

PHIL 1984B Philosophy of Sport

office hours: daily 10-11
Zoom ID: 591 824 3118

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Spring 2023 – MWF 12:20-1:15 p.m. – McBryde Hall – [Canvas site](#)

FORMAT

- ❖ Please read before class: [Course Policies](#) & [Assignment Guide](#) (links coming soon)
- ❖ All lectures meet in person. There are no online meetings. If this should change, you will be notified via email.
- ❖ The policies on masking and social distancing may change over time, and will be announced in class and via email. Keep up to date and read about your rights and responsibilities on the [VT Ready Site](#).
- ❖ Students agree to respect the Honor System and to not receive unauthorized assistance. Ignorance of the rules does not excuse dishonesty. Please read more at VT's [Office of Undergraduate Academic integrity](#).

GOALS

What is fair competition? Should we be doing dangerous or violent sports? How has Title IX changed the moral landscape of American sports? How should NCAA student-athletes be remunerated, if at all? How should transgender athletes compete against cisgender ones?

This course surveys the essential elements in the philosophy of sport from the perspectives of **moral and political philosophy** (the study of good conduct) and **sociopolitical philosophy** (the study of justice).

Though rooted in philosophy, this course adopts an interdisciplinary approach also including economic, cultural, and historical analyses.

- ❖ If you have **accommodations from SSD**, please bring them to class or to my office by January 28 and I'll sign them!
- ❖ Your mental health is very important! You may talk to me at any time and/or contact [Cook Counseling Center](#).

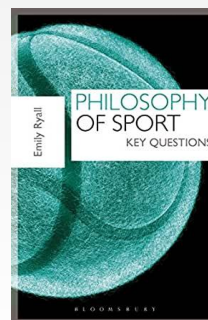
BOOKS

THESE BOOKS ARE TENTATIVE

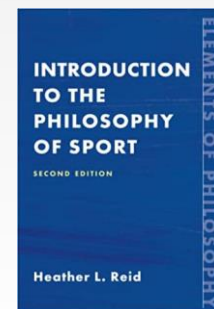
Any edition is fine,
e-books included.

If you can't procure a
book, let me know and
I will help you find it.

All readings from
these books must be
completed according
to the schedule on the
next page.



Emily Ryall
*Philosophy of Sport:
Key Questions*



Heather L. Reid
*Introduction to the
Philosophy of Sport*

ASSIGNMENTS

60% of your grade is determined by these assignments, which are mandatory for everyone:



- 20% Questions** Turn in a very short discussion question about each assigned reading. **Due each day before class.**
- 20% Discussion** Regular attendance and frequent, high-quality participation in the classroom and/or online forums.
- 20% Final Exam** Online, timed, open-book, essay-based, and comprehensive of all class material. **Due on May 9.**

40% of your grade is up to you. **Pick two assignments** from this list. Fill out the survey under *Quizzes* by January 31.

- 20% Art Project** Painting, music, poetry, memes, etc. Talk to me first! Must be related to the class. **Due on May 9.**
- 20% Two Tests** Mostly multiple-choice questions, and with a short essay for each test. **Due on Feb 12 and Apr 9.**
- 20% Lecture** One 5-minute lecture about a current sport controversy, solo or in groups. **Present on May 1 or 3.**
- 20% Journal** Bi-weekly, half-page reports of your opinions about the class material. **Due each Friday from Feb 3.**
- 20% Paper** 1000-word argumentative research on a (pre-approved) topic related to the class. **Due on May 9.**

READING SCHEDULE AND DUE DATES



HOW TO FIND THE MATERIAL

(B) = in the book (C) = on Canvas > *Files* (W) = websites: click [links](#)  (M) = movies: click [titles](#) 

Readings, movies, and assignments must be completed by the day that they are assigned for.

Daily discussion questions are due on Canvas under *Discussions* each day before class begins.

Part I: **The Ethics and Politics of Sport**

Introduction	Wed, Jan. 18	course presentation and introductory material
	Fri, Jan. 20	What is sport? What is the difference between sports and games?
Competitive Fairness	Mon, Jan. 23	What is "fairness"? Liberal, conservative, and non-political definitions.
	Wed, Jan. 25	Is the old "10,000-hour rule" a myth or is there a justification for it?
	Fri, Jan. 27	Does nature or nurture prevail when training to become a champion?
	Mon, Jan. 30	Why are performance-enhancing drugs unfair? Unfair to whom/why?
	Wed, Feb. 1	Should lopsided victories be prevented by "mercy rules"?
	Fri, Feb. 3	Watch "ESPN 30 for 30" documentary: 9.79* 
	Mon, Feb. 6	Are the supposed advantages of transgender athletes unjust?
	Wed, Feb. 8	How can professional sports become more inclusive?
Fri, Feb. 10	No class. Optional review for the first test.	
	Sun, Feb. 12	(OPTIONAL) FIRST TEST due on Canvas under <i>Quizzes</i> by 11:59 p.m.
Sport and Justice	Mon, Feb. 13	How has Title IX improved sport equity? What else has it improved?
	Wed, Feb. 15	Supremacism, segregation, and integration in recent sport history.
	Fri, Feb. 17	Olympics and Paralympics: is sporting activity inherently ableist?
	Mon, Feb. 20	Watch movie: <i>Schooled: The Price of College Sports</i> 
	Wed, Feb. 22	Should student-athletes be paid to play? Is it unpaid labor if they don't?
	Fri, Feb. 24	Should student-athletes be paid to play? Is it unpaid labor if they don't?
	Mon, Feb. 27	What is sportswashing? From the 1936 Olympics to the 2022 World Cup.
	Wed, Mar. 1	Can sport be a vehicle for social change and/or political repression?
Fri, Mar. 3	No class. Enjoy your spring break!	

SPRING BREAK: MARCH 5-13

watch movie *Blue Chips*

Sport in the United States

Mon, Mar. 13	Watch movie: <i>Blue Chips</i> ↗
Wed, Mar. 15	Are athletes capable of giving informed consent to concussion risks?
Fri, Mar. 17	Should children be allowed to play dangerous sports?
Mon, Mar. 20	Watch “ESPN 30 for 30” documentary: <i>Catching Hell</i> ↗
Wed, Mar. 22	Watch “ESPN 30 for 30” documentary: <i>Roll Tide/War Eagle</i> ↗
Fri, Mar. 24	Watch “ESPN 30 for 30” documentary <i>July 17th, 1994</i> ↗

Olympism

Mon, Mar. 27	What is the relationship of sport, virtue, and mental health?
Wed, Mar. 29	Are athletes “better”? Is good performance in sport “good”?
Fri, Mar. 31	Watch movie: <i>Chariots of Fire</i> ↗
Mon, Apr. 3	Why is the World Cup the most important event in the world?
Wed, Apr. 5	Watch movie: <i>Victory!</i> ↗
Fri, Apr. 7	No class. Optional review for the first test.

Sun, Apr. 9 **(OPTIONAL) SECOND TEST** due on Canvas under *Quizzes* by 11:59 p.m.

Everything Else

Mon, Apr. 11	Are violent sports immoral? Cases for and against martial arts.
Wed, Apr. 13	Watch “ESPN 30 for 30” documentary: <i>The Two Escobars</i> ↗
Fri, Apr. 15	Why do fans get violent? The Monica Seles and Pablo Escobar cases.
Mon, Apr. 18	What makes a “minor” sport? I.e., why do many Americans hate soccer?
Wed, Apr. 19	Authority and hierarchy: is sport training inherently illiberal?
Fri, Apr. 21	What is the relationship of sport and art?

Placeholder

Mon, Apr. 24	(catch-up, wiggle room, etc.)
Wed, Apr. 26	(catch-up, wiggle room, etc.)
Fri, Apr. 28	(catch-up, wiggle room, etc.)

Group Work

Mon, May 1	in-class group project presentation and report (1)
Wed, May 3	in-class group project presentation and report (2)

Tue, May 9 **FINAL EXAM** due on Canvas under *Quizzes* by 12:05 p.m.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: READ BEFORE ASKING

I don't feel comfortable talking about some of these topics. What can I do?

Discuss it with me! Sometimes it is possible to make alternative arrangements.

When should I buy the books?

Now. We use one of them right away and the other soon after.

I can't find the reading. Where is it?

See the instructions on p. 2 of this syllabus, just above the schedule of readings.

Can I submit a test, paper, or project late?

Late assignments incur a 10% per day grade penalty. Extensions are rare.

I have a Covid-related concern.

Come talk to me! I'm open to a wide range of precautions, medical accommodations, etc.

Should I attend every class?

Yes. Lecture contains a lot of material that's not included in the readings or in the slides.

Do you post the slides online?

Yes, on Canvas. However, my slides are low on text and high on visuals, so they're pretty useless without attending lecture and participating in discussion.

I missed class: can I get the notes?

Ask a classmate, or ask me to ask someone to share their notes with you.

I missed class: can I make up for lost credit?

No. The portion of your discussion grade that comes from attendance cannot be made up.

I don't speak up a lot in class. Can I earn participation credit in some other way?

You may post regularly to the forums under *Canvas > Discussions*. While not as valuable credit-wise as participating in person, it is a valid alternative for those who don't feel comfortable speaking up.

How quickly are grades posted?

Questions: typically 1-2 days.
Tests: typically 7-10 days.
Final: 3-4 days after classes end.

I don't like my grade. Can you change it?

You need supporting evidence to back up a grade request change. Talk to me in person, present your evidence, and make your case.

What grade do people usually get?

Students from my other philosophy classes typically average around 88-90% (a high B).

~~Should my camera be on while in Zoom?~~

~~I recommend that it is: it's more rewarding and involving for all of us to see one another.~~