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Office: Burdine 568
Class Meets: TH 3:30-5pm on Zoom
Office Hours: By appointment

WGS 340: Women, Gender, and Sport in the U.S.

Course Description:

During a Presidential Debate in 2016, then-candidate Donald Trump referred to disparaging remarks he had made about women as “locker room talk.” This phrase was meant to both rationalize his rhetoric and put people at ease—locker room talk is normal, all guys do it, and it is just harmless fun. Various professional male athletes and coaches took offense to this use of the phrase and defended their own locker rooms as spaces that are diverse, inclusive, and devoid of such commentary. But, despite these defenses, the very invocation of the phrase “locker room talk” speaks to broader narratives of athletics and athletic spaces as hypermasculine and a catalyst for representations of hegemonic masculinity. Consequently, the locker room becomes a space that is absent of women’s voices, despite the significant presence of women’s participation in sport.

This gendered conception of the locker room serves as the backdrop for this course, which has two particular objectives. First, we will locate histories and narratives of women in sport to counter long-held beliefs that athletics were and are strictly masculine endeavors. Second, we will move beyond the location of these narratives and theorize about how sport has and continues to produce constructions of gender and sexuality. Some key questions this course will pursue are: how has sport curated normative productions of gender, and how have historical actors used sport to contest these normative ideologies? What does the study of sport offer to broader histories of race, gender, and sexuality? How has sport been used to restrict or perpetuate conceptions and productions of sexuality? The assigned texts purport an intersectional analysis to these histories and narratives, and also draw from a number of scholarly disciplines. This provides an exhaustive and nuanced approach to histories of sport and allows us to better understand its significance historically and in our present-day society. The meaning of sport has changed over time and has influenced various communities in a number of ways. In this course, we will seek out these moments of difference and discuss how marginalized groups have used sport as a vehicle for resistance and agency, particularly through the lens of gender. Upon completion of this course, you will have a deeper understanding of the significance of sport within our society, and how sport is not just a mirror of conceptions of gender and sexuality, but an active producer of ideologies and identities.

Assignments:

- 1. Attendance (10%)**
- 2. Primary Source Analysis (25%)**
- 3. Final Paper (25%)**
- 4. Blog Project (25%)**
- 5. Participation (15%)**

Assignment Break-Down

Assignment 1: Discussion Boards (15%)

Throughout the course of the semester, you will engage in weekly discussion boards on Canvas. I will provide the discussion prompt, such as a series of questions, contemporary articles, or multi-media sources. Just like the classroom, please be mindful of your language and remain thoughtful in how you engage with your classmates. Feel free to address any of our discussion board conversations during our Zoom lectures and think about how our discussions relate to the course readings.

Primary Source Analysis (20%)

Reading and analyzing primary source documents is one of the most important skills necessary to produce sound historical scholarship. In this short assignment (2 pages) you will articulate a brief summary of the primary source you have selected from the course and also provide your own analysis of the document. Things you should consider when reviewing a primary source are: what time period was the document produced? Who was the intended audience? Who authored the document? What was the purpose of or main objective/argument put forward? How does the document contribute to histories of Indigenous sport? Your response does not necessarily have to answer all of these questions, but you should demonstrate that you closely and critically read the selected document. Furthermore, a successful paper will demonstrate original thought and analysis that illuminates the importance of the particular text.

Blog Project (25%)

Early in the semester you will be asked to identify a group of readings that you are particularly interested in, then, with my help and the help of your peers who also identified that group of readings, you will create a blog post of 500-1000 words on your chosen topic. Your blog post must include information from the primary and secondary material from the course, but you are welcome to bring in any outside research you have completed. You are also encouraged to be creative with this assignment and format your post in any way you would like.

Final Paper (25%)

The final paper (5-7 pages) will serve as the written/individual portion of your podcast episode. In the paper, you will demonstrate your research and analysis on the topic you selected and offer an argument about the topic. In the final paper, you should consider how your topic fits into the larger narrative of gender and sexuality in sport and offer analysis on where you think the field of gender and sport studies is headed. You are also welcome to briefly write about your experience creating your blog post and discuss how this medium furthers public histories and knowledge.

Participation (15%)

The success of this course is predicated upon your attendance and active participation. It is imperative that you attend each class and come having done the assigned readings and prepared questions and analysis on the assigned texts. Classes will be primarily discussion based so your active engagement, both as listener and contributor, are of great importance. Our virtual

classroom will be centered on collaborative learning, and this is only possible if everyone is willing and able to participate. If you struggle with speaking in class, please do not hesitate to schedule an appointment with me so we can come up with some strategies to make class participation less stressful.

Cultural Diversity in the United States

This course carries the flag for Cultural Diversity in the United States. The purpose of the Cultural Diversity in the United States Flag is for students to explore in depth the shared practices and beliefs of one or more underrepresented cultural groups subject to persistent marginalization. In addition to learning about these diverse groups in relation to their specific contexts, students should engage in an active process of critical reflection. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from assignments covering the practices, beliefs, and histories of at least one underrepresented cultural group in the U.S.

Writing

This course carries the Writing Flag. Writing Flag courses are designed to give students experience with writing in an academic discipline. In this class, you can expect to write regularly during the semester, complete substantial writing projects, and receive feedback from your instructor to help you improve your writing. You will also have the opportunity to revise one or more assignments, and you may be asked to read and discuss your peers' work. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from your written work. Writing Flag classes meet the Core Communications objectives of Critical Thinking, Communication, Teamwork, and Personal Responsibility, established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

Using someone else's work in your own writing without giving proper credit is considered plagiarism, a serious form of academic dishonesty that can result in severe penalties. Copying someone else's work, buying a paper and submitting it as your own, copying and pasting text (even with changes), or borrowing images from an online source, are some examples of plagiarism. Even if you plagiarize accidentally, you can be held responsible and penalized.

Learning to cite sources appropriately is an important part of becoming a professional. When you are unsure about citation, you are encouraged to **ask your instructor** (who is already an expert in the discipline) what is appropriate in the context of your assignment. Consultants at The University Writing Center can also help you determine whether you are citing sources correctly—and they have helpful guides online for using direct quotations and paraphrasing. Reviewing those skills will help you feel confident that you are handling sources professionally in your writing.

You can read the University's definition of plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty in Sec. 11-402 of the Student Conduct Code. For more information, visit the Dean of Students' site.

Weeks One and Two: Course Introduction and Key Themes

August 27: Course Intro and Overview/Why Sport?

September 3: Amy Bass, “State of the Field: Sports History and the “Cultural Turn,” *Journal of American History* 101:1 (2014): 148-172.

Susan Cahn, “Sports Talk: Oral History and Its Uses, Problems, and Possibilities for Sport History,” *Journal of American History* 81: 2 (Sept. 1994): 594-609.

Rita Liberti, “Coming on [and Staying] Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth Century Women’s Sport,” *Journal of Sport History*, 40:2 (Summer 2013): 297-307.

Weeks Three and Four: Women in Sport Prior to the 20th Century

September 10: Jaime Schultz, *Women’s Sports: What Everyone Needs to Know*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pg. 1-12

Jan Todd, *Physical Culture and the Body Beautiful: Purposive Exercise in the Lives of American Women, 1800-1875*, (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1998), Introduction, Chapter 1
Available online

September 17: Debra A. Shattuck, *Bloomer Girls: Women Baseball Pioneers*, (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2017), Introduction, Chapter 2, Chapters 4-5
Available online

Primary Sources: Frances E. Willard, “How I Learned to Ride the Bicycle” in *Women and Sports in the United States: A Documentary Reader*, pg. 15-17

Week Five: The Turn of the 20th Century and the Rise of Women’s Athletic Participation

September 24: Susan Cahn, *Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women’s Sport*, (New York: The Free Press, 1994), Introduction, Chapter 1
Available online

Margaret A. Low, *Looking Good: College Women and Body Image, 1875-1930*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), Introduction, Chapter 1, Chapter 3
Available online

Primary Sources: Senda Berenson, “The Significance of Basket Ball for Women,” (1903), in *Women and Sports in the United States: A Documentary Reader*, pg. 53-55; Dudley A. Sargent, M.D., “Are Athletics Making Girls Masculine? A Practical Answer to a Question Every Girl Asks,” (1912), in *Women and Sports in the United States: A Documentary Reader*

Week Six: Gender, Empire, and Sport

October 1: Linda Peavy and Ursula Smith, “World Champions: The 1904 Girls’ Basketball Team From Fort Shaw Indian School,” in *Native Athletes in Sport and Society*, ed. C. Richard King, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), pg. 40-78

Philip J. Deloria, "‘I am of the Body,’ My Grandfather, Culture, and Sports," in *Indians in Unexpected Places*, (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2004), 109-135
Available online

Primary Sources: Excerpts from memoirs written by Native women to be provided by instructor

Weeks Seven and Eight: Intersection of Race and Gender in Women’s 20th Century Sport

October 8: Cindy Himes Gissendanner, "African-American Women and Competitive Sport, 1920-1960" in *Women, Sport, and Culture*, eds. Susan Birrell and Cheryl L. Cole, (Champaign: Human Kinetics, 1994), pg. 81-92

Susan Cahn, *Coming on Strong*, Chapter 5

October 15: Amira Rose Davis, "No League of Their Own: Baseball, Black Women and the Politics of Representation," *Radical History Review*, Issue 125, May 2016

Part IV, "Race and Ethnicity," in *Gender and Sport: A Reader*, eds. Sheila Scraton and Anne Flintoff, (New York: Routledge Press, 2001), pg. 107-155

Primary Sources: Excerpts from *I Always Wanted to be Somebody*, by Althea Gibson; see also "Playing Nice: Politics and Apologies in Women’s Sports," by Mary Jo Festle, pg. 23-32 in the DR

Week Nine: Conceptions of Masculinity in Sport

October 22: Elliot Gorn, *The Manly Art: Bare-Knuckle Prize Fighting in America*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), Part 1 (pg. 34-68), Part 6 (pg. 179-206)
Available online

Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), Introduction, Chapter 5
Available online

Lois Bryson, "Sport and the Maintenance of Masculine Hegemony," in *Women, Sport, and Culture*, pg. 47-64

Ben Carrington, *Race, Sport, and Politics: The Sporting Black Diaspora*, (London: Sage Publications 2010), Introduction, Chapter 3
Available online

Primary Sources: Theodore Roosevelt, "The Strenuous Life," speech given in Chicago Illinois in 1899

Week Ten: Sexuality and Sport

October 29: Susan Cahn, *Coming On Strong*, Chapters 7-8

Susan Cahn, "Crushes, Competition, and Closets: The Emergence of Homophobia in Women's Physical Education," in *Women, Sport, and Culture*, pg. 327-340

Heather Skyes, "Queering Theories of Sexuality in Sport Studies," in *Sport, Sexualities and Queer/Theory*, ed. Jayne Caudwell, (New York: Routledge Press, 2006), pg. 13-32

Available online

Heidi Eng, "Queer Athletes and Queering in Sport," in *Sport Sexualities and Queer/Theory*, pg. 49-61

Available online

Primary Sources: Peruse the various stories in Part V of the DR on Sexuality and Sport

Week Eleven: Gender and Sexuality in Sport in a Global Context

November 5: Vicente Diaz, "'Fight Boys till the Last': Football and the Remasculinization of Indigeneity in Guam," *Pacific Diaspora: Island Peoples in the United States and the Pacific*, Paul Spickard, Joanne Rondilla and Deborah Hippolite-Wright, eds. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press: 167-194.

Available online

Joel Franks, "Pacific Islanders and American Football: Hula-Hula Girls, the Throwin Samoan, and the Rock." *International Journal of the History of Sport*, Special Issue: Pacific Sport. 26:16(December 2009), pg. 2397-2411.

Ty P. Kawika Tengan, "The Return of Ku? Re-membering Hawaiian Masculinity, Warriorhood, and Nation," in *Performing Indigeneity*, pg. 206-246

Brendan Hokowhitu, "Haka: Colonized Physicality, Body-Logic, and Embodied Sovereignty," in *Performing Indigeneity*, pg. 273-304

Shona M. Thompson, "Challenging the Hegemony: New Zealand Women's Opposition to Rugby and the Reproduction of a Capitalist Patriarchy," in *Women, Sport, and Culture*, pg. 213-220

Primary Sources: Example of a Haka: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vnvI6V-TtLs>

Example of a Hula Dance: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Xr1Wd17w-g

Weeks Twelve and Thirteen: Gender, Sexuality, and Sport in the Post Title IX Era

November 12: Eileen McDonagh and Laura Pappano, *Playing with the Boys: Why Separate is not Equal in Sports*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), Chapter 3

Available online

Kate Fagan, *The Reappearing Act: Coming Out as Gay on a College Basketball Team Led By Born-Again Christians*, (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2014), Chapters 1-8

November 19: Readings TBA

Primary Sources: For this week, each student should come to class with a contemporary source that in some way addresses issues of gender and sexuality in sport; this can be an article, video, social media post, etc.

Week Fourteen: Thanksgiving Break

Week Fifteen: So, Does Sport Matter?

December 3: Final class, course wrap-up