Politics and Sport in the Ancient World

PS 501
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Fall 2014

Instructor: Thomas Bunting
Office: North Hall 411
Office Hours: M&W 2:30-4:00

Course: PS 501
Location: Van Hise 155
Time: MW 4:00 -5:15

Course Statement:

PS 501 "Politics and Sport in the Ancient World" examines a large question -- what is the relationship between sports and political life? The course tackles this question by examining Ancient texts to see how athletics and events like the Olympics, war and other competitions relate to the political realm. Key questions include: what is the role of virtue in sports and political life? What is the relationship between democracy and competition? How do these sports influence political discourse? And finally, how do these lessons from Ancient political life apply to our present context?

The course is broken down into three sections. The first section serves as an introduction into the Ancient world and the role that athletics played in society and politics. The second section touches on specific topics related to sports and society. The final section extrapolates from the Ancient world to today and strives to show what an understanding of sport in the Ancient world can contribute to our understanding of the present.

Required Texts:

Donald Kyle, *Sport and Spectacle in the Ancient World*. ISBN 063122971

Assignments:

Participation: 15%
Papers (3) (4-5 pages) 20% each
Final Paper (5-8 pages) 25%

Participation:
Students are expected to come to class and participate. To participate, it is imperative to complete the readings. It is also imperative to come to class. The participation grade is meant to encourage students to come to class and interact with one another. Face to face
debate and conversation is a skill and class time is an opportunity to hone said skill. If students come to class regularly and are prepared to participate in discussion, they can expect high participation marks.

Papers and Class Assignment:
Each week a small group of students will be assigned as weekly leaders. It is expected that this group of students will get together and discuss the readings before starting off the seminar with discussion topics and questions. These students will then write a 4-5 page paper due by the next week at the beginning of class. Each day the paper is late the grade will go down a half letter grade (from B to BC etc.). This method of distributing the work should allow students to plan their papers around their schedules and their areas of interest.

Final Paper:
The final paper is an opportunity to synthesize Ancient political thought in a more extended fashion. The paper will be comprehensive and students are encouraged to draw from each unit of the course in making their argument. While this paper will be similar to the others in that concision and clarity of argument is desired, the final paper will be longer simply because there will be more material for students to utilize.

Schedule:
*All selections marked with an asterisk will be handed out prior to class either in hardcopy form or emailed as PDFs.

Background to Greek Sports:

September 3rd: Introduction
- Homer’s Contest by Nietzsche*

September 8th: Events
- *Sport and Spectacle*, Introduction and Chapter 1 p. 1-37
- *Homo Ludens*, Foreword and Ch.1 p. 1-27 and Ch. 3 p. 46-75

September 10th: Homeric Sports
- *Sport and Spectacle*, p. 38-71
- *Arete*, p. 16-62

September 15th: Homeric Sports
- Funeral Games Book 23 of *The Iliad* *
- *Homo Ludens*, Ch. 3 p. 76-88

September 17th: Homeric Sports
• Book 7 and 8 of *The Odyssey*
• *Homo Ludens*, Ch. 4 p. 89-104

September 22nd: Olympics
• *Arete* p. 63-95
• *Sport and Spectacle* Ch. 4 p. 72-93

September 24th: Olympics
• *Arete* 85-95
• *Sport and Spectacle* Ch. 5 and 6 p. 94-135

**Selected Topics**

September 29th: Olympics and Education
• *Sport and Spectacle*, p. 136-179
• Xenophon, “On Hunting”*

October 1st: Olympics and Education
• *Arete* p. 121-130
• *Sport and Spectacle* Ch. 9 p. 180-197
• *Homo Ludens*, Ch. 6 (p. 105-118)

October 6th: Sport and Gender
• *Sport and Spectacle*, Ch. 11 p. 217-228
• *Arete*, p 96-106

October 8th: Sport and Gender
• Aristophanes “Lysistrata”*
• Read Title Nine

October 13th: Heroes
• Pindar’s Olympians, p. 3-40
• *Homo Ludens*, Ch. 7 p. 119-136

October 15th: Heroes
• Pindar Pythians p. 41-88
• *Sport and Spectacle* Ch. 10 p. 198-216

October 20th: Heroes
• Pindar Nemeans p. 89-118
• Pindar Isthmians p. 121-137
October 22nd: Nationalism
- Sport and Spectacle Ch. 12 p. 229-250
- Arete 181-191

Contemporary Athletics and the Greeks

October 27th: Athletics and Virtues
- Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, “Our Virtues” p. 335-360

October 29th: Athletics and Virtues
- Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, “What is Noble,” p. 391-427

November 3rd: Sport and Play
- Homo Ludens, Ch. 8-10 (p. 136-172)

November 5th: Sport and Play
- Homo Ludens, Ch. 11- End (p. 173-213)

November 10th: Sport and Science
- Moneyball, Ch. p. 1-4 p.1-96

November 12th: Sport and Science
- Moneyball, Ch. 5-7 p. 97-161

November 17th: Sport and Science
- Moneyball, Ch. 8-10 p. 163-243

November 29th: Sport and Science
- Moneyball, Finish

November 24th:
- Cassuto and Grant, “Babe Ruth, Sabermetrics and Baseball’s Politics of Greatness”*
- Malcolm Gladwell, “The Art of Failure.”*

November 26th: Open Office Hours for Thanksgiving Break

December 1st: Screen Undefeated
December 3rd: Finish film and discuss

December 8th: Sports and the Spectator
   •  *Underworld*, Don Dellilo p. 11-60*

December 10th: Sports and the Spectator
   •  Al Filreis “The Baseball Fan,”*
   •  John Updike, “Hub Fans Bid Kid Adieu.”*

December 15th: Final Paper Due

Course Conduct:
It is expected that students will have the readings completed by the specified date and will come to class ready to discuss them with other students in a respectful manner. Mutual respect is necessary for running a healthy discussion. Regarding the assignments, plagiarizing or cheating in any way will be punished harshly. Offending students will receive an F in the course and the incident will be reported to the proper university channels in accord with the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s code for academic misconduct. It is better to turn in sub-par work that is your own than plagiarized work that is genius.

McBurney Students:
If you are a McBurney student it is your responsibility to notify the instructor ahead of time and present your McBurney visa so that the appropriate accommodations can be arranged.