Religion and the Body: Sports, Medicine, and Sexuality, Spring 2023 (REL 2413-30233)

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Class Meeting Times: M,W,F 12:30-1:30
Classroom: CLB (Classroom Building) 319
Office Room: SSH 160
Office Hours: W & F: 2:30-3:15, TH 3:00-4:30, or by appointment
General Education: (H) Humanities

Prerequisites: None

Course Description: The guiding argument for this course is that our bodies belong to, are defined by, constructed and shaped within and through a network of interrelated and authoritative discourses that target, control, and assign value to the individual and collective body. In this course, we will trace and analyze the intersections between religious beliefs, teachings and practices within and across the fields of sports, medicine and sexuality, which respectively, as authoritative discourses and institutions, provide their adherents with a range of teachings and techniques for self-mastery, including, the purification, transformation, and the redemption of our bodies. The second key contention that guides the structure and presentation of the course is that religion, sports, medicine and sexuality, cannot be entirely disentangled from one another because they are mutually constitutive of each other, most notably, they inform and support one another in their mutual obsession with the ordering, the evaluating and the controlling of our individual and corporate bodies. Regarding the structure of this course, there are three interrelated units, addressed in the following order: [1] Religion & Sports; [2] Religion & Medicine; [3] Religion & Sexuality. Due to the time constraints, we largely only focus on the Buddhist, Christian and Muslim traditions; another limitation is we focus on sports in the context of North America. Committed to an integrative and interdisciplinary approach in this course, we employ a range of historical, analytical and theoretical frameworks, with notable attention on issues related to geography, socio-economics, race, religion, and gender, in tandem with historical and contemporary case studies, to demonstrate the value (and limits) related to these various methodological approaches to the study of religion and the body as narrated in relation to our three touchstones: sports, medicine and sexuality. The course aims to build upon earlier material in later readings to encourage the recognition of the interrelatedness of disciplines and methodological approaches across these multiple topics and issues.

Required Course Textbooks:

Recommended Readings:

1 It should be noted that the university also participates in the targeting, evaluating, and controlling of our bodies, but that fact is beyond the scope of this course.
**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Students will (learn):

- of the importance and limits of interpretive frameworks for evaluating the variegated relationships that exist between religion and the body across sports, medicine and sexuality by using several interdisciplinary lenses (e.g., historical, scientific, theoretical, theological, and literary approaches).
- to recognize, reflect upon and evaluate the various roles that culture, gender and race play in shaping the ways we imagine, construct and discipline our bodies in the fields of religion, sports, medicine and sexuality.
- practice and improve upon listening (reading), assessing, and responding to the various arguments, issues and topics raised within this course in relation to the location of the body in religion, sports, medicine and sexuality.
- reflect upon how our own cultural and social locations have shaped our interpretation of the various readings assigned throughout this course, which presumptively, could fall out of the range of our own experiences.
- the value of listening and asking questions, and be encouraged, to do so themselves in the context of the classroom, reflections and on-line class discussions.
- practice and improve upon their analytical reading and writing skills in response to select readings, which in part, will be demonstrated by submitting an extended essay on one of the primary source documents.

**ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION (100 POINTS)**

Ten percent of the overall grade is based on attendance, which includes participation during in-class discussions. Excused absences are provided at my discretion depending on circumstances (e.g., athletics, academic commitments and emergencies). The final grade for attendance/participation will be calculated by beginning with the percentage of attended classes serving as the base and then additional points will be added for notable participation by the discretion of the professor. Generally, if students are attentive and regular (e.g., once every week) contributor within the contest of class discussions, they will be rewarded 7-15 points on top of their attendance percentage. For example, if a student showed up to 83% of the classes, their base score would be 83/100, then if they were an attentive and regular contributor, there attendance/participation grade would be between 90-93 points. If they were an exceptional contributor (e.g., once or more times in nearly every class verbally participating in the class discussions), the student would earn 15-25 points of participation credit on top of their attendance base. Students who rarely or never participate in class discussions will not earn additional points, at the same time, they will not be docked any points from their attendance grade.

**How to Download and Use I-Clicker for Attendance**

We will use I-Clicker to record attendance throughout the semester. Each student is responsible for registering themselves for the class on I-Clicker and marking themselves as present during the class time. If a student has any issue with I-Clicker, there will be 48 hours afforded from the day of the class to notify the professor of the problem so that it may be rectified. To use this program, download the app entitled "I-Clicker Student" and create an account using your Student ID & OKEY credentials on the app. Here is the link: [https://www.iclicker.com/](https://www.iclicker.com/) Once this is done, you can search for this class: "Religion and the Body: Sports, Medicine, Sexuality," and join. I have also entered the Course ID (REL 2413.39233), my last name (Pereira), and semester (Spring 2023), as other possible pathways to locate and ensure you have signed up for the correct course. Students will use their cell phones to mark them as present during each class (usually, at the beginning of class). If a student does not register for this course on I-Clicker, they will receive absences for all classes not accounted for on the app. If you have issues, please contact me immediately.
**Reading Quizzes (30 points each / 300 Points Total)**

Thirty percent of the overall grade is based on reading quizzes. There will be 13 quizzes provided throughout the semester. Of these 13 quizzes, the lowest 3 scores will be dropped, and the remaining 10 quizzes will count for 30 points each. Each quiz will consist of 10 multiple choice questions which will be directly connected to the readings covered from the past Wednesday to Monday. Quizzes must be completed by Noon (12 pm) on the Monday assigned. If a student chooses not to take a quiz for whatever reason, the first three missed quizzes will be dropped as lowest scores, thereafter a score of zero will be entered into Canvas. These quizzes will be open book, open notes, and open Keynotes. From the moment the quiz is opened on Canvas, students will be afforded 90 minutes to complete it.

**Response to the Friday Discussion Questions (50 Points Each / 100 Points Total)**

Friday classes include a discussion question intended to encourage varied perspectives, reflections, and arguments by each of us. On Fridays, we will have in-class discussions that affords space for articulating our perspectives and eloquently listening to the viewpoints of our classmates. Students are required to write 2 responses that engage two of the Friday Discussion Questions, placed at the conclusion of each Friday in the syllabus. Student responses should be between 2 full pages and no more than 4 pages. These two response essays should demonstrate the following three things: [1] skilled engagement with the course reading(s) that relate to the Friday Discussion Question by demonstrating a clear understanding of the key arguments advanced by the given author; the student may agree, disagree, nuance, and/or problematize the views advanced by the author, but first, students need to provide a summary of the viewpoints advanced within the assigned reading; [2] provide a summary/reflection on perspectives offered by fellow students; [3] then, the student should share their perspective on the discussion question. In addition, students must do the following: [1] clearly indicate what response question they are addressing by providing the question at the top of the essay; [2] turn in their first response in the Assignment titled Response 1 on Canvas; turn in their second response in the Assignment titled Response 2; [3] turn in the essay by midnight on the Monday after the given Friday Discussion Question. Thank you for your careful attention to all of the above details.

**Mid-Term Essay on Religion and Sport (250 Points)**

Students will be invited to write a five-page essay that explores the intersections between religion and sports within one of the sports covered over the first eight weeks of the course. Students will be required to cite and constructively use at least two of the assigned readings over the first eight weeks of the course. Here are the basic guidelines: 5 pages; 12 point Times New Roman; double-spaced; one-inch margins all around. Complete details will be provided at least two week prior to the due date of the assignment. **Due date:** March 10th, 2023

**Final Exam (Two Essays on Medicine and Sexuality across Religious Traditions) (250 Points)**

Students will be invited to write two 2–3-page essays. The first essay will explore the intersections between religion and medicine; the second essay will explore the intersections between religion and sexuality. For each of these two essays, students are required to cite and constructively use at least one of the assigned readings over the second half of the semester (i.e., weeks 10–16. The basic guidelines are: two 2-3 pages essays; 12 point Times New Roman; double-spaced; one-inch margins all around. Complete details will be provided at least two week prior to the due date. **Due date:** May 12th, 2023
**Submit All Assignments on Canvas**

Unless otherwise instructed by the professor, please submit the assignments, including the final exam, on Canvas on the assigned due dates. Exceptions could be made by my discretion depending on the circumstances.

**Late Work Policy**

It is important that we do our best to manage our time and turn our coursework in on time when possible. I understand that this may not always be possible, so, we will accept late work up to one week after due dates without any penalty. I am willing to accept late work up to the last day of classwork, however, there may be up to a 50% automatic deduction if late work reaches two weeks overdue.

**Grade Distribution**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Total Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and Participation:</td>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>(100 Points Total)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Quizzes:</td>
<td>30 %</td>
<td>(10 Quizzes / 300 Points Total)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Response to Friday Questions</td>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>(2 Responses / 100 Points Total)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay on Religion and Sport:</td>
<td>25 %</td>
<td>(250 Points)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam (Medicine, Sexuality, and Religion):</td>
<td>25 %</td>
<td>(Two Essays / 250 Points Total)</td>
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**The Grade Scale**

- 90–100 A = Exceptional
- 80–89.99 B = Very Good / Good
- 70–79.99 C = Satisfactory
- 60–69.99 D = Poor
- 59.99 and below F = Unsatisfactory

**Electronic Device Policy**

Thank you in advance for turning off and placing out of sight your cell phones, laptops and all other electronic devices prior to the beginning of class. Unless you are a designated note taker, the use of all electronic devices during class is strictly prohibited. The use of cell phones, laptops and other electronic devices may result in an unexcused absence. I am grateful for your attention during our time together.

**Calendar | Overview of Lectures, Readings and Assignments**

Please note that the assigned readings should be completed prior to class on the assigned dates provided below. Other than the textbooks, readings are available on Canvas, which is noted after each reading by this symbol: [C].

**Week 1**

**Class 1 (1/18)**

Introduction to Course | Review of Syllabus

**Class 2 (1/20)**


**Question 1:** Does religion or sports currently do a better job of creating belonging, believing, and becoming for contemporary people?

**Week 2**

**Baseball: America's National Pastime**

**Class 3 (1/23)**


**Assignment Due:** Reading Quiz One (Course Readings from Classes 2–3)

**Class 4 (1/25)**


**Class 5 (1/27)**


**Question 2:** Should steroid users be allowed in the MLB Hall of Fame?

**Week 3**

**Football: American Gladiators and the New National Pastime**

**Class 6 (1/30)**


**Assignment Due:** Reading Quiz Two (Course Readings from Classes 4–6)

**Class 7 (2/1)**

Class 8 (2/2)

**Week 4**

**Basketball: From the Indiana Hoosiers to the Urban Streets**

Class 9 (2/6)


Assignment Due: Reading Quiz Three (Course Readings from Classes 7–9)

Class 10 (2/8)


Class 11 (2/10)

**Online Class Lecture**


**Question 4**: Should professional athletes be encouraged or dissuaded from advancing their own political, religious, and other possible controversial views?

Class 12 (2/13)

**R. Shep Melnick**, “Rights Regulation,” in *The Transformation of Title IX: Regulating Gender Equality in Education,* pp. 3–24 [C]

Assignment Due: Reading Quiz Four (Course Readings from Classes 10–12)

Class 13 (2/15)

Question 5: What are some of your reflections, impressions, and thoughts related to the legacy of Title IX in conversation with the current state of women in sports?
Question 6: In what ways do you think, if any, has fitness culture emerged as an alternative space for believing, belonging, and becoming?

Assignment Due: Reading Quiz Six (Course Readings from Classes 16–18)

Question 7: When reflecting upon the connection between national identity (perhaps even nationalism) and sport, what are some parallels and comparisons that could be discussed between hockey in Canada and baseball in the United States?

NFL Facebook Post [see footnote 6 for link]6

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5 For the NYT article, please click on the following link: https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/05/us/damar-halmin-prayers-football-religion.html?unlocked_article_code=HvWrchHEM1JWTHLAAqamtOioiVTjiiyqYXF6eFq8bKBkZEQaKzcoKi7faAJic_UEGKPRWK_FU27w4SgsqxyYpc8-GGLOXDVcGe5rX8TqEnNhboFOo5QGcZcviV8-HWvovyagjgkGMbWAmhSprl8fWuRqKO6zbvUjCTP85YxP-amZECrJUrbztOvaqyq;Gamd_h_sn03W6cAMy12zrWTVbFr-uAFsuXMlC6Wf1Z2gAeh7rZATKFCVYJIlUgUKHwoSeZPSQeSNc-Ubbcvx2Ejahieoe4pESkKo3MycDxthzWcJL8fpbPqawqZflhvrqPCaizDcuyJY1xzoaR2KLR5SNLhn4rM8GPPVjho1n3sfRA&smid=share-url

6 https://www.facebook.com/NFL/posts/pfbid02tCg6iiYcYf7tiDLvQ5en8ks5WpivLSuXPGyQYdhkYXm6fsmfq1swMsq8Bh6qKNI8
Michael Kimmelman, “How Damar Hamlin’s Recovery Allowed Us to Breathe: This weekend the narrative around the Buffalo Bills flipped, from soul-searching about the violence of America’s most popular sport to something more hopeful,” in The New York Times (2023) [see footnote 7 for the link]  

Kathryn Post, “William Barber points to NFL players’ humanity in prayer for Damar Hamlin,” in Religious News Service (2023) [please see footnote 8 below for the link.]

Assignment Due: Reading Quiz Seven (Course Readings from Classes 19–21)

Class 22 (3/8)

Case Study Two: Football, Religion, and the Qatar World Cup of 2022

Dilshad Ali, “Sujood, Morocco in the World Cup ad what we still don’t know about Muslims: The Morroco football teams has exhibited a joyous expression of Muslimness in front of a world audience on a global sporting stage,” Religion News Service (2022), [see footnote below for the link to this article]

Shakeeb Asrar, “How the Qatar World Cup Offered Fans an Interfaith Understanding of Islam,” Interfaith America (2022) [see footnote 10 for the link]

Agence France-Presse, “World Cup Host Qatar Seeks to Change Minds on Islam,” VOA (2022) [see footnote 11 for the link]

Web Desk, “Morocco football team: German media airs Islamophobic comments; Israeli daily shows support,” News 360 (2022) [see footnote 12 for the link]

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For the NYT article, click on the following link: https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/09/arts/damar-hamlin-football-violence.html?unlocked_article_code=64pkFtWnqwqKLoMFwIlk8VzytqLeizlJupRu-BzblLtGsvUYBFGhawScxwrCzk7ag-4m6HaKxeUpjKgKw9-BILq8eimomD3vyDkn2huljpQaFRiohDqblC-RCYQbKfkezEFFjupBwqzA5pW-VUp_uhftawrWQyva73msloFljz5NVU8fSwuawzVwiEYgaliswfdct-Qtvjsbolaah5isCx5uIgqaWot5LqGyYXcplS67WXsRq4zwkWJGQ3seZtpOOfaohonovk46lMWeKwlDc3s3jKZP_kQdNZAoghOFgMAk157WOufOSvSTDMr0lD8vUmpzyPwwUmicjHstX8dzytddw&smid=share-url

8 For this article from Religion News Service, click on the following link: https://religionnews.com/2023/01/08/william-barber-points-to-nfl-players-humanity-in-prayer-for-damar-hamlin/?fbclid=IwAR3Z1AyHQWz2FAQqKuaBwgBbKrh-wHLLAfunu73yvMkgXcikSczQzqa8


10 https://www.interfaithamerica.org/world-cup-interfaith-understanding-islam/


12 For this article from News360, see: https://news360.tv/en/sports/morocco-football-team-german-media-airs-islamophobic-comments-israeli-daily-shows-support/
Class 23 (3/10)  Online Class Lecture/Discussion: The UFC, Mixed Martial Arts, and Religion


Question 8: Which of the three case studies from week 8 is of the most interest to you? What would you choose to explore further in one or more of the case studies from week 8?

Assignment Due: Religion & Sports Essay

WEEK 9: SPRING BREAK (3/23 – 3/28)

WEEK 10: A HISTORICAL NARRATIVE OF RELIGION AND MEDICINE: THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST, GREECE, AND ROME


Assignment Due: Reading Quiz Eight (Course Readings from Classes 22–24)


13 For this article from Bleacher Report, see: https://bleacherreport.com/articles/1749821-religion-and-mma-what-is-the-function-of-religious-faith-in-mixed-martial-arts
Week 11: Religion and Medicine: Vignettes Within the Christian, Muslim, and Buddhist Traditions

Class 27 (3/27)


Assignment Due: Reading Quiz Nine (Course Readings from Classes 25–27)

Class 28 (3/29)


Class 29 (3/31)
Minjung Noh and C. Pierce Salguero, “‘We Need to Balance Out the Boisterous Spirits and Gods’ : Buddhism in the Healing Practice of a Contemporary Korean Shaman,” in Buddhism and Medicine, pp. 252–63 [C]

Thomas Nathan Patton, “Medicine Wizards of Myanmar: Four Recent Facebook Posts,” in Buddhism and Medicine, pp. 177–86 [C]

Question 10: What are your reflections on religion and medicine in Early Christianity and Islam in the Middle Ages? How does Shamanism connect medicine and religion?

Week 12: Contested Medicine and Religious Traditions | From Mescaline (Peyote) to Cannabis Churches

Class 30 (4/3)

Assignment Due: Reading Quiz Ten (Course Readings from Classes 28–30)

Class 31 (4/5) 


Class 32 (4/7) 
Amanda Chicago Lewis, “Are Weed Churches Legitimate Houses of Worship, or Just Another Way Around Marijuana Law?” Rolling Stone (2019) [for the link, see footnote 14]¹⁴

Jen Doll, “Inside Denver’s International Church of Cannabis: According to a New Crop of Cannabis Activists, Pot Is a Spiritual High” Cosmopolitan (2019), [for the link, see footnote 15]¹⁵


Question 11: Do you think marijuana should be allowed to be viewed and used as a sacrament?

Week 13: RELIGION AND MEDICINE: THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD TO THE 20¹⁰ CENTURY

Class 33 (4/10) 


¹⁴ For the article in Rolling Stone, see: https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-features/weed-church-marijuana-law-worship-unlicensed-dispensary-801400/

¹⁵ For the article in Cosmopolitan, see: https://www.cosmopolitan.com/lifestyle/a26450828/international-church-of-cannabis-denver-spirituality-marijuana/

¹⁶ For the article by the Cannabis Law Group, see: https://www.los-angeles-marijuana-lawyer.com/cannabis-churches-and-the-religious-freedom-restoration-act.html
Assignment Due: Reading Quiz Eleven (Course Readings from Classes 31–33)

Class 34 (4/12)


Class 35 (4/14)


Question 12: What are some differences and similarities across the attitudes, practices, and beliefs between the earlier periods discussed (e.g., Greece, Roman, and Early Christianity) and the Early Modern Period up through the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries?

WEEK 14: SEXUALITY AND THE BODY IN THE BUDDHIST TRADITIONS

Class 36 (4/17)


Assignment Due: Reading Quiz Twelve (Course Readings from Classes 34–36)

Class 37 (4/19)

Bernard Faure, “Disciplining Sex,” in The Red Thread, pp. 64–97 [C]

Class 38 (4/21)


Question 13: What are some of the most interesting and/or important teachings related to sexuality within the Buddhist traditions?
Week 15: Marriage and Sexuality Across the Christian Traditions

Class 39 (4/24)

Assignment Due: Reading Quiz Thirteen (Course Readings from Classes 37–39)

Class 40 (4/26)
Augustine of Hippo, The Confessions of Saint Augustine, (Excerpts) [C]


Class 41 (4/28)
David Hunter, “The Post-Constantinian Church” and “Pelagius’s Letter to the Matron Celentia,” in Marriage and Sexuality, pp. 23–34; 165–71 [C]

Question 14: How would you summarize some of the central and most prevailing attitudes amongst the writers of Early Christianity?

Week 16: Regarding Sexual Diversity within the Christian and Muslim Traditions

Class 42 (5/1)


Class 43 (5/3)


Class 45 (5/5)

Question 15: What are some challenges and/or opportunities and/or possibilities related to the intersection between sexuality and religion in the 21st century?

Week 17: Pre Finals Week

Assignment Due: Research Paper on Religion and Sports

Final Exam: Due date: May 12th, 2023