

Game.Set. Match. Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Sport

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Contact

Course Description:

Sport has become an important subject within the humanities, with numerous sociological, economic, anthropological, and psychological studies collectively forming the field of sport studies. This course introduces key topics within this field, including the commercialization and globalization of elite sport, the role of sports mega-events, sport in relation to social and gender inequalities, the intersections between sport and politics, and differences between sports cultures in the United States and Europe. These themes will be examined through a series of case studies—such as the Olympic Games, the Super Bowl, and sportswashing in European football. The seminar will focus primarily on professional sport. A central aim of the course is to show that sport is not “just” a game, but a lens through which to understand significant and often urgent social issues. Emphasis will be placed on the interdisciplinary nature of sport studies, demonstrating how insights from sociology, philosophy, economy, cultural studies, and related fields complement and enrich one another.

Course Prerequisites:

- None

Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes:

- Examine **contemporary issues in sport from an inter-disciplinary perspective** of various humanistic disciplines and understand sport as an important social phenomenon
- Students will understand how **global forces shape contemporary sport** and critically reflect on **the role of sport in today's society**.
- Analyze the **specific nature and features of Czech sport and its organization within the global context**
- Learn how to **apply theoretical knowledge to concrete experience**
- **Compare sporting events in the Czech Republic and the US**
- Discuss and better understand **the importance of outdoor activities and sports**

Course Requirements:

Reading Quizzes – 20%: Throughout the semester, students will complete four short online reading quizzes, each worth 5% of the final course grade (20% in total). The quizzes are designed to check your understanding of the assigned course readings. Each quiz will be completed online via Moodle and will consist of several questions based on the readings covered in the relevant part of the course. **The quizzes are open-book**, meaning that you may consult the assigned readings while completing them. However, each quiz **is limited to 15 minutes**, so you are expected to have read the assigned texts in advance. The quizzes are intended to encourage regular engagement with the course readings rather than memorization of specific details.

Sport and politics (Short Podcast) (20%): During the semester, students deliver a short podcast session on the relation of sport and politics. In the podcast, students present one historical event when politics were involved in the world of sports. To demonstrate a clear connection to the historical and sociological frameworks presented, students should reference at **least three academic readings in the podcast**. Students should write down cited sources and upload a paper with a bibliography to Moodle. **The podcast should be 6 to 8 minutes long. Students can use any podcast app and must upload the podcast to Moodle.** Podcasts must be comprehensive and well-structured with a proper **introduction and ending. Quality of speech is also evaluated.** Students should not merely read prepared text **but try to speak freely and naturally.** Students should **be creative with the podcast and can add intro music, jingles or concrete sounds** to make the podcast engaging, entertaining, yet instructive. Students should not forget to give the **podcast a title and a brand image**. Students can use, e.g. Canva for the podcast logo. A detailed grading rubric is shared via Moodle.

Please upload your sources (.pdf, .docx, etc.) or provide full bibliographic information for all sources used.

Sport and gender (Short Podcast) (20%): In this assignment, students will work in pairs to prepare a short dialogical role-based podcast focusing on gender inequalities in sport. Unlike the first podcast, students do not primarily speak from their own perspective but instead adopt the position of specific social actors involved in, affected by, or responding to gender inequalities in sport. The podcast should take the form of a discussion between two participants representing different perspectives, interests, or positions within the world of sport. The goal is not simply to determine who is “right” or “wrong,” but rather to sociologically understand how gender inequalities are experienced, interpreted, justified, challenged, or negotiated by different actors in sport. Students should select a concrete issue related to gender inequality in sport (for example unequal pay, media representation, access to leadership positions, transgender participation policies, sexism in coaching culture, motherhood and athletic careers, or inequalities in sponsorship and visibility). Each

participant should adopt a clearly defined social role and engage in discussion from that perspective while using sociological concepts and academic literature discussed during the course.

Possible roles include (examples):

- Professional athlete
- Coach or club manager
- Sports federation or policymaking representative
- Sports journalist or media professional
- Sponsor or commercial partner
- Activist or NGO representative
- Fan or supporter group member
- Academic expert in sport and gender

(Other roles are possible but must be clearly justified)

The discussion should demonstrate:

- clear introduction of the selected issue and adopted roles,
- identification and explanation of specific forms of gender inequality,
- sociological analysis of tensions, conflicts, interests, or institutional constraints connected to the issue,
- interaction between differing perspectives rather than isolated monologues
- reflection on possible ways of addressing or overcoming gender inequalities in sport.

In this podcast, students should clearly **introduce their adopted role, identify and explain specific forms of gender inequality relevant to that position, and present coherent arguments, interests, tensions, or constraints associated with it.** Students should also discuss **possible ways of addressing or surpassing gender inequalities** as they would reasonably be articulated from the perspective of the chosen role. To demonstrate a clear connection to historical and sociological frameworks presented in the course, **students should reference at least three academic readings in their podcast.** Students are asked to write down the sources used and upload a paper with a bibliography to Moodle. **The podcast should be 10 to 12 minutes long. Students can use any podcast apps and must upload the podcast to Moodle.** Podcasts must be comprehensive and well-structured with a proper **introduction and ending. Quality of speech will also be evaluated.** Students should avoid merely reading prepared text and instead aim for **natural discussion and active engagement** with one another's arguments. Students should try to **be creative with the podcast** and can **add intro music, jingles or concrete sounds** to make podcast engaging, entertaining yet instructive. Students should be prepared for a class discussion during the follow-up class. A detailed grading rubric is shared via Moodle. **Please upload your sources (.pdf, .docx, etc.) or provide full bibliographic information for all sources used.**

Final Podcast (40%): Students form teams to prepare a podcast discussion. Each team chooses one of the topics covered during the semester. One student assumes the role of an interviewer; remaining students are positioned as topic experts. **Teams must use academic literature connected to the topic in their podcast.** The podcast should employ **the course topics enriched by the findings from individual academic research in relevant sources** (required or recommended literature) **and from individual experience and expertise connected to the undertaken field studies.** Students should write down sources used and upload a paper with a bibliography to Canvas. The podcast should **be appropriately structured** (e.g., introduction, main body, conclusions) and should **be based on academic literature combined with own reasoning and analysis.** Students are expected to present original arguments based on a combination of good-quality sources. Additionally, **each podcast should include a comparison with their home city/country**, with the aim of highlighting the key differences or interesting similarities. **Quality of speech will also be evaluated.** Students should not merely read prepared text **but should try to speak freely and naturally.** **The podcast should be around 20-30 minutes long.** Students should try to **be creative with the podcast.** **Students can add intro music, jingles or concrete sounds** to make podcast engaging, entertaining yet instructive. A detailed grading rubric is shared via Moodle.

Please upload your sources (.pdf, .docx, etc.) or provide full bibliographic information for all sources used.

Grading Policy:

Mandatory Completion Policy

Note that all mandatory assignments and exams must be completed to the best of your ability in order for your final grade to be issued. Failure to complete a mandatory assignment or exam may result in a failing grade.

Letter Grade	Percentage	Description
A+	97-100	Excellent Work
A	93-97	Outstanding Work
A-	90-92	
B+	87-89	Good work
B	83-86	
B-	80-82	
C+	77-79	Acceptable Work
C	73-76	
C-	70-72	
D+	67-69	Work that is significantly below average
D	63-66	
D-	60-62	
F	0-59	Work that does not meet the minimum standards for passing the course

AEP Academic Integrity Policy

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are not tolerated. The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for the development of knowledge and learning is encouraged at many stages of the learning process. While we value technology for educational purposes, we also value originality and the retainment of knowledge, and thus using AI for assignments and examinations, even if rephrased, is strictly prohibited and considered an academic integrity violation, unless the instructor explicitly allows for it in the context of evaluated work

AEP Non-Discrimination/Harassment Policy

The AEP program in Prague promotes a diverse learning environment where the dignity, worth, and differences of each individual are valued and respected. Discrimination and harassment, whether based on a person's race, gender, sexual orientation, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, or other legally protected characteristics, are repugnant and completely inconsistent with our objectives. Retaliation against individuals for raising good faith claims of harassment and/or discrimination is prohibited.

AEP Diversity Policy

AEP is committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming community that values diversity in all its forms. We believe that one of the most meaningful lessons of studying abroad is learning to navigate and appreciate differences with curiosity and an open mind. While engaging across differences can sometimes be challenging or uncomfortable, these moments are essential for growth and learning. We recognize that every member of our community, even with the best intentions, may occasionally make missteps. Our commitment is to provide a supportive environment where respectful and honest

dialogue helps us learn from these experiences, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to thrive and broaden their perspective.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1

CEE Introductory Lecture Series

AEP Introductory Lecture Series

Week 2

When It's About More Than "Just" Sports

Introductory lecture which will describe main topics that will be presented in the semester. In this very first lecture will try to show, that sports are not just a game but a serious topic within the humanities.

Week 3

Czechoslovak Sport during Communism (1945-1989)

In this lecture, we will examine what sport looked like in Czechoslovakia during the communist era. How did the regime influence society and its sporting culture? Why did sport become a political tool? And what exactly was the Spartakiáda? These are just some of the questions we will discuss in class. As part of the session, we will also visit the Strahov Stadium.

Readings:

- Waic, pp. 12-40
- Numerato, pp. 704-712

Week 4

The (in)separable Pair: Sport and Politics

It is often said that politics has no place in sports. However, we frequently witness situations where politics enters the realm of sports. Politics seems to be an integral part of sports at all levels, not just at the elite level. This lesson will focus on the ambivalent relationship between sports and politics.

Readings:

- Brannagan, Giulianotti, pp.703-719
- Soares, pp. 47-61

Week 5

"Money, money, money..." Sports Industry, Globalization and Media

Today's world of elite sports is unimaginable without money and financing. This lesson will focus on the increasing commercialization of professional sports. We will also look at the globalization processes in modern sports. Additionally, we will examine the influence of media in the world of sports. **The first short podcast is due this day.**

Readings:

- Whannel, pp. 205-218
- Giulianotti, Numerato, pp. 229-240

Week 6

Local Czech Sporting Event

Class Description

Readings: None

Week 7

Winners and Losers of the Olympics. Sports Mega-Events and Environment

Sport mega-events play a crucial role in world of sports and in the whole society. Olympic games or FIFA World Cups are viewed by billions of people around the world. But there are not without controversy. In this lecture we will discuss positives and negatives of these events with an emphasis on environmental sustainability.

Readings:

- Horne, Manzenreiter pp. 1-24
- Ivester, pp. 1-16

Week 8

The Czechs and the Outdoors. Hike to Divoká Šárka

During this class we will visit the national preserve Divoká Šárka.

Readings:

- Martin, Turcova, Neuman, pp. 297-306

Week 9

Differences between Sports in US, Czechia and Europe

From mass media, it might seem that sports have a similar form in Europe and the USA. However, there are numerous differences in both professional and semi-professional sports. In this section, we will explore the most significant distinctions, including the organization of

sports competitions, methods of funding elite sports, and game formats. In this lecture, we will also visit the Sports Card Museum.

Readings:

- Ahonen, pp. 469-483
- Backman, Carlsson, pp. 505-522

Week 10

Is sport egalitarian? Social Inequalities, Gender and Psychology in Sports

Sports are often portrayed as egalitarian, where performance, perseverance, and training are key. However, numerous studies reveal that factors such as an athlete's background, social class, place of birth, and even gender play an equally important role. This section will focus on the connections between social inequalities and sports. We will also address sports psychology, which is closely related to these topics. **The second short podcast is due this day.**

Readings:

- Fialova, pp. 102-117
- Pfister, pp. 234-248

Week 11

Kdo Neskáče Není Čech! Sports and Fandom

Nowadays sport can't be imagined without fans. They play a key role in sports industry: it's them who fills the stadiums, who buys merch and for who the show is made. But it is not just about business. Fanship can create new and very strong identities, stronger than the everyday life.

Readings:

- Barrer, pp. 223-238
- Cenek, J. and Smolik, pp. 138-153

Week 12

Slavia Praha Stadium tour

In this lecture, we will visit the Fortuna Arena - the biggest soccer arena in Czechia and a home arena of Slavia Praha soccer team. During this field study we will get to the inner parts of the stadium, to VIP sectors and also to the pitch. Our guide will also talk about the history of the Slavia Praha which goes to end of 19. century.

Readings: None

Week 13

Final class review

In this final lecture we will recap the most important outcomes of this class. **The final podcast is due this day.**

Readings: None

Field studies:

- Strahov stadium and Evžen Rošický stadium
- Local Czech sporting event (TBA)
- Hike in nature preserve Divoká Šárka
- Hockey card Museum
- Slavia Praha Stadium Tour

Readings:

Ahonen, A. *Strong entrepreneurial focus and internationalization—the way to success for Finnish ice hockey: the case of JYP ice hockey team*. Sport in Society, 23(3), 2020, pp. 469-483.

Backman, J. and Carlsson, B. *Jokerit's move to KHL: an odd momentum in the commercialization of Nordic elite ice hockey*. Sport in Society, 23(3), 2020, pp. 505-522.

Barrer, P. *'Šatan is God!': Re-imagining Contemporary Slovak National Identity through Sport*. Sport in Society, 10(2), 2007, pp. 223-238.

Brannagan M. P. & Giulianotti, R. *Soft power and soft disempowerment: Qatar, global sport and football's 2022 World Cup finals*, Leisure Studies, 2015 34:6, 703-719.

Carlsson, B., Backman, J. and Stark, T. *Introduction: the progress of elite ice hockey beyond the NHL*. Sport in Society, 23(3), 2020, pp. 355-360.

Cenek, J. and Smolik, J. Nationalism and Its Manifestations in Sport: the Case of Football Hooliganism in the Czech Republic. In Cordell, K., and Jajecznik, K. (eds.), *The Transformation of Nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe*, University of Warsaw, 2015, pp. 138-153.

Crossan, W. *Expanding game, expanding opportunity: the effect of athlete migration on Czech ice hockey from 1993 to 2018*, Sports in Society: Cultures, Commerce, Media, Politics. Vol. 23 (3), 2019, pp. 377-398.

Fialova, L. *Women and Sport in the Czech Republic*. In Pfister, T. and Hartmann-Tews, I. (eds.) *Sport and Women: Social Issues in International Perspective*. Routledge: London, 2003, pp. 102-117.

- Giulianotti, R. and Numerato, D. *Global sport and consumer culture: An introduction*. Journal of consumer culture, 18(2), 2018, pp. 229-240.
- Horne, J. and Manzenreiter, W. *An introduction to the sociology of sports mega-events*. The sociological review, 54(2_suppl), 2006, pp.1-24.
- Kvasnicka, T. *Equipment and Changing Outdoor Culture in the Czech Republic*. *Anthropology of East Europe Review*. Vol 25 (1), 2009, pp. 53-63.
- Martin, A., Turcova, I. and Neuman, J. *Turistika activities and games, dramaturgy, and the Czech outdoor experience*. In Humberstone, B., Prince, H. (eds). Routledge International Handbook of Outdoor Studies. London: Routledge, 2016, pp. 297-306.
- Numerato, D. *Sports as Resistance: Czech Hockey Protest in Czechoslovakia in 1969*. In Kratzmueller, B. et al. Sport and the Construction of Identities. Vienna: Verlag Turia & Kant, 2007, pp. 704-712.
- Pfister, G. *Women in sport—gender relations and future perspectives*. Sport in society, 13(2), 2010, pp. 234-248.
- Soares, John. *East beats West: ice hockey and the Cold War*. Sport and the Transformation of Modern Europe, Routledge, 2013, pp. 47-61.
- Spacek, O. *Sporting activities and social stratification in the Czech Republic: a temporal perspective*. European Journal for Sport and Society, Vol 13 (4), 2016, pp. 256-273.
- Turcova, I. *The Czech approach to outdoor adventure and experiential education: the influence of Jaroslav Foglar's work*. Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning. Vol. 17 (4), 2017, pp. 321-337.
- Waic, M. *Sport in Czechoslovakia 1945-1989*. In Waic, M. et. Al. (eds). In the Shadow of Totalitarianism: Sport and the Olympic Movement in the "Visegrad Countries" 1945-1989, Prague: Karolinum Press, 2015, pp. 12-40.
- Waic, M. *The Czech Sokol movement: school of the nation*. Sport–Integration–Europe, pp.72-81.
- Whannel, G. *Television and the Transformation of Sport*. The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 625(1), 2009, pp. 205-218.