

AMH 4612
Sport and American Culture/ Spring 2026
T & Thrs (8:35 am-10:25 am, 9:35 am-10:25 am) TUR 2328

Professor Jack E. Davis Ofc. Keene-Flint 235
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Website: people.clas.ufl.edu/davisjac/
Ofc. Hrs.: Tuesday 10:30-12:30, Thursday, 10:30-11:30

This course explores the place of sport in American society and culture from the time of European settlement to the present. It uses sport, in its institutional and recreational forms, to illuminate broader historical themes: urban and community life, economic development, social relationships, social mobility, and popular and cultural processes.

Course Objectives:

- ☐ Expanding one's knowledge of the history of sport and its place in the larger American experience.
- ☐ Introducing the student to scholarship in sport history.
- ☐ Promoting critical thinking about the dynamics of race, gender, and class in American society.
- ☐ Advancing the student's experience in the reading, researching, and writing tasks of the historian.
- ☐ Improving the student's cognitive and communication skills.

Course Requirements:

Class attendance and participation	10%
(.5% of the 10% attendance grade deducted for each absence after 1 freebie absence)	
Oral history/autobiography review	20%
Mid-term take-home essay	35%
Final take-home essay	35%
Grammar and Writing Guide (grade factored into written assignments)	

Course Grading Scale (see UF grading scale at end of syllabus):

A+ =100
A =95
A- =90
B+ =88
B =85
B- =80
C+ =77
C =75
C- =70
D =65

Assignments not completed earn a 0

Plagiarized and AI-written assignment (see plagiarism section below) earn a 0

Assignments not turned in before or by stated due date will not be accepted. All assignments

must be submitted on Canvas in Word **(NO PDFs)**

Class participation is based on attendance and discussion participation. You are allowed one unexcused absences without penalty. Each additional absence will result in .5% deduction from the 10% class-participation requirement. Religious holidays, UF athletic travel conflicts, and written explanations from a certified health professional are eligible for an excused absence when cleared with the professor. See UF attendance policy at <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>.

Course Texts (required):

H. G. Bissinger, *Friday Night Lights: A Town, A Team, and a Dream* (Da Capo Press, 2000)

Darcy Frey, *The Last Shot: City Streets, Basketball Games* (Mariner Books, 2004)

Elliot J. Gorn and Warren Goldstein, *A Brief History of American Sports* (University of Illinois Press, 2004)

Mary Lou LeCompte, *Cowgirls of the Rodeo: Pioneer Professional Athletes* (University of Illinois Press, 1999)

Jules Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment: Jackie Robinson and His Legacy* (OUP, 1997)

Week I (Jan 13 &15): Course introduction

Reading: Gorn and Goldstein, chapter 1

Week II (Jan 20 & 22): Early American Sports

Reading: Gorn and Goldstein, chapter 1, cont.

Week III (Jan 27 & 29): City Sports and the Rise of Urban Society
(Monday September 4, Labor Day Holiday)

Reading: Gorn and Goldstein, begin reading chapter 2

Grammar and Style Guide Exercise Due Friday September 8 on Canvas by 11:59 pm

Week IV (Feb 3 & 5): Religion and Physical Culture in Victorian Society

Film: *Chariots of Fire*

Reading: Gorn and Goldstein, chapter 2

Week V (Feb 10 & 12): The American Way: The Development of Youth Sports, Intercollegiate Sports, and Organized Sports

Reading: continued from last week

Week VI (Feb 17 & 19): The American Tough

Film: *On the Water Front*

Reading: Gorn and Goldstein, 98-113, 138-49.

Week VII (Feb 24 & 26): The Last Blood Sport

Film: *When We were Kings*

Reading: Gorn and Goldstein, 114-28.

Week VIII (Mar 3 & 5): The Idea of the American Sports Hero and Heroine

Reading: Gorn and Goldstein, 183-96

Week IX: (Mar 10 & 12): America's Game: The Early Years of Baseball

Film: *Baseball* (excerpts)

Reading: Gorn and Goldstein, 209-220; begin reading Tygiel

Week X: (Mar16-20) Spring Break

Week XI (Mar 24 & 26): America's Game and the American Dilemma

Reading: Tygiel, all.

Mid-Term Take-Home Essay Due March 27 on Canvas by 11:59 pm

Week XII (Mar 31 & April 2): Women and American Sports

Reading: Gorn and Goldstein, 197-208; LeCompte, all.

Oral history/autobiography review due due on Canvas April 3. 11:59 pm

Week XIII (April 7 & 9): Gridiron Culture and Local Values

Reading: Bissinger, all.

Week XIV (April 14 & 15): Round Ball, Magic Ball

Reading: Gorn and Goldstein, 222-249; start Frey.

Week XV (April 21): Dreams

Reading: All of Frey.

Final Take-Home Essay Due April 26 on Canvas by 11:59 pm

Course Requirements Descriptions:

All written work for the course must be written in 12-point double-spaced print and submitted on Canvas in .doc or docx. **(DO NOT SUBMIT A PDF FILE)** by the due date and time Your work must also be presented in third-person language.

Course Attendance and class participation is required. Students are expected to come to class for lectures and prepared to participate in discussions. All missed classes after 2 free absences will result in a deduction from your class participation grade. *****If you miss 8 or more classes, or simply stop attending, because you believe you can pass the course successfully by only completing the written assignments, you won't. You will receive a failing grade.***

An absence is considered *excused* if there is an *acceptable reason* according to UF policy (<http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationattendance.html>). Examples of acceptable reasons are medical illness, religious holidays, and military obligation. It is the student's responsibility to notify the instructor of an excused absence and to provide documentation of an acceptable reason. Otherwise, the absence will be considered *unexcused* and will result in a quiz grade of zero if a quiz is administered when the student is absent. Whenever possible, the instructor should be notified prior to the absence. When this is not possible (e.g., due to unexpected emergency or illness), the instructor should be notified as soon as possible.

Grammar and Style Guide exercise can be found on my Canvas site. Download and answer the questions by circling that which you believe to be the correct response. You will be required to follow the rules of the guide in all writing assignments for the course. If you fail to show proof of having completed the guide before any one of the writing assignments is due, you will lose 5 points from the assignment grade. If you fail to follow the standards laid out in the guide, up to 5 points will be deducted from your assignment grade.

Mid-term and Final Papers will represent responses to a list of essay questions provided on my web site at least one week prior to the due date of the assignment. The questions will be drawn from the assigned readings and the course lectures, and you will be expected to use the course readings and your class notes as sources to answer the questions. Each answer must be presented in essay format, using formal, academic language and style (i.e., complete sentences, tightly constructed paragraphs, no colloquialisms). Do not, in other words, provide answers in lists or bullets. Those exams that address each question in a rigorous and organized manner are more likely to earn a decent grade. These grades will be dependent in part on your compliance with the rules in the Grammar and Style Guide standards.

Autobiography/Oral History Paper assignment asks you to choose an autobiography of any athlete who had an impact on American sports and society, or whose life with sports was shaped by larger society. Pay particular attention to the latter two. We're not interested in personal

athletic achievements, except as backdrop, as we are the big picture. Examples would include sexual discrimination shaping Billie Jean King's tennis career, or an immigrant or first-generation American drawn to a sport by the forces of Americanization.

The book must be an autobiography **as opposed to a biography**. You can alternatively use an oral history of the person.

Write a three-page, double-spaced paper, following the writing-mechanics rules, summarizing that person's life and highlighting the points above: how that person had an impact on his or her sport and larger American society, or how American society or social changes in American life shaped that person's experiences in American sports.

Other Business:

Plagiarism and Honesty Code:

Keep in mind that your written assignments must represent original work. You cannot copy the words, phrases, arguments, ideas, and conclusions of someone else or of another source (including Internet sources) without giving proper credit to the person or source by using both **quotation marks** and a **footnote**. Do not cobble together paragraphs or passages of separate texts and then try to claim that you have done original and legitimate work. You must write with your own ideas and in your own words. If you copy the words of someone else without putting those words in quotation marks, **REGARDLESS OF CITING THE SOURCE**, you are plagiarizing. Plagiarism is theft, and it is academic dishonesty. You can be reported to the Dean of Students office for plagiarism, and the incident may then become a permanent part of your academic record. Plagiarism **will** earn you a failing grade in the course, a grade that is final and that cannot be made up. If you have any questions about how you are citing or using sources, come to me for the answers.

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 Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions.
<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/>

Again, please consult with me if you have any questions or concerns.

In-Class Recording:

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the

instructor. A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session. Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student

Classroom Assistance:

Please do not hesitate to contact the instructor during the semester if you have any individual concerns or issues that need to be discussed. Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center. Click here (<https://disability.ufl.edu/get-started/>) to get started with the Disability Resource Center. 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.

Online Course Evaluation:

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.ua.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.bluer.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Academic Resources Information:

E-learning technical support: Contact the UF Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.

Career Connections Center: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601.

Career assistance and counseling services.

Library Support: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding

resources.

Teaching Center: Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420.

General study skills and tutoring. Writing Studio: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138.

Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.

Student Complaints On-Campus: Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage for more information.

On-Line Students Complaints: View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process.

History Majors:

If you are a history major or minor and wish to receive important announcements on courses, scholarships, awards, and the Phi Alpha Theta Honor Society, please sign on to the history department listserv. Compose a message to: majordomo@clas.ufl.edu. In the text of the message, type the following: subscribe hist-ba@history.ufl.edu

Alpata: A Journal of History

Keep in mind that the undergraduate- and graduate-student members of Phi Alpha Theta History Honor Society at the University of Florida publish an academic journal each spring. In the fall, the journal editors will be sending out a call for submissions (articles and book reviews) to the journal. The journal is also looking for talented students who would like to serve on the editorial board. Please contact me if you're interested.

UF Grading Scale

A = 4.0

A- = 3.67

B+ = 3.33

B = 3.0

B- = 2.67

C+ = 2.33

C = 2.0

C- = 1.67

D+ = 1.33

D = 1.0

D- = 0.67

E = 0.0

E1 = 0.0 Stopped attending or participating prior to end of class

I (incomplete) = 0.0