

TEACHING AMERICAN STUDIES:**TEACHING AMERICAN SPORT ‘DOWN UNDER’****INTRODUCTION**

PAUL TAILLON

A while ago, when I mentioned that I was editing an *AJAS* Teaching Section forum on the teaching of sport in American Studies, a colleague responded, ‘Oh ... that sounds... interesting’. Now this friend of mine has as much interest in sport as anyone in New Zealand, but as an academic this person gave me the distinct feeling that teaching a subject like sport was somehow trivial, of less merit than, say, a subject such as popular culture or Hollywood film (subjects that, of course, underwent their own struggles for scholarly legitimacy). In fact, this kind of response has greeted scholars and teachers of sport historically, for it has been until only fairly recently—the past three decades—that historians, sociologists, and cultural studies scholars have undertaken serious study of sport. Until its entry into the academy, scholars tended to regard sport as either unworthy of attention or so well understood by the public that study of it would neither yield new knowledge nor shed new light on any of the social, cultural, or historical problems of the United States.

But the study and teaching of sport in American Studies *is* legitimate, for as a social, cultural, and economic activity and as a set of institutions sport has been central to the American experience. The courses presented in this issue’s teaching forum illustrate the ways in which the study of sport can shed light on key aspects and issues in United States history, culture, and politics. Steve Jackson teaches in the School of Physical Education at the University of Otago. The two upper-division undergraduate courses he teaches—‘Advanced Sociology of Sport’ and ‘Sport, Media and Culture’—do not appear to have American content at first glance. Nevertheless, these courses, the latter one especially, draw upon the United States, illustrating the worldwide influence of contemporary American popular culture. Vernon Andrews teaches in the American Studies Programme at Canterbury University. His American Sports Culture (AMST 244/344), a combined second- and third-year course, is implicitly comparative. Andrews engages his New Zealand students by asking them to help him, an American, understand such ‘non-American’ sports as cricket and rugby. Both Jackson and Andrews encourage their students to understand the identity politics of American sport and the ways in which sport is shaped by global media while at the same time inviting them to make comparisons and connections between American sport and their own New Zealand context.

Jackson and Andrews highlight issues of ethnicity/race, gender, and power in their courses, but what appears to make their teaching effective is the way in which they get their students to engage critically with subject matter they may think they know a lot about. Jackson, for instance, pulls back the curtain covering the connections between American sporting institutions and corporate power while Andrews gets his students to grapple with the often fraught racial and gender politics of American sport (to say nothing of the politics surrounding differently-abled athletes). In the end, both essays demonstrate the potential of American sport as an effective vehicle for teaching the United States 'outside' of the United States. Were we to 'flip the script' and teach Australian and New Zealand sport in the United States, no doubt American students would gain greater insight into the culture, society, and politics of the countries we live and work in 'down under'.

**SPORT, MEDIA AND CULTURE: IMPLICATIONS FOR
AMERICAN STUDIES
PHYSICAL EDUCATION: PHSE 424**

STEVE JACKSON

Most people are quite surprised to learn that a course such as PHSE 424 'Sport, Media and Culture' actually exists and more significantly is taught within a School of Physical Education. However, the School of Physical Education at the University of Otago offers one of the most comprehensive programs of its kind in relation to fields variously known as 'Sport and Exercise Science', 'Kinesiology', 'Human Kinetics' and 'Physical Cultural Studies'. Our degree is a 4-year programme and, after 2 years of core courses spanning the biophysical and socio-cultural studies of the body, students 'major' in one of four areas of specialisation including the one in which I teach, 'Sport and Leisure Studies'. Within this area students have the opportunity to study Sport Sociology, Sport History, Leisure Studies, Body Culture, Sport Organisation, Sport & Social Policy, Sport and Social Theory, Sport Film and a range of others related to Health, Physical Activity and Outdoor Experiential Education. In this article I focus on the two interrelated courses I currently teach: PHSE 338 'Advanced Sociology of Sport', which is a prerequisite for the more advanced PHSE 424 'Sport, Media and Culture'. To be clear from the outset, my emphasis is on PHSE 424 but I wanted to share some basic information about PHSE 338 since students need some of this knowledge prior to exploring the role of media-sport in defining particular problems. Notably, both courses draw heavily upon international examples and the U.S.A. in particular, given its ubiquitous presence within global contemporary popular culture.

PHSE 338 'Advanced Sociology of Sport' is largely structured as a course in identity politics: gender, race, nation and sexuality and all of their related intersections. Here, students are asked to think about the ways in which sport serves as both a cultural practice and cultural site where these identities are represented, reproduced and resisted. For example, we compare the way in which sport provides a place where both African American and Maori and Pacific Island athletes appear to demonstrate enormous success. However, this is contrasted with their lack of access and success in other areas of social life along with the potential social costs of young minority group athletes over-investing their time and energy into sports that offer a short and rather tenuous career path. Moreover, success in sport often serves to reproduce particular racial stereotypes and discourses linked to genetic advantages and 'natural talent'. This is one reason why we explore the power of the media to represent and reproduce a range of discourses. Going one step further, while PHSE 338 examines the

representational power of the media, students also gain an understanding of how global mass media are structured to influence our world view. As such, students learn about how media content is produced, represented, consumed and incorporated into lived experience. Given the power of the American media and its mass production of popular culture with respect to music, fashion, television, Hollywood movies and, last but not least, sport, it should be no surprise that any course dealing with media would connect with American Studies.

As one quick example, I use the Media Education Foundation (MEF) documentary 'The Mickey Mouse Monopoly' as the basis for one of my 'video tutorials'. 'The Mickey Mouse Monopoly' reveals how the magic and innocence of Disney's globally distributed, animated film productions mask offensive and arguably oppressive messages about a range of identity politics. This documentary (although now somewhat dated) provides an excellent starting point for students (including those in New Zealand and Australia) to see how both a brand and global corporation (i.e., Disney) with which they are quite familiar is shaping our world view. The video not only examines how Disney is structured but leading experts discuss how specific Disney "cartoons" serve to reproduce stereotypes about gender and race. As one specific link to American Studies, I have students explore the connections between Disney's 'Pocahontas' and the debates about Native Indian mascots. These debates centre around whether it is appropriate to use Native Indian culture (names, symbols) within a sporting context. One of the key targets has been the names of teams and their associated mascots including: the National Football League's "Washington Redskins" and Major League Baseball's Cleveland Indians whose logo is a cartoon Indian figure called "Chief Wahoo". Connecting these sporting issues to Disney's 'Pocahontas' in conjunction with some historical contextualization of the plight of Native Americans offers a powerful site for linking oppressions of the past to those of the present. My own teaching experience indicates that students, while at times somewhat sceptical of certain arguments, really do begin to see familiar things with a much more critical eye.

As previously noted, PHSE 338 'Advanced Sociology of Sport' is a prerequisite for PHSE 424 'Sport, Media & Culture'. With a basic understanding of identity politics and at least some appreciation of the role of the media, students get the opportunity to see how our wider contemporary social existence is influenced by global media. Below I outline the objectives and structure of the Sport-Media course and highlight some of its links with American Studies. Where appropriate I have noted specific readings that may be of interest to those wishing to incorporate examples of sport into their courses.

Sport, Media and Culture (PHSE 424): Course Objectives:

1. To gain an appreciation of the power of the media to shape, represent, and reproduce our social reality.
2. To develop a basic sense of media literacy, that is, skills for reading, understanding and resisting media.
3. To gain an understanding of the power and politics associated with defining national and other identities in context of globalisation.
4. To gain an understanding of the politics and disjunctures that emerge when global forces meet local cultures.
5. To make connections between the issues related to the politics of identity examined in PHSE 338 'Advanced Sociology of Sport' and how these are played out within various media contexts.

Sport, Media and Culture (PHSE 424):

I begin PHSE 424 'Sport, Media and Culture', with an overview lecture that is intended to overwhelm the students in terms of content and pace of delivery. This exercise is intended to capture the fleeting, sound-bite nature of contemporary media. Here, I also illustrate the role of the media in influencing world politics and national elections along with the representation of identities, public issues and social policy. In particular, I emphasise the role of the media as a foundation for contemporary global consumer capitalism. In turn, I present a model loosely based on Richard Johnson's (1987) thought provoking article entitled 'What is cultural studies anyway?'. Johnson attempted to answer this question by outlining a 'circuit of commodification', that is, a way of tracing how commodities are produced, represented, consumed, regulated and incorporated into everyday lived experience. I use this model as a framework for the course to illustrate how "media sport" and its related commodities (sport spectacle, sport celebrity, and sport promotional culture) are organised and impact on our lives. Thus, PHSE 424 examines sport in relation to the politics of production, politics of representation, the nature of audiences and consumption, the role of state or other regulation, and ultimately the way in which media sport plays out in everyday lived experience. A key point, reinforced throughout, is the challenge of seeing all aspects of the circuit at any one time. That is, we tend to see the beautifully choreographed advertisements featuring high profile celebrity athletes of sport companies such as Nike but not the human rights violations of those involved in the labour of production that are the foundation of the company's success.

So, how is this done? In addition to lectures I use a series of documentaries as part of my video tutorials, many of which are drawn from the Media Education Foundation Series. These provide high quality productions of “real world” issues that, while not necessarily linked to sport per se, stimulate thinking and connections to lectures and readings. For example, as previously noted, in the prerequisite course (PHSE 338) students examine the MEF documentary ‘The Mickey Mouse Monopoly’ to explore how Disney Corporation plays a key role in the global distribution of particular representations of identity. However, in PHSE 424 we examine Disney from a slightly different perspective in order show its links with other major global corporations. To assist with this I draw upon an article by Harvey, Law and Cantelon that effectively maps out the ownership patterns and links between some of the world’s leading media and other companies.¹

In one snapshot students get to see the sheer size of one particular corporation and how it is interconnected to other multi-national organisations spanning a diverse range of business interests including: magazines, newspapers, music, movies, television, the internet and sport. To reinforce the point about the links among media, sport and Americanization I use the case of the National Hockey League (NHL’s) Anaheim Mighty Ducks. Owned by Disney Corporation, and by default its partner and subsidiary companies, television networks ABC and ESPN, the team name is directly linked to a Disney movie (in fact a trilogy of movies) and later animated television series, ‘The Mighty Ducks’. Furthermore, we are able to make connections between “America” and Australia and New Zealand by tracing the wide range of media synergies associated with Rupert Murdoch’s *News Corp* and *News Limited*, including FOX and SKY TV networks. This background helps in later sections of the course where we talk about globalisation and its impact on national and local cultures. Given my background, I focus on how American/global media influence both Canadian and New Zealand identity, looking at everything from McDonalidization to particular cases of sport.

Inasmuch as PHSE 424 attempts to confirm the power of global media, and American media in particular, we also examine local/national resistance. From a Canadian perspective I use the historical case of former ice hockey star Wayne Gretzky, whose marriage to actress Janet Jones and his eventual trade to the Los Angeles Kings in 1988 was characterized as a ‘national crisis’ couched largely within a discourse of ‘Americanization’ (see Jackson, 1994). Within a New Zealand context we spend a fair amount of time tracing the relationship between global sportswear company, Adidas,

¹ Harvey, J. , Law, A. and Cantelon, M., ‘North American Professional Team Sport Franchises Ownership Patterns and Global Entertainment Conglomerates’, in *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 18 (4), 2001, pp. 435-457.

and the NZRU/All Blacks (see Jackson and Hokowhitu, 2002; Scherer and Jackson 2007; 2008; Jackson, Batty, and Scherer, 2001). Although Adidas is not an American company we are able to draw parallels with similar global sport-corporate ownership and sponsorship patterns. What we are able to illustrate is the fact that the major television rights deal with News Limited (SKY SPORT) attracted a major sponsor such as Adidas, who knew that their brand would get global media exposure. Moreover, we are able to illustrate how particular elements of largely, but not exclusively, American entertainment-sporting spectacle emerges through league structures, team names, cheerleaders, night games and entertainment focused production values. The longer term, wider implications of 'American sporting spectacle' really begins to hit home when I draw their attention to the emerging popularity of the 'haka' in America. At first appearing almost flattered by the overseas popularity of a national cultural ritual, students are soon shocked to learn it is being used by Texas High School football teams or, perhaps worse, characters on 'American Gladiators'.

It is at this point that PHSE 424 begins to explore the possibility of cultural resistance. With respect to sport it is quite easy to draw upon examples of resistance against Nike given the highly publicised nature of their engagement in labour exploitation. Students learn about public protests and boycotts but perhaps not surprisingly find it difficult to see how they could personally get involved. At this point I offer some of the research we have been involved in that looks at how global sport advertising has been challenged within local contexts. Here, I draw upon collaborative research that has been carried out with postgraduate students and colleagues overseas. Personally, I have found the experience of cooperating with key scholars addressing similar problems in other global contexts to be not only rewarding but essential. Within a New Zealand context I show examples of particular television advertisements that have been banned from screening. Indeed, students not only watch these but read articles about how and why they were banned within context of debates about globalisation/Americanisation. We offer cases involving a range of companies including Nike, Adidas, Reebok and Lynx. Each of these companies had advertisements banned from New Zealand television screens due to one issue: 'violence'. It is clear that America has become demonised with respect to its production and circulation of violent movies, television and more recently music in certain forms of rap. The fact that other nations, including Australia and New Zealand, produce or at least screen to general audiences equally if not more violent content is largely overlooked. To illustrate the complexity and contradiction of what is referred to as a global/local disjuncture we navigate through the process of public complaint, ASCB (New Zealand's Advertising Standards Complaints Board) assessment and the basis of the final decision to accept or reject

particular advertisements (the same process could be done with television complaints). In one case a Reebok ad featuring then NBA basketball star Shawn Kemp competing against an animated opponent was banned due to 'excessive and inappropriate violence'. The Director of the TVCAB (Television Commercial Approvals Bureau, an industry funded, but independent regulatory agency) at the time, Winston Richards, was quoted as saying: 'There seems to be a trend over the past couple of years, originating in America, to have increasingly violent and aggressive sport shoe commercials and in our view they are inappropriate.' (See Jackson, Grainger and Batty, 2004: 222). With respect to teaching then, we compare and contrast the advertisement with local productions to try to explain what people found objectionable. While in some cases one could argue that advertisements cross the line of being in the public interest, there are others where 'foreign' (read largely American) commercials are targeted. The course concludes with a wider analysis and discussion of the media-violence debate where again American popular culture takes centre stage.

I have used a range of assessments in the course over the years including the traditional essays and examinations. However, I have also used team debates to help develop particular skills. Issues such as 'The Americanisation of New Zealand' or 'Media-Violence' lend themselves very well to developing research, presentation and debating skills. Each year I try to have students do something a little bit different and with the rapid pace of technological developments they certainly have access to a wider range of resources than ever before. As one example of an assignment I have used several times I have assign students a particular form of identity politics (gender, race, sexuality) and ask them to explore how this is played out in contemporary advertising. In part, this is intended to encourage them to make connections to the prerequisite course, PHSE 338. As students learn more about the cultural and ideological power of the media and advertising they gain confidence in critiquing not only the reproduction of various forms of discrimination but also the commercial exploitation of identity politics itself. This assignment also illustrates the complexity and contradictions of contemporary social problems. For example, we contrast the conspicuous (albeit often stereotypical) representations of gays and lesbians within almost every aspect of contemporary television but their apparent invisibility within sport. Thus, while corporations, including media production companies and their advertisers, acknowledge the buying power of the gay community there are particular sites within society that remain largely prohibited.

PHSE 424 is not a course about American Studies but any consideration of the power of global media cannot ignore the influence of American multinational corporations and their influence on international popular

culture, including sport. Below I offer the basic outline of the course along with some references, some of which have been referred to above, that may be useful.

Sport, Media and Culture (PHSE 424): Course Structure & Selected Readings:

Week 1: Course Orientation: The Power of the Media

Week 2: Sport, Culture & Advertising

Andrews, D. L. 'Sport in the Late Capitalist Moment', in T. Slack (ed.), *The Commercialisation of Sport*, Routledge, Oxford, 2005, pp. 3-28.

Jackson, S. and Andrews, D., (eds), *Sport, Culture and Advertising: Identities, Commodities and the Politics of Representation*, Routledge, London, 2005.

Week 3: The Sports-Media Complex + The Politics of Production

Goldlust, J., 'Television and Sport: a Match made in Heaven', *Playing for keeps: Sport, the media and society*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1987, pp. 78-112.

Week 4: Representation: Media Texts & Semiotics

Week 5: Sport & Audience Research

Duncan, M. & Brummett, B. 'Types and sources of Spectating Pleasure in Televised Sport', *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 6, (3), 1989, pp. 195-211

Week 6 Sport, Citizenship & National Identity in Canada

Jackson, S. J. 'Rearticulating the Americanization of Culture Debate: Gretzky, Crisis and Canadian identity in 1988', *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 11, 1994, pp. 428-446.

Jackson, S. J. 'Exorcizing the ghost: Donovan Bailey, Ben Johnson and the Politics of Canadian identity', *Media, Culture & Society*, 26 (1), 2004, pp. 121-141.

Week 7: Sport, Media & National Identity in New Zealand

Perry, N. 'Boots, Boats & Bytes: Novel Technologies of Representation, Changing Media Organisation, and the Globalisation of New Zealand Sport', in R. Horrocks and N. Perry (eds), *Television in New Zealand*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2004, pp. 291-301.

Jackson, S. J., Batty, R. and Scherer, J., 'Transnational Sport Marketing at the Global/Local Nexus: The Adidasification of the New Zealand All Blacks', *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 3, (2), 1, 2001. pp. 85-201.

Week 8: Sport & the Globalisation/Americanisation of Culture

Andrews, D. L., Carrington, B., Mazur, Z. and Jackson, S. J., 'Global Jordanscapes: The place of American Sport Culture Within National Populist Imaginaries', *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 13, 1996, pp. 428-457.

Jackson, S., Scherer, J. and Silk, M., 'Globalisation and Sport in New Zealand', in C. Collins & S. Jackson (Eds.). *Sport in Aotearoa/New Zealand Society*, 2nd edition, Thomson Dunmore Press, Australia, 2007, pp. 130-146

Jackson, S. J. and Andrews, D. L. 'Excavating the (Trans) National Basketball Association: Locating the global/local nexus of America's world and the world's America', *Australasian Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 1, July 1996, pp. 57-64.

Scherer, J. and Jackson, S. 'Sports Advertising, Cultural Production and Corporate Nationalism at the Global/local Nexus: Branding the New Zealand All Blacks', *Sport in Society*, 10 (2), 2007, pp. 268-284.

Scherer, J. and Jackson, S. 'Producing Allblacks.com: Cultural Intermediaries and the Policing of Electronic Sporting Consumption', *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 25, 2008, pp. 187-205.

Week 9: Sport, Media & The Politics of Nike

Goldman, R. and Papson, S. *Nike Culture*, Sage, London, 1998.

Grainger, A. and Jackson, S. 'Resisting the Swoosh in the Land of the Long White Cloud', *Peace Review*, 11 (4), 1999, pp. 511-516.

Week 10: Sport, Globalisation & Disjuncture

Jackson, S. and Hokowhitu, B. 'Sport, Tribes and Technology: The New Zealand All Blacks *Haka* and the Politics of Identity', *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 26 (1), 2002, pp. 125-139.

Grainger, A. and Jackson, S. 'Sports Marketing and the Challenges of Globalization: A Case Study of Cultural Resistance in New Zealand', *International Journal of Sports Marketing & Sponsorship*, 2 (2), 2000, pp. 35-49.

Week 11: Sport, Media & Violence

Weaver, K. 'The Television and Violence Debate in New Zealand: Some Problems of Context', *Continuum*, 10 (1), 1996, pp. 64-75.

Young, K. & Smith, M. D. 'Mass media Treatment of Violence in Sports and its Effects', *Current Psychology: Research & Reviews*, 7 (4), 1988-89, pp. 298-311.

Week 12: Course Summary & Review**Summary**

Overall, PHSE 338 and PHSE 424 work in tandem to promote critical thinking about the role of sport in reflecting and reproducing issues to relating to global identity politics.

Sport is a powerful vehicle, cultural practice and site through which to understand our contemporary world. Curiously, sport tends to be overlooked, marginalised or taken for granted in the study of contemporary social problems and processes. As an aspect of contemporary popular culture whose structure and representation has largely evolved through U.S. media-entertainment companies, it is a rich and strategic site for American Studies.

**BASEBALL, CRICKET, GRIDIRON AND RUGBY: OPPOSITES
ATTRACT IN TEACHING AMERICAN SPORTS CULTURE
ABROAD**

VERNON L. ANDREWS

How do you get New Zealand students excited and engaged in learning about U.S. sport when most do not know anything about the rules or history of U.S. sport, especially the cultural history surrounding baseball, football and basketball? One general pedagogical rule I have learned here is not to make the U.S.A. (and sport) the only focus of a course. Thus, teaching American Sports Culture in New Zealand is not only about educating students on yet another American institution fraught with racism, sexism and homophobia, but also about educating students about American culture and history, the proclivities and peculiarities of American sports and fans, and how these all relate to situating one's own culture and sport as an institution in society – particularly New Zealand sport and society.

The University of Canterbury in Christchurch is an ideal setting for teaching sports culture of any type as the region, basically, is sports mad. Thus, this American studies stage 2/3 course (including both second and third year students) focuses on African American cultural issues in sport, gay and lesbian 'outing' dilemmas, the battles women engage in for monetary rights and the access/respect issues of differently-abled athletes. Within this focus, I work to achieve a delicate balance between sports students don't know (USA-based) with the sports stars and teams in New Zealand and Australia they do know intimately.

One of the beautiful aspects of teaching American Sports Culture (AMST 244/344) in New Zealand is that, from the start, I know I am far and away the expert on the topic from the moment I step into the classroom. My youth was spent consuming sport everyday on TV, radio and in newspapers but my Ph.D. years and time in New Zealand have been spent meticulously observing, researching and writing on the non-verbal cultural histories embedded in U.S. basketball, baseball and football (or "gridiron" as they call it here).¹ That is not saying much in a culture where the rugby scrum is king, but I at least feel reassured that my expensive graduate education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison was well worth those massive student loans. My hip-hop culture class, in stark contrast, is peppered with students who have vast knowledge about American rappers and groups I have only vague – or no – knowledge of.² This subject knowledge-gap in the past could have made 'teacher' quite nervous about being able to deliver the

product. Happily, I have found that students armed with a general knowledge and interest in the subject matter under discussion -- parent/coach sideline aggression in youth sport, doping in the Olympics, the commercialization of stadia -- can make for a much more interactive class.

So how does one begin all this in-class interaction? I always found that the first few weeks of class were tough-going. With little knowledge about the substance of baseball or football, students did not know where to start with a line of inquiry. Couple this with the universal problem of getting young students to engage in dialogue early in the semester and you can begin to see the problem 'Mr. Interactive Lecturer' had to contend with. The teaching problem/question for me in this class became, ironically, 'How could I increase student in-class efficacy and thereby increase their classroom participation on the discussion of American sport?' I decided, as a classroom rhetorical device, to 'flip the script' and engage a sporting topic I knew little about. I reasoned that by periodically showing my students that *not knowing* is perfectly fine and that *asking questions* is the road to knowledge I could set an example for them to follow. They might thus help *me* understand an antipodean sporting subject, and by so doing, feel less inhibited about asking inane questions. Of course, all this required me to watch the one thing American sports fans dread watching even more than soccer, and that is cricket. Gasp! Eight hours of viewing in one day? And yes, my U.S. prejudice for a "win" or "result" came to the fore when finding that my five days of watching might end in a 'draw' or tied match. Prejudice aside, I began to learn about cricket.

The logic worked as I began consciously to level the in-class playing field with rambling commentary on Commonwealth/Antipodean sporting codes with cross-cultural comparisons as discussion points during lectures. The students would much more likely participate and not feel 'uncomfortable' about asking questions on obscure things such as end zone dancing in professional football and why the 'World' Series only involves teams from the USA (short answer from Major League Baseball: "we *ARE* the world"). The goal became to integrate American sports culture into a framework of sport and society that my students were already familiar with. As the quintessential teacher – Yoda – might have said, 'learn cricket, rugby and netball you must.' So I did. In the rest of this essay, I will show how lecturer participant-observation in local sporting codes greatly aids teaching this esoteric American Studies topic down under.

Course Structure

American Sports Culture is taught in a twelve-week semester divided into two six-week terms. In the first term, I focus on African American sports culture. In the second term, I cover a variety of topics, including differently-

abled athletes, women and lesbian athletes, gay athletes, Native American protests on racist sports team names, and religion and sport. I highlight various individuals as exemplars, including Jesse Owens, Joe Louis, Jackie Robinson, Muhammad Ali, Chris Evert, Billie Jean King, Martina Navratilova, Greg Louganis, Terrell Owens, Venus Williams, Serena Williams and Tiger Woods. I draw upon a variety of resources utilized, including film, popular press articles, academic and popular books and journal articles. By the end of this course students 1) understand the struggle for racial diversity and cultural diversity in U.S. sport, 2) understand the struggle for women's equality in U.S. sport, 3) understand the struggles of other marginalized groups in U.S. sport, and 4) understand key controversial issues in U.S. sporting culture.

These are lofty goals for a 12-week course, to say nothing of the broad array of topics I cover. But with two 2-hour sessions per week, I am able to cover much ground. The first two-hour block is taken up with either film or video clips on a given topic. For instance, I screen 'He Got Game' by Spike Lee, which provides many talking points for students about the significance of sports stars in black urban areas. We easily discuss class, race and the exploitation of young athletes with abundant examples to drawn from the life of Jesus Shuttlesworth, the film's protagonist. I make use of a tool many lecturers routinely employ: get students to discuss the film or video clip in small groups first. In this way, they have already exercised their mouth muscles and feel less inhibited about shouting out "sexism!" or 'homophobia!' or 'the continued exploitation of black male athletes by the media, shoe companies and corporate league powers!' when I ask about the main themes of a film.

The interactive nature of my classes demands that I have something to 'feed off' of in terms of the material I choose for the day. I could go the easy route and present my notes oblivious to what the students thought or knew or cared about, later looking up at them verbally to note "this will all be on the test." But I did not come to New Zealand for one-way communication; I retain my student-status covertly and overtly. I constantly take notes on my experiences down-under for future research purposes, in addition to overtly informing students in class that I endeavour to learn sport (or hip-hop culture or racial politics) from their perspective.

To further elaborate on the structure of the course and its content, here is the syllabus for the *first six weeks* for both AMST 244 and AMST 344 students. Though the students, for the sake of repetition, are all together in one class, the assessment for each stage of learning is markedly different and will be discussed in the following section.

TERM ONE: The Significance and Controversy of Sport in the African American Community

Week 1: African/Americans & The Sports Dream

- Introduction to the course & video screening: 'He Got Game' by Spike Lee
 - Optional screening: 'Coach Carter'
 - 'The Role of Sport in the Black Community', Othello Harris
 - 'Betting Against the Odds: An Overview of Black Sports Participation', Gary A. Sailes
- Term one readings from *African Americans in Sport*, 1998, Gary Sailes, Ed., Transaction Publishers: Piscataway, New Jersey

Week 2/3: Globalizing Tiger Woods & Re-Branding Race

- 'The Dominant Images of Black Men in America: The Representations of O.J. Simpson', Billy Hawkins
- 'Race Logic and "Being like Mike": Representations of Athletes in Advertising, 1985-1994', Mikaela Dufur
- 'Gladiators, Gazelles, and Groupies: Basketball Love and Loathing', by Julianne Malveaux, in *Basketball Jones: America above the Rim*. Edited by Todd Boyd and Kenneth L. Shropshire, 2000, pp. 51-58. (*Optional, on reserve*)
- 'Black Sports Images in Transition: The Impact of Tiger's Roar', by Christopher P. Uchacz
- 'Looking Back at the Balcony (Tiger Woods)', in *Who's Afraid of a Large Black Man?*, Charles Barkley, 2006, pp. 1-15. (reading pack)
- **Screening:** Tiger Woods, ESPN Classic feature; *Tiger's Oprah Interview*

Week 4 Are Black Athletes Genetically Better?

- 'Race and Athletic Performance: A Psychological Review', David W. Hunter
- 'The Athletic Dominance of African Americans – Is There a Genetic Basis?' Vinay Harpalani
- 'The African American Athlete: Social Myths and Stereotypes', Gary Sailes

Week 5/ 6: Express Yourself! Sport and Individual Celebration

- 'An Examination of Basketball Performance Orientations among African American Males', Gary A. Sailes
- 'Black Bodies, White Control', V. L. Andrews (reading pack)
- 'African American Player Codes on Celebration, Taunting and Sportsmanlike Conduct', V. L. Andrews
- 'Cool Pose: Black Masculinity and Sports', Richard Majors

- Screenings: ‘Muhammad Ali’ (TV One); ‘A Tradition of Excellence’ (NCAA)
- Assignment #1 due (2 screening essays), (10%)
- Assignment #2 due, essay/test, due (40%)

The primary purpose of term one is to interrogate the role of sport in the black community; a secondary goal is to critically analyse the historical stereotypes of African Americans in the U.S. and in global media culture. These two goals work hand-in-hand and the two themes are interwoven throughout each lecture. When asked about their own stereotypes of Black Americans, students in New Zealand respond in much the same way as my U.S. students at Wisconsin did in the 1990s: ‘athletic’ is always near the top of everyone’s list, along with ‘rhythmic’ (regarding dancing and singing) and ‘badass’ (regarding toughness, crime and gang activity). Deconstructing these myths and embedding sport in the larger context of African American culture is exciting for me as I get to see their faces and attitudes slowly change after screenings and story-telling. ‘He Got Game’ and ‘Coach Carter’ both speak extensively about how sport is both loved for its mythology as a “way out of the ghetto” and loathed for its de-emphasis of high school and University education.

The readings by Sables (1997) and Harris (1997) highlight this sporting dilemma in the black community, and essays by Mikaela (1997), Hawkins (1998) and Uchacz (1998) all speak to the stereotypical imagery of African American males in U.S. society and those same images as recreated in sporting commentary and magazines.

We have a brief interlude to discuss an even more deeply-held belief – that of black genetic physical superiority in sport and society. Students discuss and debate this positive stereotype while learning that it is a double-edged sword. While most students have never reflected on the negative implications of a positive stereotype, they grapple with the implicit assumption that African Americans are not as well-suited as whites who, by implication, are more genetically suited towards *non*-physical skills such as front-office management, head coaching and key “thinking” positions on the field. Students quickly see the parallels with Maori, Samoan and Aboriginal athletes and stereotypes about athleticism as juxtaposed against white New Zealanders and Australians. Though the distinctions are not as harsh as in the U.S., there is still some degree of looking to Pacific Islander and Polynesian athletes as ‘more physical than mental’ on the field of play. This parallel is what stimulates the cross-cultural in class discussion.

The final section of term one is where I discuss (in far more detail than my students care to hear about) the non-verbal expressivity of African

Americans in sport and society. My contention is that Muhammad Ali represented the ‘big bang’ as it were for black expression in sport. We discuss Ali’s brash physical and verbal expressivity in the context of the turbulent 1960s and how ‘expression rules’ since 1984 in professional and NCAA football have attempted to regulate physical celebratory behaviour. The celebratory behaviour – dancing or signalling to the crowd after making an otherwise brilliant play that requires some form of individuality – is considered ‘excessive’ by league and NCAA standards. We do not highlight the ‘right and wrong’ of celebration, rather, I make a case for an African American sub-culture that is influenced by everything from religiosity to preachers to slavery to hip-hop culture.

My broader pedagogical purpose is to show students the cultural relativity of terms such as ‘sportsmanlike’ and phrases such as ‘appropriate conduct’. Each country will look at sporting behaviour very differently among its various regions, and often within the same city. Students are then prompted to discuss the various high schools around Christchurch and how each has a differing ‘ethos’ about how sport is to be played. We refer to chapters in the reader by Sailes and Andrews which highlight differences in the meanings blacks and whites give to the playing of sport.

Term two has a different, but no less complex set of challenges. Here is the syllabus for the second six-weeks of the course:

TERM TWO: The Challenges of Marginalized Sporting Groups

Week 7: Differently-Abled Sports Issues

- ‘The Sociology of Ability and Disability in Physical Activity’, Margaret Carlisle Duncan, *SSJ*, 2001, vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 1-4.
- ‘Disability, Sport, and the Body in China’, *SSJ*, 2001, vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 51-68.
- ‘Reconceptualizing Inclusion: The Politics of University Sports and Recreation Programs for Students with Mobility Impairments’, David Promis, Nirmala Erevelles, and Jerry Matthews, *SSJ*, 2001, vol. 18, no. 1, p. 37-50.
- ‘An Ideal Misconstrued: Newspaper Coverage of the Atlanta Paralympic Games in France and Germany’, Otto J. Schantz & Keith Gilbert (opt.) *SSJ*, 2001, vol. 18, no. 1, p. 69-94.
- Screening: ESPN/60 Minutes documentaries on wheelchair athletes: *Murderball*

Week 8: Gay Masculinity

- Rodman, Dennis, 'Man on Man: Painted Fingernails and the Status Quo', in *Bad as I Wanna Be*, Bantam Doubleday Dell Pub. Group, Inc. New York, 1996.
- Freeman, Paul and Ian Roberts, *Finding Out*. Random House. Australia, 1997.
- 'Sport, Sexuality, and the Gender Order: Amateur Rugby Union, Gay Men, and Social Exclusion', Michael Price and Andrews Parker, *SSJ*, 2003, vol. 20, n. 2, pp. 108-126.
- Screening: *The Greg Louganis Story* [ESPN Documentary]

Week 9/10: Women, Sports Equality & The Lesbian Threat

- 'Reading between the Lines: A Discursive Analysis of the Billie Jean King vs. Bobby Riggs "Battle of the Sexes"'. Nancy E. Spencer (*SSJ*, 2000, vol. 17, no. 4, pp. 386-402.
- 'Never Let the Bastards See You Cry', Toni Bruce, *SSJ*, 2000, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 69-74.
- 'Dis', Eleanor M. Miller, *SSJ*, 2000, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 75-80.
- 'A Quality Assessment of the Significance of Body Perception to Women's Physical Activity Experiences: Revisiting Discussions of Physicalities', Lisa McDermott, *SSJ*, 2000, vol. 17, no. 4, pp. 331-363.
- Screening: *When Billy Met Bobby* [ABC Television Re-enactment] Part 1 & 2

Week 11: Nationalism and Cultural Issues in U.S. Sport

- 'The Christian-Athlete: An Interactionist-Developmental Analysis', Christopher L. Stevenson, *SSJ*, 1991, vol. 8, no. 4, pp. 362-379.
- Hand-out on "Indian/Native American" issues in U.S. Sport
- ESPN News Story: *Native Team Names; Christian Athletes*

Week 12: Assignment #3 due (2 screening essays) (10%); #4 due, essay/test, (40%)

The topics covered in term two -- differently-abled athletes, gay athletes, lesbian athletes, Christian athletes and Native Americans (re sporting team names) -- tend to be uncomfortable subject matter for students. Not many able-bodied individuals willingly discuss the issue of the differently-abled in small talk, let alone classrooms. By the end of the discussion, however, it becomes a topic students don't want to leave behind; indeed, this week makes the biggest impact in terms of changing social attitudes, I believe. The screenings of documentaries featuring wheel-chair-bound individuals discussing how they became 'disabled' through a drunk-driving (or other) accident or were otherwise born 'not normal', and the ways in which their 'disability' affect their performance of the everyday tasks we take for granted, have a powerful impact. As the students begin to identify with

these on-screen everyday folks, the documentary's subjects transform into fierce athletes in wheelchairs slamming into one another and competing with every fibre of their being. They drink beer and flirt when they win, cry when they lose. Students are truly shaken by these life dramas and come away with new ways of viewing those who are physically different from themselves. Two tangential topics we have taken up recently are the dilemma of those with prosthetic legs or arms competing with technological advantages against those who struggle on without enhancements and the use of steroids and human growth hormones by athletes to improve on the body's ability to perform.

Students also feel challenged when we get to the topic of gender identity in sport. American basketball great Dennis Rodman and Australian Rugby League great Ian Roberts both critically comment on masculinity and what it means to be treated as 'gay' in team sport. Rodman's perspective is that of an African-American male heterosexual cross-dresser, while Roberts' view is that of a white male black-belt in karate. The two athletes are considered, at least in their respective sporting codes, as hyper-masculine: both were aggressive and feared for their tough play by others on the field or court. Rodman, after talking his way clear of a suicide attempt, decided to live his life as he wanted, which included dressing in traditionally feminine attire, driving both a pink pick-up truck and a pink motorcycle, painting his fingernails and also frequenting gay bars. Roberts, on the other hand, was known to fight frequently when challenged, get involved in abusive relationships (towards him, ironically), and refuse to pose with women for advertising promotions so as not to promote hypocrisy.

I ask the students – the men – to define masculinity and its relationship to outward appearance; that is, the way we dress, the vehicles we drive, and our association with women. Both Rodman and Roberts challenge our heterosexual definitions of masculinity and complexify the issue of what it is to be a 'man'. Male students typically squirm during this discussion. The women have less difficulty in this area – though some do feel challenged by a man who dresses and grooms better than themselves with feminine attire. In a similar sense, male students have no problems with the general notion of athletic women (or lesbian athletes), but women who are stronger than themselves (namely body-builders) challenge their notions of femininity.

Students of both sexes, I find, seem to have less difficulty accepting the concept of lesbian athletes in sport. The readings present first-person accounts of in-the-closet lesbians grappling with their own sexuality from a young age as well as the phenomenon of women in sport distancing themselves from lesbians (and the threat of appearing 'mannish') by over-feminizing their appearance or by sleeping with men to give the appearance

of heterosexuality (even lesbian athletes report this). A former member of the New Zealand national netball team, the Silver Ferns, and a member of the national women's rugby team, the Black Ferns, Louisa Wall, has been 'out' for a while and talks about the experience of dating who she wants to date. Ms. Wall (now a Member of Parliament) does not like the term lesbian, though she has had a female partner for several years now; she has also been involved, on her own accord, with men in the past. She proves such an eloquent spokesperson for same-sex dating and relationships (she jokes, handles tough questions, and discusses her strong bond with her parents) that students 'fall in love' with her personality, and by association, accept her lifestyle as she is happy 'in her own skin' as they say these days. Indeed, students end up wondering what all the fuss is about in and around women in sport. The fuss, I remind them, is not only over sex and sexuality, but equality.

The final week of the term is taken up with less controversial issues, although of no less interest to the students. We delve into the dilemma of Christian athletes who are conflicted about the brutality of their sport and 'winning at all costs' attitudes that prevail – attitudes that might conflict with the ethos of their religiosity. Most students remain mum, but some Christian athletes in class do speak up about their own conflicted feelings, which add a much-needed personal perspective. We flash back to Muhammad Ali using his newfound religiosity to promote racial equality and his anti-war sentiments as a way to ease into this topic of discussion. I also broaden the topic to include ways in which others non-traditional religious groups (Muslim, Mormons, Jews) have interjected their religiosity into sporting fixtures.

Finally, students learn about a controversy they know nothing about: the team-naming concerns voiced – but little heard – by American Indians. Native Americans have been poked fun at, caricatured and generally treated as second-class citizens in their depiction by teams as mascots and on team logos such as the Atlanta Braves, the Cleveland Indians (baseball) and the Washington Redskins (gridiron). Again, media discussions aid the debate in class over the rights of racial/ethnic groups over the rights of teams to retain their traditions verses the 'freedoms' of speech and school traditions in the United States. The term 'political correctness' gets thrown around in class and in media discussions on the topic – a convenient "out" when discussing racial insensitivity. Students are then asked to look at their own ethnic groups and figure ways that those identities could be used against them. We do discuss that one sacred New Zealand ritual of both Maori and Pakeha males -- the haka -- and how it was seen as an ethnic 'war' ritual and not suitable for the Olympics. I note that some would also see it as 'excessive celebration', and some could mock it in order to disgrace Maori. The haka,

then, becomes a touchstone for many of the issues discussed in both term one (stereotypes, the meaning of sport to sub-communities) and the last two discussions in term two. Therein I learn various nationalistic feelings students hold about *their* sacred cultural symbols.

Course Assessment

The second-year students have comprehensive tests at the end of each term. I focus their reading and lecture materials by giving them test questions along the way after each week's class and I take into consideration their in-class discussion as a way of bumping upward their final grade if they are on the borderline. The stage three students, on the other hand, get to complete a 12-page term paper, due at the end of the semester, but divided up into four components. Initially, the students complete an annotated bibliography (12 citations) on a topic generally around an area of interest in sport. Three weeks later, they submit a four-page outline which consists of a three-page "abstract" and a one-page detailed outline of at least three essay sections. In this way, I force them to choose a topic early-on. Their 'penultimate draft' is due two weeks before the end of the semester. I then go over these drafts with a fine-toothed comb, suggesting corrections as one would any journal article under review.

These revisions generally take students anywhere from four to eight hours to complete and are due within one week. This 'redraft' is the rare chance students get to conclude their work in as near-perfect a fashion as they ever will in undergrad education. Students, I hope, learn the art of thinking through a topic, gathering information, reflecting on the topic for an extended period of time, having tutorials on writing each section of the assignment, and in the end revising so that they learn the lesson of vision and revision in writing. Each section is graded with equal importance, 25% for each part of the essay.

Cricket Redux

After watching well over 1,000 hours of cricket during the past eleven years, it would be hard for me now to live without the great game. I have attended one day internationals on the north island, test matches in Australia (the Boxing Day Test, no less, in 2004), and have watched every ball of no less than 50 eight-hour matches. It was necessary for me to move beyond a superficial knowledge of cricket to truly understand why so many people were passionate about the sport. I can say the same for rugby, as I have attended matches at all grades over the past eleven years, played rugby (only once, fearing for my safety and desiring to play in pads), and gone as far as attending six test matches during the 1999 world cup in England, Scotland and Wales.

I have collected massive amounts of antipodean sports data, so much so that when the All Blacks once again came up short in the 2007 World Cup against France, guess who the most powerful television station in New Zealand (TV One) called the next day for comment on the state of New Zealanders and their devotion to rugby and sport? Your local American sport sociologist. While I said nothing of any great consequence, I did speak from a position of knowing all of the recent All-Black and Black Caps (cricket) history. My point here is that it is fruitful for academic/student in-class interaction and future research that we, as scholars teaching topics such as American Sports Culture (or other popular culture topics) in Australia and New Zealand, remain students forever and therefore living examples to young scholars of the lifelong learning process.

ENDNOTES

¹ For more on nonverbal culture in sport and African American culture, please see Andrews, V. L. & Majors, R. G., 'African American Nonverbal Culture', in Reginald Jones (ed.), *Black Psychology*, Cobb and Henry: Hampton, Virginia, 2004; Andrews, Vernon L., 'African American Player Codes on Celebration, Taunting and Sportsmanlike Conduct in College Football', *Journal of African American Men*. Volume 2: 2/3, 1997; and Andrews, Vernon L., 'Black Bodies – White Control: Race, Culture, Expression and The Contested Terrain of Sportsmanlike Conduct', *Journal of African American Men*. Volume 2:1, 1996.

² Please see Andrews, Vernon L., 'American Studies 111: Hip-Hop Culture Coming Soon to a Classroom Near You?', in *Australasian Journal of American Studies*, vol. 25, no. 1, July, 2006, pp. 103-114.