zone, unless we're using devices specifically for class activities.

Recording Policy

The Macalester College Classroom Recording (MCCR) policy sets forth community expectations regarding the recording (whether audio, video, or streaming) of class lectures, discussions, office hours, and other course-related activity. As an academic community, we value the free exchange of ideas and the privacy of community members. We are also committed to providing appropriate accommodations to students who require recorded lectures as an academic adjustment for documented disabilities. The MCCR policy balances the legitimate uses of classroom recording, the intellectual property of the faculty, and the privacy of individual students and faculty. The entire policy can be found [here](#). In short, the policy requires students to submit a completed Student Recording Agreement to the appropriate office (Disability Services for students with approved accommodations; Academic Programs and Advising for all others) prior to engaging in any type of recording. The faculty member who signed the Recording Agreement (or is notified by Disability Services that recording will occur as an accommodation) is responsible for notifying the class that recording will be occurring. The required Student Agreement Recording form is available [here](#).

Religious Observance

Students may need to take part in religious observances that occur during the semester. If you have a religious observance/practice that conflicts with your participation in the course, please contact me before the end of the second week of the semester to discuss appropriate accommodations.

Health and Wellness

You are encouraged to make your health and well-being a priority throughout this semester and during your career at Macalester. Taking care of yourself will help you engage more fully in your academic experience. Remember that beyond being a student, you are a human being carrying your own experiences, thoughts, emotions, and identities with you. It is important to acknowledge any stressors you may be facing, which can be mental, emotional, physical, cultural, financial, etc., and how they can have an impact on your academic experience. I encourage you to remember that you have a body with needs. In the classroom, eat when you are hungry, drink water, use the restroom, and step out if you are upset and need some air. Please do what is necessary so long as it does not impede your or others' ability to be mentally and emotionally present in the course. Outside of the classroom, sleeping, moving your body, and connecting with others can be strategies to help you be resilient at Macalester. If you are having difficulties maintaining your well-being, please don't hesitate to contact me and/or find support from Health & Wellness Center. I have included contact information for health and wellness resources on the course Moodle page.

Inclusivity

I am committed to providing a safe and equitable learning environment that welcomes and supports everybody. As learners and teachers, we all bring various experiences and life contexts to this course. These differences will emerge in class and be part of what we negotiate and benefit from as a developing community. I acknowledge that academic institutions have evolved within a historical context that privileges certain students over others, and in this classroom, we will do our best to be aware of how these

inequities may manifest. I hope you will feel comfortable coming to us to express any concerns or suggestions; this is an iterative process that requires the collaboration of all.

Late work

You must turn in your work on time. I will indicate due dates for every assignment, and you must respect them. Late work will be graded down 10% (or a whole letter grade) for each day after the due date. For other, extenuating circumstances (e.g. illness, accident, bereavement, religious observance, etc.), I will consider granting extensions on a case-by-case basis. Remember, for the weekly essay responses, you have five “bye weeks” that you can use, so you don’t have to write an essay every week.

Turning in Assignments

I will be using electronic submission for most assignments. For a given assignment, I will create a "dropbox" on Moodle that has a specific time that work is due (and the dropbox then "closes"). Please do not submit assignments via email or as "shared" documents in Google Docs.

Citation Style

Unless otherwise specified, we will be using the APA (American Psychological Association) style for in-text citations and bibliography. Refer to the Purdue OWL resource on APA style citations [here](#).

COURSE SCHEDULE AT-A-GLANCE

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
0	15 (JANUARY) MLK DAY	16	17	18 FIRST DAY Introductions and Course Business	19
1	22	23 Key Concepts and Themes	24	25 Place Identity and Sports	26 Reflection 1
2	29	30 Methods for Sports Geography	31	1 (FEBRUARY) Nationalism in Geography	2 Reflection 2
3	5	6 National Identity and Sports	7	8 Nationalism and Sports: The Olympic Games	9 Reflection 3
4	12 ← Super Bowl Sunday (Feb. 11)	13 South Africa, Apartheid, and Sports	14	15 Citizenship and International Athletes	16 Reflection 4 <i>Matt Jackson '92, Lanegran Day speaker</i>
5	19	20 Race, Sports, and Class in the US <i>Kaepernick Effect</i>	21	22 NO CLASS (Prof. Carter out of town) Continue <i>Kaepernick Effect</i>	23 Reflection 5
6	26	27 Dave Zirin '96, guest Special lecture: "Sports Futurism" at 4:45 pm	28	29 Sports and Gender	1 (MARCH) Reflection 6
7	4	5 Mascot Controversies	6	7 Is Big-Time College Sports out of Control?	8 Reflection 7
SPRING BREAK (March 14-18) <i>Minnesota State High School Girls' Basketball Tournament (if you're in town)</i>					

8	18	19 Stadiums and Urban Development (Prof. Lanegran, guest)	20 <i>MN State HS Boys' Basketball Tournament begins</i>	21 FIELD TRIP to Allianz Field <i>NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament begins</i>	22 Reflection 8 <i>NCAA Women's Basketball Tournament begins</i>
9	25	26 Should Stadiums Be Publicly Funded?	27	28 International Sports Mega-Events: Are They Worth It?	29 Reflection 9
10	1 (APRIL)	2 TBA	3	4 Street Sports and Urban Spaces	5 Reflection 10
11	8 <i>NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament final</i>	9 TBA – Students' choice	10 <i>Geography Honors Day</i>	11 TBA – Students' choice	12 Final day to submit "Sports in Action" essay
12	15	16 Project work	17	18 Project work	19
13	22	23 Oral presentations	24	25 Oral presentations	26
14	29	30 Study Day	1 (MAY) Study Day	2 Hold for oral presentations during exam period (1:30-3:30 pm)	3 Final Project Due

IMPORTANT NOTE: Detailed, constantly updated course schedule available [here](#). Follow this document closely, because it will have reading assignments, links to lecture notes, lab exercise assignments, and so on.