

SCAR 2SP3 (ANTHROP: 2EE3): Sport and/as Religion
Term 2 (Winter 2021)
Course Syllabus

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Instructor: Paul Arnold
E-mail: arnolp2@mcmaster.ca
Office hours: TBD
Lectures: Online via Avenue to Learn

TA(s): TBD

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Course Description

Sports and religion are prominent and persistent features of our modern society. What is it about sports and religion that gives them such staying power? In this course, we will treat sports and religion as dialogue partners to explore what religion can teach us about sports and what sports can teach us about religion. We will dive into topics such as cultural identity, religious experiences, political activism, secular religions, body modification, death and more to get a better handle on how sports and religions function as “world-making” activities in our modern world.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Appreciate the similarities and differences between sport and religion in modern society;
2. Understand a number of important concepts in the contemporary study of religion;
3. Identify and reflect on the social, political and ethical issues that intersect both sport and religion in our modern society;
4. Critically read and engage with texts and films as they relate to sport and religion.

Required Materials and Texts

There are no required textbooks in this course. All readings, videos and recordings will be available on the Avenue to Learn course website or accessible through McMaster library or publicly accessible online.

Course Structure

This course is asynchronous and online. Lectures will be pre-recorded and uploaded each week on Monday throughout the term. There will be no mandatory live lectures or tutorials or

“in-class” components to the course but there will be weekly readings and materials that students will be expected to keep up with.

This course will explore the relationship between sport and religion thematically. Each week we will look at a particular theme and examine that theme as it relates to sports and religion in our modern society. As a result, this course is not a history of the relationship between sport and religion nor is it a proposal for any one particular understanding of that relationship. Instead, it is an attempt to introduce students to some important concepts and methods for understanding sport and religion.

The content of the course is divided into 3 main parts spread out over 13 weeks. The first part of the course (Weeks 3-6) will focus on sport and religion from a societal or cultural perspective. The second part (Weeks 7-9) will focus on the nature of religious experiences and similar experiences found in sports. The third part (Weeks 10-12) will focus on the ritual dimension of sport. Weeks 1-2 and Week 13 will serve as an introduction and conclusion to the course, respectively.

Course Assessment – Overview

1. Annotated Readings – 20%
2. Paper 1 – 25%
3. Paper 2 – 25%
4. Final Exam – 30%

Course Assessment – Details

Annotated Readings: 20% (5 readings x 4%)

Online course delivery has many advantages—especially during a pandemic—but it also comes with a number of disadvantages. One of those disadvantages is the loss of face-to-face dialogue and social interaction. In a small attempt to mitigate this loss, students will participate in collective annotated readings of course material throughout the term. Research shows that annotating texts while reading—marking, highlighting, commenting, etc.—leads to better reading comprehension. This is further improved when it is done with others. In this online course, students will use Hypothes.is—an annotating tool that allows readers to annotate, mark up, and comment on texts—to collectively annotate selected course readings in small groups in Avenue to Learn. Hypothes.is is a free open source software that can be embedded into the course page on Avenue to Learn so students will not have to worry about navigating an external piece of technology. Students will be given simple instructions on how to annotate a text and will be assessed based on their ability to follow those instructions and engage with the text and the comments of others. More details on how to use Hypothes.is will be given once the course begins. Annotated readings will occur on **Weeks 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11** and will be **due Fridays at 11:59pm.**

Paper 1: 25%

Students will write a short paper on a topic or theme from the first five weeks of the course. More details to follow. The format of the paper will be (approx.) 3 pages in length (excluding title page and bibliography) in standard essay format (double-spaced, normal margins, Time New Roman, 12-point font). Due date will be **Thursday February 25 at 11:59pm**.

Paper 2: 25%

Video and film are an important medium in the world of sports. For this paper, students will write a short paper in response to a short film that will be given later in the course (a choice of films will be given). Students will be expected to identify at least one topic or theme present in the film and to explain that topic or theme in light of the material of this course. More details to follow. The format of the paper will be 3 pages in length (excluding title page and bibliography) in standard essay format (double-spaced, normal margins, Time New Roman, 12-point font). Due date will be **Thursday March 25 at 11:59pm**.

Final Exam: 30%

The final exam will be a take home essay that will ask students to reflect on and consolidate what they have learned in the course. Details and due date TBD.

Course Schedule and Topics

Course Introduction

Week 1 (January 11-15): Introduction

Why take a course on sports and religion during a pandemic?

Week 2 (January 18-22): Sport, Religion and ‘World-Making’

Readings:

Chidester, D. (1996). The church of baseball, the fetish of Coca-Cola, and the potlatch of rock ‘N’ roll. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 64(4), 743-765.

Noë, A. (2019). The infinite game. In *Infinite baseball: Notes from a philosopher at the ballpark* (pp. 1-28). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Part I: Sport, Religion and Society

Week 3 (January 25-29): Sport as “Secular Religion”

Readings:

Jennings, G., Brown, D., & Sparkes, A. C. (2010). 'It can be a religion if you want': Wing Chun Kung Fu as a secular religion. *Ethnography* 11(4), 533-557.

Assessment: **Annotated Reading #1** Due Friday 11:59pm

Week 4 (February 1-5): Sport and Cultural Symbols: Hockey in Canada

Readings:

Berger, P. & Luckmann, T. (1991) Selection from "Ch. 2: Society as Objective Reality: Origins of Symbolic Universes" In *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (pp. 110-122). Penguin Books.

Faulkner, T. (2001). A puckish reflection on religion in Canada. In J. L. Price (Ed.), *From season to season: Sports as American religion* (pp. 185-202). Macon, GA: Mercer University Press.

Week 5 (February 8-12): Sport and Political Structures: Apartheid in South Africa

Readings:

Nixon, R. (1992). Apartheid on the run: The South African sports boycott. *Transition*, 58, 68-88.

Assessment: **Annotated Reading #2** Due Friday 11:59pm

READING BREAK (February 15-19)

Week 6 (February 22-26): Sporting Icons and Scapegoats

Readings:

Starn, O. (2011). Out of the woods? In *The passion of Tiger Woods: An anthropologist reports on golf, race, and celebrity scandal* (pp. 107-118). Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Thompson, W. (2016, April 21). *The secret history of Tiger Woods*. ESPN. http://www.espn.com/espn/feature/story/_/id/15278522/how-tiger-woods-life-unraveled-years-father-earl-woods-death

Vice. (2013, February). *Football as a religion: The Church of Maradona*. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=knRo_1xrJ2A

Assessment: **Paper 1** Due Thursday 11:59pm

Part II: Sports and Religious Experiences

Week 7 (March 1-5): “Flow” and Extreme Sports

Readings:

Sanford, A. W. (2007). Pinned on karma rock: Whitewater kayaking as religious experience. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 75(4), 875-895.

New York Times. (2018, November). *What if He Falls? The Terrifying Reality Behind Filming ‘Free Solo’*. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/3-wjmIFlnNo>

Rickert, R. (Filmmaker). (2019). The Flip. Vimeo. <https://vimeo.com/390490875>

Assessment: **Annotated Reading #3** Due Friday 11:59pm

Week 8 (March 8-12): Nature Sports and Religious Conversion

Readings:

Brymer, E., & Gray, T. (2010). Developing an intimate “relationship” with nature through extreme sports participation. *Leisure/Loisir*, 34:4, 361-374.

Roll, R. (Host). (2019, January). Kilian Jornet (No. 417) [Audio podcast episode]. In *The Rich Roll Podcast*. <https://www.richroll.com/podcast/kilian-jornet-417/>

Week 9 (March 15-19): Sport and Religion as “Collective Experience”

Readings:

Serazio, M. (2013). The elementary forms of sports fandom: A Durkheimian exploration of team myths, kinship, and totemic rituals. *Communication and Sport* 1(4), 303-325.

Assessment: **Annotated Reading #4** Due Friday 11:59pm

Part III: Sports and Rituals

Week 10 (March 22-26): Bodily Rituals and “Bodily Techniques”

Readings:

Mauss, M. (1973 [1935]). Techniques of the body. *Economy and Society*, 2:1, 70-88.

McNamee, M. (2007). Whose prometheus? Transhumanism, biotechnology and the moral topography of sports medicine. *Sport, Ethics and Philosophy*, 1:2, 181-194.

Assessment: **Paper 2** Due Thursday 11:59pm

Week 11 (March 29-April 2): Pilgrimage and Sacred Places

Readings:

O'Connor, P. (2018). Handrails, steps and curbs: Sacred places and secular pilgrimage in skateboarding, *Sport in Society*, 21:11, 1651-1668.

Smith, J. Z. (1987). Selection from "To take place." In *To take place: Toward theory in ritual* (pp. 103-117). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Assessment: **Annotated Reading #5** Due Friday 11:59pm

Week 12 (April 5-9): Death and Memorial

Readings

Q (2016, June). Onaje Woodbine on basketball as 'lived religion' [Audio Interview]. CBC Radio. <http://www.cbc.ca/radio/q/schedule-for-tuesday-june-28-2016-1.3655659/onaje-woodbine-on-basketball-as-lived-religion-1.3655684>

Woodbine, O. (2016). Part 1 – Memory. In *Black Gods of the asphalt: Religion, hip-hop, and street basketball* (pp. 25-85). New York: Columbia University Press.

Course Conclusion

Week 13 (April 12-14): Sport and/as Religion? A Final Assessment

Readings

Bain-Selbo, E. (2009). Conclusion: Sport as religion? A summary and final assessment. In *Game Day and God: Football, Faith and Politics in the American South* (pp. 213-239). Macon, GA: Mercer University Press.

Land Acknowledgment

McMaster University recognizes and acknowledges that it is located on the traditional territories of the Mississauga and Haudenosaunee nations, and within the lands protected by the “Dish with One Spoon” wampum agreement.

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments

All assignments should be submitted to Avenue as .doc(x) or .pdf. Assignments submitted in other formats will not be graded. All reasonable requests for extensions will be considered prior to the assignment’s deadline.

Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

Avenue to Learn

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Note on Course Modifications

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to

comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check her/his McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

University Policies

Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. **It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.**

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/), located at <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- improper collaboration in group work.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Authenticity/Plagiarism Detection

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software. **All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld** (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster's use of Turnitin.com please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

Courses with an On-line Element

Some courses may use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such

as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Copyright and Recording

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

Conduct Expectations

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the “Code”). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online.**

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students’ access to these platforms.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or sas@mcmaster.ca to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University’s [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work

[McMaster Student Absence Form \(MSAF\)](#): In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work”.

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous and Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO](#) policy. Students requiring a RISO accommodation should submit their request to their Faculty Office normally within 10 working days of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Extreme Circumstances

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, Avenue to Learn, and/or McMaster email.