Course Overview

“If all the year were playing holidays To sport would be as tedious as to work.”

“It has long been my conviction that we can learn far more about the conditions, and values, of a society by contemplating how it chooses to play, to use its free time, to take its leisure, than by examining how it goes about its work.”

“Sport is like religion: many follow, but few understand.”
Larry R Gerlach, (2012)

Prospectus

The purpose of this course is to study the evolution of sport in the U.S. since the turn of the twentieth century. It will explore the rise and popularization of sport, the integration of African-Americans at all levels of sport and Title IX and its affect on women in sports. It will also examine the commercialization of sport and how sports are now big business in this country. This course will be devoted to the study of the role of sport in American history, not just the history of American sports. The approach will be to study sport from the perspective of internal developments in the world of sport as well as within the context of external developments in American society as a whole. This will enable us to examine the intrinsic nature of sport and how it reflects the economic, social and political status of society as a whole at any particular period of time.
Course Objectives
The objectives of this course would be 1) identify with sports at a different level than the “just a game mentality” and begin to see sports as a means of studying major themes in American history such as gender, race, media, technology and international relations and to explore the importance of sports on several levels. 2) to reveal how sports have not only reflected but paralleled the major occurrences and developments in our nation’s history and how sports have served American society as a cultural imperative and agent for social change and to explore how sport unites our society across all social, economic and political lines and becomes a part of our local and national identity.

Readings
A variety of photocopied documents including newspaper reports, magazine articles, diary entries, songs, etc.

*Baseball’s Great Experiment, Jackie Robinson and His Legacy* – Jules Tygiel.

Course Schedule
Week 1 – Sept. 22
   Origins of American Sport, Overview of Sport up to 1900
Week 2 – Sept. 29
   Sport at the Turn of the Century, Baseball: Mirror of America
Week 3 – Oct. 6
   Progressive Era Sports: Football and Baseball, From Exclusion to Inclusion: Women, Blacks and Native Americans
Week 4 – Oct. 13
   No Class, Fall Break
Week 5 – Oct. 20
   The 1920’s: The Golden Age of Sports. Amateur vs Professional
Week 6 – Oct. 27
   The Great Depression: A New Deal for Sports
Week 7 – Nov. 3
   World War II, Racial Integration: Jules Tygiel, *Baseball’s Great Experiment*