

RACE & SPORTS IN AMERICA

African American Studies
& Sociology and Criminology, & Law
AFA2390/SYA4930
FALL 2024



T 11:45 AM – 1:40 PM
R 12:50 PM – 1:40 PM
Classroom: [LIT0121](#)

Instructor: [Drew D. Brown, Ph.D.](#)
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Office: 1012F Turlington Hall
Office hours: Tuesday 2pm-3pm (or by appointment)

Course Description:

Sports continue to carry a significant relationship with African Americans. The structure and grandeur of sports in the U.S. systemically impact the construction of African American identity. For many African Americans, sports are a way of life, a spaceship out of the pitfalls of poverty, a platform for cultural heroes, and/or a display of African aesthetics. For others, it is a neo-colonial institution that perpetuates self-destruction. This course examines the direct relationship between sports and African American life and culture.

Additionally, we look to better understand the racial experiences of African Americans in relation to its historical, cultural, social, economic, and political dynamics. We will also identify, analyze, discuss, and critique theories regarding race and ethnic relations in U.S. sports. Students will develop critical thinking and analytical skills by comparing the experiences of African Americans with other groups. This will allow students to see both the cultural agency of African Americans and the pervasiveness of racial oppression that exists in and out of sports. Lastly, we use an intersectional approach to address many salient issues in American society such as ethnic discrimination, sexism, ableism, blind patriotism, capitalism, violence, oppression, etc.

African American Studies:

African American Studies (also referred to as Africana Studies or Black Studies) uses a pedagogy that involves 1) centering African Americans (aka. Black people, people of African descent) along with their culture, thought, experiences and practices; 2) examining content from a Black perspective or standpoint; 3) utilizing culturally appropriate interpretations of Black cultural elements; 4) a holistic or inter-disciplinary in modes of research and academic

development; 5) drawing on concepts and theories that have been developed by or are heavily used in African American Studies; and 6) a commitment to community engagement and responsibility. These six tenets are what make the methodological approach of African American Studies unique and separate my course from others with some similar subject matter.

Course Goals:

In this course, students will learn the role that race and sports have played in American history while enhancing the following:

- Critical thinking skills
- Information literacy
- Ability to do interdisciplinary examinations of historical events
- Understanding of issues in historical and contemporary context
- Engagement in the issues of the day, both locally and globally

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand the significance of race in sports
- Explain, discuss, and identify the facts and myths surrounding African Americans in sports
- Be able to identify the ways racism manifests itself in sports and explain the effects
- Explain, discuss, and identify the social impact of African American sport
- Use strategies with their families, co-workers, and peers to create better race relations, and to eradicate anti-Black racism in their immediate environments, the sports world, and the nation as a whole.

On the first quiz, you will be asked, “What is the ‘keyword’ according to the syllabus.” The answer is “think”.

Required Texts:

Rhoden, William C., *Forty Million Dollar Slaves: The Rise, Fall, and Redemption of the Black Athlete*. Broadway Books, 2010.

Supplemental readings for the semester will be provided via Canvas along with any other pertinent course information (syllabus, guidelines for assignments, etc.) *All students enrolled in this class have been automatically enrolled in Canvas. Please make sure to check Canvas and your UF email accounts regularly for any announcements, information or changes that may be made to the class schedule.*

II. Coursework & Schedule

1. List of Graded Work

Assignment	Description	%
Discussion Boards (5)	Students will (1) answer a question on the discussion board and (2) respond to another student's post. Each post must be more than 75 words. Students must think critically and deeply when posting and responding.	10
Quizzes (11)	There will be quizzes that evaluate the reading assignments. The lowest quizzes will be dropped.	20
Test 1 & 2	The Test 1 and Test 2 examinations will cover selected information and consist of fill-in-the-blank, short answer, multiple-choice, and essay questions.	25
Writing Assignment #1: Pre-Reflection	Write a 350 to 450-word paper on "What is the connection between race and sports?"	2.5
Writing Assignment #2: Outline and Introduction	Construct an introduction outline and write a 350 to 450-word introduction to the course research paper.	5
Writing Assignment #3: Literature Review	Write a 700 to 750-word literature review for the course research paper.	5
Writing Assignment #4: Theoretical framework	Write a 700 to 750-word theoretical framework for the course research paper.	5
Writing Assignment #5: Full paper	Write a 2500 to 3000-word research paper that includes the previously written Introduction, literature, review, and theoretical framework, as well as a new analysis section (900-1000 words) and short conclusion (< 350 words).	15
Digital presentation: Current Event Analysis	Create a 4-5-minute video that analysis the character of a Black athlete(s) in a major fictional film.	10
Writing Assignment #6: Post-Reflection	A 350 to 450-word paper on how your views have advanced or changed regarding the connection between race and sports.	2.5
	Total:	100

2. Weekly Course Schedule

Module:	Activity:	Topic/Assignment: (Subject to change)	Assigned Work Due:
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Section 1: Introduction

Module 1	Date: Aug 22		
	Topic:	Introduction - Syllabus and course overview	
	Concepts and Theories:	Sport, African American Studies	
	Lectures:	Class Introduction Syllabus Why Sports Matter...to Black Americans The Influence of Sports (Vid)	T2
	In-class activity:	"Speed dating" introductions	
	Readings/Films:	• Syllabus	Aug 27
	Assignments:	Discussion 1: What should we attribute to the dominance of athletes of certain racial or ethnic backgrounds in certain sports? Paper 1: Pre-Reflection	Aug 27 Aug 29

Module 2	Date: Aug 27-29		
	Topic:	Sociology of sports	
	Concepts and Theories:	Race, Ethnicity, Nationality, Gender, Racism, Conflict theory, Sport, Ethnicity theory, marginality theory, social role marginality theory	
	Lectures:	Key terms: Race, ethnicity, nationality Key terms: Sex, gender, sexuality (Video) Theories on Sports Participation	Aug 29
	In-class activity:	Discussion: "What makes a [Place social construction here]?"	
	Readings/Films:	• Coakley: Race and Ethnicity (PDF)	Sept 3
	Assignments:	Quiz 1	Aug 27

Section 2: Early African Americans in Sports

Module 3	Date: Sept 3-5		
	Topic:	Black athletes before the 20 th century – Slave games and Jim Crow	
	Concepts and Theories:	Slave games, Jockey Syndrome, Racial Segregation, Functionalism Early Pioneers: Ora Washington, Paul Robeson, Fritz and Pollard	
	Lectures:	History of African Americans Jockey Syndrome (Vid)	Sept 5

	In-class activity:	Pass the buck: Racial segregation in sports Read and reflect: Paul Robeson and Fritz Pollard (Link)	
	Readings/Films:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forty Million Dollar Slaves by Rhoden Ch. 2 • Forty Million Dollar Slaves by Rhoden Ch. 3 	Sept 5 Sept 10
	Assignments:	Paper #2: Meet with the Professor Quiz 2	Sept 26 Sept 19 Sept 3

Module 4	Date: Sept 10-12		
	Topic:	Emerging Representations in Sports	
	Concepts and Theories:	Good/Bad Black, Social Role Theory	
	Lectures:	Racial Othering: Dialectics of Opposites Jack Johnson (Vid) Joe Louis (Vid)	
	In-class activity:	Active comparison between Johnson, Louis, and Rudolph	
	Readings/Films:	• Watch: Unforgivable Blackness: The Rise and Fall of Jack Johnson	Sept 17
	Assignments:	Quiz 3	Sept 10

Module	Date: Sept 17-19		
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	Topic:	Black Women Pioneers in Sports	
	Concepts and Theories:	Intersectionality, Womanhood, Black Feminism, Womanism	
	Lectures:	Intersectionality in sports Black Feminism in Sports Black Women pioneers in sports (Vid)	Sept 19
	In-class activity:	Read: A History of Women in Sport Prior to Title IX by Bell (PDF) Write, pair, share: Do sports reflect womanhood in broader society?	
	Readings/Films:	• Gissendanner, Cindy Himes. "African American women Olympians: The impact of race, gender, and class ideologies, 1932–1968." <i>Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport</i> 67.2 (1996): 172-182. (PDF)	Sept 19
	Assignments:	Discussion 2: Was racial integration more beneficial or detrimental to the Black community and why? Quiz 4	Sept 26 Sept 17

Section 3: Racial Integration

Module 6	Date: Sept 24-26		
	Topic:	Negro Leagues and Jackie Robinson	
	Concepts and Theories:	Integration, Perspective, Interest convergence	

	Lectures:	Integration of College Football Negro Leagues (Vid)	Sept 26
	In-class Activity:	Small and large group discussion on the benefits of racial integration in sports	
	Readings/Films:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forty Million Dollar Slaves by Rhoden Ch. 4 • The Great Migration of College Football by Brown 	Sept 26 Oct 1
	Assignments:	Paper #3: Quiz 5	Oct 22 Sept 24

Section 4: Racial Politics in Sports

Module 7	Date: Oct 1-3		
	Topic:	Nationalism and Sports – 1968 Olympics	
	Concepts and Theories:	Athlete Activism, Conflict Theory	
	Lectures:	American Politics and Nationalism in Sports	
	In-class Activity:	Discussion: Should we eradicate politics from sports Discussion: The significance of the Olympics on nationalism and patriotism	
	Readings/Films:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rethinking Sports, Empire and American Exceptionalism by Pope • Watch: Black Power Solute at the 1968 Olympics • Watch: The Journey of the African American Athlete pt. 1 (1875-1950) 	Oct 3 Oct 10 OPT

	Assignments:	Discussion 3: Should Black athletes feel proud to represent U.S.A. in international sports given their racial experiences? Quiz 6	Oct 15 Oct 1
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TEST 1			Oct 8
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Module 9	Date: Oct 15-17		
	Topic:	Politics and Sports - Muhammad Ali, Colin Kaepernick, and the Dilemma of Patriotism	
	Concepts and Theories:	Agency, Structural Functionalism	
	Lectures:	Today's Sports Activism (Vid)	Oct 17
	In-class Activity:	Create a plan to make a political statement using sports	
	Readings/Films:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is the Patriot by Bryant (PDF) • Shut up and Dribble by Tenjido (PDF) 	Oct 17 Oct 22
	Assignments:	Discussion #4: Student Created Quiz 7	Oct 22 Oct 15

Section 5: Culture and Style

Module 10	Date: Oct 22-24		
	Topic:	Culture and Style - Black Aesthetics in Sports	
	Concepts and Theories:	Nzuri model, coolness, cultural capital	
	Lectures:	What is culture and what is Black culture? Black Culture and Style (Vid)	Oct 24
	In-class Activity:	Discuss the dress code in sports Small and large discussion of cultural capital	C10 C10
	Readings/Films:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forty Million Dollar Slaves by Rhoden Ch 6 • The Takeover by Boyd 	Oct 24 Oct 29
	Assignments:	Quiz 8 Paper #4:	Nov 14

Module 11	Date: Oct 29-31		
	Topic:	Marketing and Media - The Model for Commodifying Athletes (Jordan & Serena)	
	Concepts and Theories:	Commodification, Framing theory, Media Bias, Old/New Media, Cultural Appropriation	
	Lectures:	Marketing Black Culture (Vid)	Oct 29 Nov 5

		Sports Communication Bias Voices and new media (Vid)	
	In-class Activity:	Create a journalistic sports article on a current event Analyze sports advertisements and social media	
	Readings/Films:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read "Be Like Mike" by Dyson • Watch: Sports journalists stereotype athletes by race -- and we do too by Ferrucci • Draymond Green and New Media by Rohrbach 	Oct 31 Nov 5 Nov 5
	Assignments:	Quiz 9	Oct 29

Section 6: Stereotypes

Module 12	Date: Nov 5-7		
	Topic:	Stereotyping Black Athletes -	
	Concepts and Theories:	Black Brut theory, Stacking, Rooney Rule, Physical vs. Intellectual	
	Lectures:	Race Sports Leadership and Intelligence (Vid)	Nov 7
	In-class Activity:	Discussion: Should all sports teams implement diversity quotas for leadership positions to improve racial equality in sports?	
	Readings/Films:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "The Segregation of Blacks by Position in Football" by Eitzen and Sanford 	Nov 7
	Assignments:	Discussion 5: Student created Quiz 10	Nov 12 Nov 5

Module 13	Date: Nov 12-14		
	Topic:	Representations of Black Athlete in Film (Part I)	
	Concepts and Theories:	Cool Pose, Manhood	
	Lectures:	Black masculinity in sports films (Vid) Black women athletes (Vid) Black women in sports films (Vid)	
	In-class Activity:	Watch and analyze videos with a theme	
	Readings/Films:	• The Making of Men in American Sports Film by Lewis	Nov 14
	Assignments:	Quiz 11	Nov 12

Module 14	Date: Nov 19-21		
	Topic:	Representations of Black Athlete in Film (Part II)	
	Concepts and Theories:	Title IX,	
	Lectures:	Black women athletes (Vid) Black women in sports films (Vid) Course summary	

	In-class Activity:	Small and large group discussion: Should transgender athletes compete in gendered sports categories based on their gender identity or biological sex, and what considerations, if any, need to be made?	
	Readings/Films:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Girls Can't Play No Ball by Brown (PDF) • Watch: The Journey of the African American Athlete pt. 2 (1950-1996) 	Nov 21 OPT
	Assignments:	Evaluations Writing Assignment #6: Post-Reflection	Dec 3 Nov 21

THANKSGIVING BREAK			Nov 26-28
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TEST 2			Dec 3
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III. Grading

4. Grading Scale

For information on how UF assigns grade points, visit:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

A	94 – 100% of possible points		C	74 – 76%
A-	90 – 93%		C-	70 – 73%
B+	87 – 89%		D+	67 – 69%
B	84 – 86%		D	64 – 66%
B-	80 – 83%		D-	60 – 63%
C+	77 – 79%		E	<60

VI. Required Policies

10. Students Requiring Accommodation

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

11. UF Evaluations Process

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

12. University Honesty Policy

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct->

honor-code/) specifies a number of behaviors that violate this code and possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

13. Counseling and Wellness Center

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

14. The Writing Studio

The writing studio is committed to helping University of Florida students meet their academic and professional goals by becoming better writers. Visit the writing studio online at <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> or at 2215 Turlington Hall for one-on-one consultations and workshops.

15. Class Attendance and Make-up Work

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies. [Click here to read the university attendance policies.](#)

16. Online Issues

If you encounter any technical difficulties, please seek assistance by [visiting our helpdesk website](#) or contacting us at 352-392-4357.