**WRPR0203/AMST0203 MEDIA SPORTS & IDENTITY**

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| **Instructor:**  Hector J. Vila, PhD  Davis Family Library, Office #224 (next to CTLR & Media Lab)  Phone: 443-2181  Email: [hvila@middlebury.edu](mailto:hvila@middlebury.edu)  **Course Location: AXN 220**  **Course DAYS & TIMES : T/R, 3-4:15**  **Communication btwn Us:**  If you email me, it may take me a full day to respond. You may also want to text me (802)989-8025, but please, first line state your name as I don’t respond to unsolicited texts. | **Office Hrs:**  Wednesdays: 12:30PM– 3:30PM  And by appointment. [Sign up here](https://meetme.so/HectorJVila).  **Technology in the Course:**  I am open to using computers during class, particularly for notetaking. There are times that I may say, *Google this* or *that.* But, I ask you NOT TO USE social media during class hrs.  It’s also possible that you use a phone to write and find things on the web. I’m good with that too, provided that your phone is NOT USED for socializing during class. |

**Course Description:**

In this course we will examine the relationship between media, sports, and the formulation of one’s identity. We will examine issues pertaining to gender identification, violence, and hero worship. Reading critical essays on the subject, studying media coverage of sporting events, and writing short analytical essays will enable us to determine key elements concerning how sports are contextualized in American culture. Student essays will form the basis of a more in-depth inquiry that each student will then present, using media, at the end of the course. 3 hrs. sem. **AMR, CW, NOR, SOC**

**Learning Goals:**

In this course we will examine the relationship between media, sports, and the formulation of identity, culturally and personally. We will examine issues pertaining to gender identification, violence, and hero worship. Reading critical essays on the subject, studying media coverage of sporting events, and writing short analytical essays will enable us to determine key elements concerning how sports are contextualized in American culture.

By the end of the course, I expect you to be able to:

* Describe, Define, Explain and Discuss the general challenges to *identity formation* when confronted by major ideals communicated *through* mediated sports;
* Develop your own ideas of how you’ve come to believe - and see - your world as you do;
* Be able to identify and evaluate some of the cultural assumptions in writing about sports.

**Course Materials:**

All of the articles for the course will be placed in a “readings” folder inside our course folder.

There are 2 full-length books, however: *Body Politic* by David Shields and *Forty-Million Dollar Slaves* by William C. Rhoden.

**Course Structure:**

Being present and participating is critical in a seminar; however, not everyone is comfortable speaking in class. Thus, I have designed several alternative ways to engage with the material, your peers, and your professor: class discussions; in-class, small group discussions; writing assignments; one-on-one discussions with me. These 5 alternatives should provide for you pleasant, creative – and non-stressful – ways of engaging with each other, course materials, and your professor.

We will have writing workshops to critique each other’s essays (see syllabus). *Body Politic*, the first reading, establishes how to write about sports, media, and identity. We will closely examine the text for ideas, but also for methodology to help our writing. I will also ask you to write in class—I will give you prompts to help you focus in on an idea, a subject—based on our discussions about the readings.

As you can tell, and since I’m not giving you traditional assignments—*write about subject A*, for instance—it is important for you to be in class and alert as your writing will grow from the discussions and the in-class writing prompts.

Closer to a final deadline for a piece of writing, of course, I am also available for personal critique, advise, and suggestions.

*Grading:*

I want each of you to do your best; sometimes, grades get in the way. To level the “grading playing field,” I want us to have a *Contract* between us. You tell me what you want to achieve in the course, which includes what you want to achieve with your writing, and we’ll grade that. Along the way, I will comment and grade your writing.

Each week, we will have *in-class writing workshops* for the purpose of peer editing. Guidelines will be provided.

*The Contract is DUE 9/3/2019 – FIRST CLASS*

*Parts of the Contract*:

* A description of at least 5 goals you want to achieve by the end of the course.
* These goals should include: something about your writing – what level of understanding you wish to achieve in your writing; how you intend on using readings in your essays; how you intend on participating – in class, in groups, in conversations with me.
* These points of engagement should lead to a desired outcome: What do you want to know by the end of the course? Where do you see yourself in terms of writing and your knowledge and understanding of the power of mediated sports? And, where do you want to be at the end of the course in terms of knowledge of the subject and how it relates to you, your identity-formation?

*How I Grade:*

* How will you contribute to the building of a community in this course focused on the questions and challenges posed by mediated sports?
* Does each piece have a title?
* Is language clear, simple, and straightforward, using the least amount of words to get an idea across?
* Is there evidence of explicit examples to fully engage ideas?
* Is there evidence of logical and coherent transitions from one idea to the next?
* Is there evidence of texts from the readings in the essays and are these appropriately analyzed?
* Do the uses of texts *fit* stylistically into each piece?

**Diversity and Inclusivity:**

Middlebury College recognizes and supports the standards set forth in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, as amended, and similar state laws (hereinafter "applicable law" or "law[s]"), which are designed to eliminate discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities. Disabilities may include physical or mental impairments which substantially limit one or more of a person's major life activities, and which necessitate modifications to the facilities, programs, or services of the College. Middlebury College is committed to making reasonable accommodations for qualifying students, faculty, and employees with disabilities as required by applicable laws.

Please visit the [Diversity and Inclusivity website](http://www.middlebury.edu/student-life/community-living/diversity-inclusivity/american-disability-act/policy) to learn more.

**Relevant Policies:**

Academic Integrity: As an academic community devoted to the life of the mind, Middlebury requires of every student complete intellectual honesty in preparation and submission of all academic work. Details of our Academic Honesty, Honor Code, and Related Disciplinary Policies are available in [Middlebury’s handbook](http://www.middlebury.edu/about/handbook).

[Honor Code Policy and Pledge](http://www.middlebury.edu/about/handbook/ug-college-policies/ug-policies/academics/acad-honesty): Faculty members may define additional actions as Academic Honesty violations for their particular departments and courses as appropriate.

*Note: I will speak to this in class: Given the nature of this course, the honor pledge does not have to be included in your essays. It’s enough to know that you are honoring the Code as we work together.*

**WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:**

The **5 WRITING** assignments *will not* be delivered to you in the traditional manner; that is, assignments will evolve from the following: reading notes, class notes, in-class writing, and discussions.

**Your first writing piece will be contract that you set up with me**. In this one-page contract, you will describe the goals you’re setting for yourself in this course.

Throughout the course, we will discuss these goals and see how you’re doing.

Your final writing assignment will be a one-page *evaluation* of your goals, my comments on your writing, and our one-on-one meetings where we discuss your writing, as well as goals. This is your **5thwriting assignment.**

***In-class writing assignments***, which will be free writes that follow prompts, will be used to begin discussions about a text and a subject.

These in-class writings will serve to help you focus on a topic of your choosing. ***You will develop your own topics and points of view*,** stemming from your first piece***.***

Each piece of writing should always include something personal – what you know and have experienced; something from the readings in the course **(except for the contract)**, examples; and a well-argued – and well developed – discussion that addresses issues raised by the material in the course and your experiences with sports, as a participant and as a spectator.

Each assignment leads to the next. In effect, you will be writing a very real non-fiction story, in chapters – think of each assignment as a chapter – concerning your relationship with *the messages* from mediated sports and your sense of self.

After each writing, you'll receive my comments. You will then revise, but continue to add to the piece as per in-class prompts (broad ideas). Thus, by the end you could have 30 - 40 pages of work; this work will likely be memoir-like, as well as academic and reflective, engaging the personal and the public. It will also be critical, in that you’ll delve deeply into the subject of each of your pieces.

I'm looking to see how you think in language; how you are able to maintain a reader's interest; how you move from the personal to the public; that is, how you make what you know and have experienced relevant to the rest of us. This is writing. Achieving all these intricate and interesting levels guarantees an "A." I don't compare one writer to another. What you give me in the first writing has to be really strong so that I can see where you are; this enables me to then establish personal writing benchmarks for you. How you reach these goals, which should be described in your contract, establishes your grade.

The first essay after the contract is therefore critical. Our first full-length book, *Body Politic*, by David Shields, is our model for this kind of writing.

Here’s what you need to consider, **the prompt for the first piece**:

When did you first participate in sports? How old were you? Where were you? Create a full description of the moment as best you can. When did you first engage is spectatorship? Did you relate to the relationships between participation and spectatorship? What role did sports – as a participant and as a spectator -- play in your life? Now, having said that, at what moment – describe the experience – did you realize that sports were more than building character, learning how to deal with adversity, healthy, etc., and something else too, something that might open doors, give you a leg up when others – non-athletes – had to rely on other extracurricular activities to be noticed? And, finally, as a consequence, what lasting ideas did these early experiences leave you with?

Going forward, after we begin the course you may want to consider the following:

* After experiencing the readings how do you feel?
* What can you begin to add or how can you use the readings to augment critical ideas you originally had?
* Can you find one or two ideas in the texts that can, perhaps, engage you in such a way as to add ideas, questions and concerns to your evolution?

**Course Calendar:**

**Part 1: The Cult of Distraction**

* **September 3 —September 12/Writing Workshops 17/19**

First Essay Due 09/22 by midnight

**The FIRST WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE 1/13, by Midnight**

**PROMPT:** When did you first participate in sports? How old were you? Where were you? Create a full description of the moment as best you can. When did you first engage is spectatorship? Did you relate to the relationships between participation and spectatorship? What role did sports – as a participant and as a spectator -- play in your life? Now, having said that, at what moment – describe the experience – did you realize that sports were more than building character, learning how to deal with adversity, healthy, etc., and something else too, something that might open doors, give you a leg up when others – non-athletes – had to rely on other extracurricular activities to be noticed? And, finally, as a consequence, what lasting ideas did these early experiences leave you with?

*Readings for Part 1:*

Shields, David. *Body Politic: The Great American Sports Machine.*

[Rose, Eva & James Friedman*. Television Sports as Mas(s)culine Cult of Distraction*](https://books.google.com/books?id=MhMLbP9N-7YC&pg=PA1&lpg=PA1&dq=Eva++Rose+%26+James+Friedman+in+books&source=bl&ots=JDOPflRko5&sig=ACfU3U1FOWDkYb5QTeWOsy9wGV1Iiq9v0g&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjsyty-h7_jAhVJmlkKHeZ9CqQQ6AEwC3oECAgQAQ#v=onepage&q=Eva%20%20Rose%20%26%20James%20Friedman%20in%20books&f=false)

**Part 2: Race & Racism**

* **September 24 —October 10/Writing Workshops 15/17**

Second Essay Due 10/20 by midnight

**The SECOND WRITING PROMPT:** Revise and add to your first piece, based on my comments. Take three ideas from any of the texts in the following section of readings and now move your story along: how do you feel? what do you see? what are the challenges, concerns, obstacles? Can you actually use these ideas, the three ideas you've found, and describe the world as you see it? Are you hopeful? Pessimistic? Is it all too overwhelming? Based on the first writing and your sense of yourself, what's different -- or the same -- now and how has your perspective(s) been challenged? In other words, what would your second chapter look like since now you’ve read some critical material?

*Readings for Part 2*

Boyd, Todd. “*The Day the Niggaz Took Over*: *Basketball, Commodity Culture, and Black Maculinity.”* (Handout)

Rhoden, William C. *Forty Million Dollar Slaves: The Rise, Fall, and Redemption of the Black Athlete.*

NOTE: I will assign groups to present different chapters of this book

**Part 2: Gender Identities and Sexuality in Sports**

* **October 22 —November 7/Writing Workshops 11/12&14**

Third Essay Due 11/17 by midnight

Giulianotti, Richard. *“Gender Identities and Sexuality in Sport.”* (Handout)

Holmlund, Chris. *“Visible Difference and Flex Appeal: The Body, Sex, Sexuality and Race in the ‘Pumping Iron’ Films.”* (Handout)

***Note: we will also see clips of the movies to compare and to better understand Holmlund’s argument.***

# Heggie, Vanessa. *“Testing sex and gender in sports: reinventing, reimagining and reconstructing histories.”* (Handout)

**Part 3: Sports, Media, and the Politics of Identity**

* **November 19 —December 5**

Fourth Essay Due 11/17 by midnight: This is your course evals, which address your contracts.

Jenkins, Henry. *“‘Never Trust a Snake’: WWF Wrestling as Masculine Melodrama.”* (Handout)