

**The Spirit of American Sports**  
*American Studies*

**Course Description**

At the root of our culture, sports are fun, an escape from the grind of day-to-day life. A simple glance at the television, however, and one sees on display steroid scandals, dogfighting charges and off-the-field issues that truly negate the spirit of American sport. In this course, students will delve deep into sports fandom, first analyzing the sports fans' experience as it relates, for example, to the sports venue and city. Students will analyze how the media represents sport, and how that representation shapes the life of the fan. Last, and most importantly, the class will delve deep into the spirit of American sports, attempting to determine where it truly lies.

**Required Texts**

Art Chansky, Blue Blood: Duke-Carolina: Inside the Most Storied Rivalry in College Hoops  
Mark Fainaru-Wada, Lance Williams, Game of Shadows  
Steve Rushin, Road Swing: One Fan's Journey Into The Soul Of America's Sports  
Various additional readings

**Course Requirements and Evaluation**

Response Papers (2): 15% each = 30% total  
Major Paper: 40%  
Presentation/Lead Discussion: 20%  
Class Participation: 10% total

**Major Papers**

These papers are meant to be, in a word, personal. Sports fandom is personal, whether we believe it or not.

For the first unit – **“The Sports Fans’ Experience”** – select a sports venue, one that you have attended. For the purpose of this assignment, select one that you can remember, preferably in vivid detail. Perhaps there is a venue that you frequented as a child. In this paper, your assignment is to suggest to your readers why this venue is, put bluntly, special. You must interview one other person that has frequented this venue. Incorporate in some way details from class in terms of why the sports venue is important to American culture. You also must accumulate 10 sources that reference your venue in some profound way.

For the second unit – **“The Sports Fan and the Media”** – argue for or against this question: Many say that sports are different today than they used to be. Scandals (e.g., steroids) prevail, and these, many say are a reflection of the way sport has evolved. Some say, however, that the media represents these scandals in a different light. How would you respond?

## Presentation/Discussions

Three groups, evenly divided, will lead a discussion at the conclusion of each unit. Discussions are open-ended, but must address applicable class content.

## Works Cited

- Bordonaro, Joe. "Tiger's Greatest Shot." *Saturday Evening Post*, July 2008: 16-88.
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- Chansky, Art. *Blue Blood: Duke-Carolina: Insidet he Most Storied Rivalry in College Hoops*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2005.
- Fainaru-Wado, Mark, and Lance Williams. *Game of Shadows: Barry Bonds, BALCO, and the Steroids Scandal that Rocked Professional Sports*. New York, NY: Penquin Group, 2006.
- Feinstein, John. *The Last Dance: Behind the Scenes at the Final Four*. New York, NY: Brown & Company, 2006.
- Freeman, Michael. *ESPN: The Uncensored History*. New York, NY: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2000.
- Los Angeles Times. *Jim Murray: The Last of the Best*. Edited by Bill Dwyre, Mike James and Steve Horn. Los Angeles, CA: Los Angeles Times, 1998.
- New York Times*. "Evolution of a Tournament." March 16, 2009.
- New York Times Magazine*. "When the Thunder Comes Dribbling Down the Plain." November 9, 2008.
- Reilly, Rick. *Hate Mail From Cheerleaders*. New York, NY: Sports Illustrated Books, 2007.
- Simmons, Bill. "A fan's notes: Gus, Kevin, more." *ESPN.com*. March 17, 2007. <http://sports.espn.go.com/espn/page2/blog/entry?id=2805762&name=simmons> (accessed April 1, 2009).
- Simmons, Bill. *Now I Can Die in Peace*. New York, NY: ESPN Books, 2005.
- Streeter, Kurt. "Los Angeles Times." *SuperSonics' Move Leaves a Bitter Pain*. July 6, 2008. <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/jul/06/sports/sp-streeter6>. (accessed April 1, 2009).