SCAR 2SP3 (ANTHROP 2EE3): Sport and Religion

Spring 2022

Course Syllabus DRAFT

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Course Website: Avenue to Learn

Lectures: Online via Zoom, Mon and Wed 1:30-4:30pm

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# Land Acknowledgment

I recognize and acknowledge that McMaster University 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 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, politics, scapegoating, secular religion, extreme sports, nature spirituality and 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

This course will be synchronous and delivered online. Lectures will begin on May 2nd and finish on June 15th and will be held over Zoom twice a week on Mondays and Wednesdays from 1:30-4:30 pm EST (14 lectures over 7 weeks). There are no tutorials or “in-class” components to the course.

The content of the course is divided into two main parts spread out over the 7 weeks. After an initial introduction to the course, the first part of the course (Weeks 2-4) will focus on sport and religion from a societal or cultural perspective and the second part (Weeks 5-7) will focus on the nature of religious experiences from both a fan’s and an athlete’s perspective. 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. Participation – 20%
2. Annotated Paper – 20%
3. Film Review – 25%
4. Final Exam – 35%

# Course Assessment – Details

**Participation: 20%**

There will be a number of ways to participate in this course. You can actively participate in lectures, contribute to the group annotated readings, post on discussion boards, share course-related content, etc. In order to receive a good participation it is expected that you will engage with your peers in the course in more than one way. Your participation grade will be self-assessed and reviewed by the instructor.

**Annotated Paper: 20%**

Students will provide a detailed annotation of one of the assigned readings in the course. More specific instructions on expectation and format will be given during the course. Due date TBD.

**Film Review: 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 approx. 1000 words in length (excluding title page and bibliography) in standard essay format (double-spaced, normal margins, Time New Roman, 12-point font). Due date TBD.

**Final Paper: 35%**

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**

### Mon. May 2: Introduction: Sports and Religion in our Modern World

Readings:

Alpert, R. (2015). Introduction: Why Study Religion and Sports, Anyway? In *Religion and Sports: An Introduction and Case Studies* (pp. 1-38). Columbia University Press.

### Wed. May 4: Sport as Religion?

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.

## Part I: Sport, Religion and Society

**WEEK 2**

### Mon. May 9: Sport and Cultural Symbols: Hockey

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.

### Wed. May 11: Sport and Political Protests: Sport in Apartheid South Africa

Readings:

Asad, T. (1992). “The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category.” In *Genealogies of Religion: Disciplines and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (pp. 27-54). The Johns Hopkins University Press.

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

Alpert, R. (2015). Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf and the National Anthem Ritual in the NBA. In *Religion and Sports: An Introduction and Case Studies* (pp. 127-132). Columbia University Press.

**WEEK 3**

### Mon. May 16: Sport as “Secular Religion”: Martial Arts

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.

### Wed. May 18: Secular Spaces and Sacred Sports I: Skateboarding

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.

**WEEK 4**

### Mon. May 23: Victoria Day: NO CLASS

### Wed. May 25: Secular Spaces and Sacred Sports II: Basketball

Readings:

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.

## Part II: Sports and Religious Experiences

**WEEK 5**

### Mon. May 30: Sports Fanatics I: Collective Experiences

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.

### Wed. June 1: Sports Fanatics II: Imitation

Readings:

Boswell, Thomas. 1994. “The Church of Baseball,” in *Baseball: An Illustrated History,”* Geoffrey C. Ward, Ed. (pp. 189-193). New York: Alfared A. Knopf.

Noë, A. “For the Love of the Game: Play Ball!” and “How to be a Fan.” In *Infinite Baseball:* *Notes from a Philosopher at the Ballpark.* Oxford University Press.

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.

**WEEK 6**

### Mon. June 6: Nature Sports and Spirituality: Surfing

Readings:

Jon Anderson (2013) Cathedrals of the surf zone: Regulating access to a space

of spirituality. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 14:8, 954-972.

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

### Wed. June 8: Extreme Sports and “Flow”: Rock Climbing and Kayaking

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.

**WEEK 7**

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### Mon. June 13: Training 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.

### Wed. June 15: Sport and Religion: Till Death Do Us Part

No readings.

# 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/app/uploads/Academic-Integrity-Policy-1-1.pdf) located at [https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures- guidelines/](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-%20guidelines/)

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.](http://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*](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/Code-of-Student-Rights-and-Responsibilities.pdf)(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**](https://sas.mcmaster.ca/) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or [**sas@mcmaster.ca**](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca%20) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University’s [***Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities***](http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicAccommodation-StudentsWithDisabilities.pdf)policy.

**Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work**

[McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF)](https://www.mcmaster.ca/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](http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicAccommodation-Observances.pdf) 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.