

SCAR 2SP3 (ANTHROP 2EE3): Sport and/as Religion
Term 1 (Fall 2021)
Course Syllabus

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Zoom student office hours: Wed and Thurs 12-2pm – by appointment on Avenue homepage

Lectures: Online via Avenue to Learn

TAs: TBD

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Course Description

This course will explore why sports and religions are important “world-making” activities in our modern world. This course will treat sports and religion as dialogue partners and ask what religion can teach us about sports and what sports can teach us about religion. Topics include symbols, icons, flow, political activism, scapegoating, secular religion, extreme sports, nature spirituality and much more.

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

The format of this course is asynchronous and online. There are no synchronous or live lectures or tutorials or “in-class” components to the course. Lectures will be pre-recorded and uploaded each week on Monday throughout the term. There will also be readings and materials that students will be expected to keep up with on a weekly basis.

The content of the course is divided into two main parts spread out over 13 weeks. The first part of the course (Weeks 2-8) will focus on sport and religion from a societal or cultural perspective and the second part (Weeks 9-12) will focus on the nature of religious experiences and similar experiences found in sports. Weeks 1 and 13 will serve as an introduction and conclusion to the course, respectively. Each week we will look at a particular theme and examine that theme as it relates to sports and religion in our modern society. 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.

Course Assessment – Overview

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

Course Assessment – Details

Annotated Readings: 25%

(11 annotated readings: Weeks 2-11. Lowest 2 grades will be dropped at the end of the term.)

Online courses have many advantages but they also come with a number of disadvantages. One of those disadvantages is the loss of face-to-face dialogue and social interaction. In an 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 and understanding. This is further improved when it is done collectively with others. In this course, students will use the annotation tool Hypothes.is to annotate selected course readings in small groups in Avenue to Learn. Hypothes.is is a free open source software that will 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. There will be 11 annotated readings throughout the term (Weeks 2-12) and students will be able to drop their lowest 2 grades at the end of the term.

Annotated readings will occur on each week and will be due Fridays at 11:59pm.

Paper 1: 25%

Students will write a short paper in response to an article that touches on a number of the themes in the first five weeks of the course. More specific instructions will be given at the beginning of the course. The format of the paper will be (approx.) 5 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 Oct. 21 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 paper in response to a short film that engages with a variety of themes from the course. A choice of films will be given. Students will be expected to identify at least two topics or themes present in the film and to explain those topics or themes in light of the material of this course. More instructions will be given during the course. The format of the paper will be the

same as the first: (approx.) 5 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 Dec. 2 at 11:59pm.**

Final Exam: 25%

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. More details will be given closer to the date. **Due date TBD.**

Course Schedule and Topics

Course Introduction

Week 1 (Sept. 7-10): Introduction: Sports and Religion in our Modern World

Are sports and religion “essential” parts of life?

Part I: Sport, Religion and Society

Week 2 (Sept. 13-17): Sport, Religion and “Social Imaginaries”

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.

Taylor, C. (2004). Ch. 2: What is a “Social Imaginary”? In *Modern Social Imaginaries* (pp. 23-30). Duke University Press.

Assessment: **Annotated Reading Due Friday Sept. 17 at 11:59pm**

Week 3 (Sept. 20-24): Sport and Cultural Symbols: Hockey in Canada

Readings:

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.

Geertz, C. (1973). Religion as cultural system. In *The Interpretation of Cultures* (pp. 89-94). Basic Books.

Assessment: Annotated Reading Due Friday Sept. 24 at 11:59pm

Week 4 (Sept. 27-Oct. 1): Sport and Political Structures: Apartheid in South Africa

Readings:

Catsam, D. C. (2010). The death of doubt? Sport, race, and nationalism in the New South Africa. *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* 11(2), 7-13.

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

Assessment: Annotated Reading Due Friday Oct. 1 at 11:59pm

Week 5 (Oct. 4-8): 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

Woods, T. (February 19, 2010). *Tiger Woods' apology*. CNN. <http://www.cnn.com/2010/US/02/19/tiger.woods.transcript/index.html>

Assessment: Annotated Reading Due Friday Oct. 8 at 11:59pm

READING BREAK (Oct. 11-15)

Week 6 (Oct. 18-22): 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 Due Friday Oct. 22 at 11:59pm
Paper #1 Due Thursday Oct. 21 at 11:59pm

Week 7 (Oct. 25-29): Secular Spaces and Sacred Places I: Sporting Rituals in Public Spaces

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 Due Friday Oct. 29 at 11:59pm**

Week 8 (Nov. 1-5): Secular Spaces and Sacred Places II: Spirituality in Sporting Arenas

Readings:

Bramadat, P. (2021). "A bridge too far: Yoga, spirituality, and contested space in the Pacific Northwest." In *Urban Religious Events: Public Spirituality in Contested Spaces* (pp. 79-94). Ed. Paul Bramadat, Mar Grier, Julia Martínez-Ariño and Marian Burchardt. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Woodbine, O. (2016). Ch. 1: "Last one left" in the game: From black resistance to urban exile. In *Black Gods of the asphalt: Religion, hip-hop, and street basketball* (pp. 25-47). New York: Columbia University Press.

Assessment: **Annotated Reading Due Friday Nov. 5 at 11:59pm**

Part II: Sports and Religious Experiences

Week 9 (Nov. 8-12): 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 Due Friday Nov. 12 at 11:59pm**

Week 10 (Nov. 15-19): Embodiment and the Experience of "Flow"

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.

Assessment: Annotated Reading Due Friday Nov. 19 at 11:59pm

Week 11 (Nov. 22-26): Nature Sports and Spirituality

Readings:

Fabjanski, M., & Brymer, E. (2017). Enhancing health and wellbeing through immersion in nature: A conceptual perspective combining the Stoic and Buddhist traditions. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8(September), 1–6.

Taylor, Bron. (2007). Surfing into spirituality and a new, aquatic nature religion. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 75(4), 923-951.

Assessment: Annotated Reading Due Friday Nov. 26 at 11:59pm

Week 12 (Nov. 29-Dec. 3): Bodily Rituals and “Bodily Techniques”

Readings:

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

Luhrmann, T. (2020) Ch. 3: Talent and training. In *How God Becomes Real* (pp. 58-78). Princeton University Press.

Assessment: Annotated Reading Due Friday Dec. 3 at 11:59pm
Paper #2 Due Thursday Dec. 2 at 11:59pm

Course Conclusion

Week 13 (Dec. 6-8): 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.

Assessment: None

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**](mailto: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.