

Race in Sport Film

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CES 222
Wilson 6
W 3:00-6:00
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Office Hours: Wednesdays 9:00-10:30
and by appointment

This course uses sport films to map the contours of race and racism in post-civil rights America. It is particularly concerned with popular representations of identity, opportunity, and equality in the world of sport, and what they in turn reveal about dominant understandings of race relations in the aftermath of the civil rights movement. Sport films offer a unique and powerful way to glimpse the shape and force of color-blindness and the new racism, because they play up and play off accepted ideas, what might be best termed cultural myths, about history, society, and power. Class discussions, readings, and activities push students to ask questions about the ways in which race and racism have shaped the play of sport, while probing how the cinematic representation of sporting worlds, in turn, advance and enforce the means and meanings of race. Attention pivots around stereotypes, stories, and structures, that is, the interplay of difference and power within sport and films about it.

After introductory discussions of race, sport, and cinema, the course pairs one or more films with readings to illuminate a set of key themes. Specifically, it moves from a consideration of past and present representations of integration and the centrality of nostalgia for the golden era of pure, amateur (and white dominated) athletics to the fixation with urban blackness and the prospect of escape through individual effort and interracial relationships. Against this backdrop, attention turns to prominent elements of sport films intent to reclaiming sports: kids, comedy, marginal heroes, and nationalist narratives. The course closes with a consideration of documentary sport film as a critique of mainstream movies.

Objectives

This course has five goals. It seeks to (1) enhance understandings of race, sport, and film; (2) encourage students to think about what it means to play and watch sports; (3) clarify and problematize the meanings, histories, and practices of race; (4) enable students to locate themselves as participants and spectators; (5) improve critical thinking and communicative skills.

Expectations and Policies

This course emphasizes active learning. It stresses discovery, analysis, and application through listening talking, reading, reflecting, and writing. It sets aside lecturing in favor of interaction and discussion. Given the subject of the class, our explorations demand respect and sensitivity;

open and honest communication will prove essential to understanding. All participants are expected to come to class prepared, to be engaged once in class, and to contribute to our ongoing discussions. A few points of etiquette warrant reiteration:

- **Treat others with respect and courtesy.**
- **Show up to class on time. Students arriving late or leaving early disrupt the class and should not anticipate receiving credit for attendance.**
- **Do the readings and assignments.**
- **Do not have private conversation in class.**
- **Do not read the paper or work on assignments for other classes.**
- **Turn your cell phones off.**

This is a reading intensive, discussion oriented class, thus I expect each student to carefully read and think critically about the assigned readings and come to class prepared to actively participate in class discussion, group activities, and individual writing assignments. Student participation will be evaluated on quality as well as quantity. If you remain quiet throughout the semester or rarely express yourself, you can expect to your participation grade to suffer accordingly. Of course, one cannot participate, if s/he does not attend class. Students are expected to attend every class and will be awarded points for each day that they do. Missing class for legitimate, documented reasons (such as school sponsored event or illness) will be excused; oversleeping, job interview, work, dental visit and the like are important to be sure, but not legitimate reasons to miss class.

Academic Integrity

PLAGARISM OR CHEATING OF ANY KIND ON ANY ASSIGNMENT OR EXAM WILL NOT BE TOLLERATED AND WILL RESULT IN A FAILING GRADE IN THE COURSE. (Consult the WSU Student Handbook for further details). In other words, do your own work. If using the ideas, work or wording of another in written assignments acknowledge the source. Do not offer or accept assistance during an examination.

Accommodation for Disabilities

I am committed to providing assistance to help you be successful in this course. Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. Please go to the Disability Resource Center (DRC) during the first two weeks of every semester to seek information or to qualify for accommodations. All accommodations **MUST** be approved through the DRC, located in the Administration Annex Bldg, Room 205. To make an appointment with a disability counselor, please call 335-3417.

Office Hours

As noted above, I will hold regular office hours each week (Wednesdays 9:00-10:30). Come see me if you are intrigued by something you read about for class or that was said in class and would like to read more about it. Come see me if you are puzzled or troubled about something that was said in class. Come see me if you need help with the term project, writing assignments, or readings. Come see me to talk about your grade. Come see me if you have ideas about how to make the course better.

Email

I check my email at least once a day. If you cannot make my office hours or simply find it more convenient to use electronic mail, let me know via computer what is troubling, perplexing, and/or inspiring you.

Grading

Attendance (15%)

You are expected to attend class every day, arrive on time and participate in an informed and consistent manner. Anything less will not be tolerated and will result in problems in this class. After one absence, each missed class will lead to a 5% deduction (per day) from your overall grade. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of class, so lateness will potentially lead to an absence for that day. If you are absent from class, it is your responsibility to check on announcements made while you were away.

Participation (15%)

In order for this class to be productive you will need to come to class each and every day prepared to discuss the material. This requires more than simply doing the reading (WHICH IS ESSENTIAL), but arriving at class with a readiness to discuss the issues for that day. Recognizing that silence is not always a result of a lack of interest or preparation, I envision participation along many lines. Participating in class not only consists of talking, but also includes **listening** (please do not talk while others are speaking), interacting with your peers, and contributing to our classroom energy (body language, being engaged – no newspapers).

Reading and Responding (15%)

At the start of each class period, students will turn in a one page, typed response paper that should (a) briefly summarize the assigned reading(s), (b) identify at least one question and one comment on it, and (c) connect it ongoing discussions of race and sport film in a few sentences.

Midterm (25%)

Final (30%)

Course Outline

16 January: Racism Then

Overview of the course.

Unforgivable Blackness

C. Richard King and Charles F. Springwood, "Posting-Up" in Beyond the Cheers.

David J. Leonard and C. Richard King, "Screening the Social" in Visual Economies

23 January: Sport and Cinema

The Program

Aaron Baker, "Introduction," in Contesting Identities.

Norman K. Denzin, "The Cinematic Racial Order," in Reading Race.

30 January: Racism Today

Any Given Sunday

Aaron Baker, "Conculsion: The Big Game" in Contesting Identities.

C. Richard King and Charles F. Springwood, "Body and Soul: Physicality, Disciplinarity and the Overdetermination of Blackness" in Beyond the Cheers.

6 February: Urban Dystopias

He Got Game

Michael D. Giardina and Cameron McCarthy, "The Popular Racial Order of Urban America: Sport, Identity, and the Politics of Culture" *Cultural Studies & Critical Methodologies*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 145-173 (2005). (Reader)

13 February: Escape Attempts

Hoop Dreams

C.L. Cole and Samantha King, "Representing Black Masculinity and Urban Possibilities: Racism, Realism, and Hoop Dreams" (Reader)

20 February: Harmony in the 'Hood?

White Men Can't Jump

Norman Denzin, Race, "Women and Violence in the Hood," in Reading Race.

Aaron Baker, "From He Got Game to We Got Next: Gender in American Sports Films"

27 February: Magic

The Legend of Bagger Vance

5 March: Getting Civil Rights Wrong?

Remember the Titans

Aaron Baker, "Sport Films, History, and Identity" in Contesting Identities.

C. Richard King and Charles F. Springwood, "White Out: Erasures of Race in College Athletics" in Beyond the Cheers.

19 March: Nostalgia: Escaping the Present Tense

Hoosiers

Paino, T.D. (2001). "Hoosiers in a Different Light: Forces of Change Versus the Power of Nostalgia," *Journal of Sport History* 28, 63-80. (Reader)

26 March: Refighting the Cold War in a Time of Terror

Miracle

David J. Leonard, "Is This Heaven" in Visual Economies.

2 April: Recuperations

Dogtown and Z-Boyz

Kyle W. Kusz, “Dogtown and Z-Boys” in Visual Economies.

9 April: Neoliberal Fantasies

Coach Carter

Friday Night Lights

Jared Sexton, “The Field of Fantasy and the Court of Appeal” in Visual Economies.

16 April: Transnational Flows

Bend it Like Beckham

Michael Giardina, “‘Bending it like Beckham’ in the Global Popular” in Visual Economies.

23 April: Is documentary a meaningful alternative?

In Whose Honor

Chiefs

C. Richard King and Charles F. Springwood, “‘Kill the Indians, Save the Chief: Native American Mascots and Imperial Identities’” in Beyond the Cheers.

C. Richard King, “Vanishing Points” in Visual Economies.