PHIL 210 - Philosophy of Sport
Winter 2012 Course Syllabus

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**Course Description**
This class will examine prevailing philosophical ideas related to the meanings, functions and purposes of sport in its various social settings. Among our primary concerns will be the evolving relationship between major sports and the societies in which they are embedded. We will examine to what degree sport both mirrors, and helps produce, larger social trends, and ask just how much the games we play (and watch) tell us about ourselves and the world around us.

We will also consider several arguments of philosophers who have offered definitions of sport, and examined ethical and epistemological issues in sport that pertain to its current practice.

In other words, we will take both a *philosophical* and *sociological* approach to sport, aiming both to arrive to clear definitions of key concepts and (where appropriate) to critically analyze sport's relationship with its social surroundings, including most prominently its relationship with the vehicle by which sport has come to be so powerful an institution in society, the commercial media.

**Statement of Goals:**

The student should emerge from the class with:

1. an understanding of how philosophical reflection can be valuable for addressing questions that arise from the practice of sport in contemporary society;
2. a summary understanding of the influential theoretical perspectives [for which philosophy provides the basis] that have shaped the evolution of theories of sportive practice;
3. the ability to clearly articulate and subject to criticism the arguments confronted in this class;
4. an introduction to the role played by media in enmeshing major and professional sport in society; and
5. an introduction to the sometimes-difficult-to-see political and ideological elements of sports and sports fandom in society.

Course Outline

Weeks 1-3: What is Sport?
Readings:
3. Tricky Triad: Games, Play and Sport, Bernard Suits
6. Practice and Prudence, W. Miller Brown
7. Moral Liberalism and the Atrophy of Sport: Autonomy, Desire and Social Irresponsibility, M. Andrew Holowchak
Other Readings: The Nature of the Virtues, Alasdair MacIntyre

QUIZ #1

Week 4: Can the Language of Sport Tell Us Anything About its 'Meaning'?
5. A Matter of Life and Death: Some Thoughts on the Language of Sport, Jeffrey O. Segrave
21. Into the End Zone For a Touchdown: A Psychoanalytic Consideration of Professional Sport, Alan Dundes

Weeks 5-6: Ethics: What Effect Does Cheating Have on Sport?
15. Can Cheaters Play the Game? Craig K. Lehman
24. Paternalism, Drugs and the Nature of Sport, W.M. Brown
25. On Performance-Enhancing Substances and the Unfair Advantage Argument, Roger Gardner
26. 'Aretism' and Pharmacological Ergogenic Aids in Sports, M. Andrew Holowchak

QUIZ #2 [take-home]

Weeks 7-10: Sport, Politics, Crime and Society
29. Is Our Admiration For Sports Heroes Fascistoid? Torbjorn Tannsjo
41. Sport in the Larger Scheme of Things, William Morgan
Other Readings/Topics:
--Excerpts From *Football and American Identity*, Gerhard Falk
--The NFL and the Mafia, Dan Moldea
--Moldea vs. the New York Times, Dan Moldea
--Excerpts from *Bad Sports: How Owners are Ruining the Games We Love*, Dave Zirin

**FILM:** *Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Mass Media*
**FILM:** *Not Just a Game*, featuring Dave Zirin
**FILM:** *The Tillman Story*, Amir Bar-lev
**FILM:** *Militainment, Inc*, Roger Stahl

**Last Day of Class: QUIZ # 3 [take-home]**

**Grading**
The three quizzes will each comprise 25% of your grade. The remaining 25% of your grade will be taken from classroom participation, the completion of homework assignments and (perhaps) an oral presentation in the second half of the term. Notice will be given at least one week in advance of all quizzes.

**Changes to Syllabus:**
I reserve the right to make additions, subtractions of other changes to the syllabus at any time, and I will always notify students as soon as possible after a decision to revise has been made.

**Academic Integrity:**
Students will be expected to become familiar with and abide by Drexel University’s policies regarding Academic Honesty. All forms of academic misconduct including cheating, plagiarism, and fabrication must be avoided. Please review Drexel’s Academic Integrity policy at [http://www.drexel.edu/studentlife/judicial/honesty.html](http://www.drexel.edu/studentlife/judicial/honesty.html). For a fuller explanation of cheating, plagiarism and fabrication see [http://www.drexel.edu/provost/policies/academic_dishonesty.asp](http://www.drexel.edu/provost/policies/academic_dishonesty.asp).

**Students with Disabilities**
Students with Disabilities who wish to request special accommodations in this class are asked to consult the Office of Disability Services if they have not done so already: [http://www.drexel.edu/oed/disabilityResources/](http://www.drexel.edu/oed/disabilityResources/)
Course Drop Policy

Please consult http://www.drexel.edu/provost/policies/course_drop.asp for more information.