

Literature in Sporting Form
English

Course Description

In this course, students will explore sport as a literary subject, drawing on such themes as symbol, motif and metaphor in a variety of texts and genres, including journalism, fiction, non-fiction and memoir. We'll attempt to use these texts to analyze what sport means to our society, and the ethical questions that arise when discussing these questions.

Required Texts

W. P. Kinsella, Shoeless Joe
H. G. Bissinger, Friday Night Lights
Bill Bradley, Life on the Run
Roger Kahn, The Boys of Summer
Various additional readings

Course Requirements and Evaluation

Reaction Papers (3): 10% each = 30% total
Major Paper: 40%
Class Participation: 30%

Reaction Papers

You will be responsible for writing three reaction papers, in response to W. P. Kinsella's Shoeless Joe, Roger Kahn's The Boys of Summer, as well as H. G. Bissinger's Friday Night Lights. Paper topics are as follows:

- *Reaction Paper 1 – Shoeless Joe*: One major theme in Kinsella's work is dreaming. Ray's a dreamer. Using evidence from the novel, explain how baseball allows the pursuit of dreams. In addition, think about how you "dream" in your life. Can you draw parallels between Ray's experience and your own?
- *Reaction Paper 2 – The Boys of Summer*: Much of Kahn's work is spent off the baseball diamond, in which time Kahn paints a lyrical picture of the lives of the Brooklyn Dodgers. In terms of a work of non-fiction, how do we respond to an author getting up close and personal with athletes who typically live very private lives? Is a work about sports supposed to take place *on* the field? Use evidence from the text.
- *Reaction Paper 3 – Friday Night Lights*: High school football in Texas, and often sports in general, are tied to self-image. First, use evidence from the text that supports this specific point. How does this fact affect a larger culture? Make sure to explore the positive and negative consequences that result.

Major Paper

One of the goals of this course was to suggest that as consumers of sport, literature plays a large part in the consumption process. Explore the goals and literary journey associated with

each genre that we have discussed, using textual evidence from the novels we have read as well as the additional readings. Which ones are the most effective at conveying the sporting journey? Which ones can we leave behind? How important is it to remember the past? These are only some of the questions to consider, as this paper is open-ended.

Works Cited

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