

# MCS 367: Sports Fandom

Online on D2L

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 3:30 – 4:30 (in office), Fridays 2:30 – 3:30 ([virtual on Zoom](#)), and by appointment

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## Contact Policy:

I check email twice a day, 10 am and 5 pm, on **weekdays**. If you email me, you should expect a response at the next scheduled email check time. For example, an email sent on Friday at 3pm will be answered when I check email on Friday at 5 pm. An email sent on Friday at 11:30 pm will be answered when I check email on Monday at 10 am.

Please use email only for questions relating to personal information, such as your own grades or an unusual situation. **Please post questions about shared topics like course content, assignment instructions, or policies in the Q&A Forum.** You'll earn extra credit for asking/answering questions there, help out any comrades with the same question, and help me get back to individual emails quickly. The Off-Topic thread in the Q&A Forum is a great place to chat with your classmates about anything, related to course content or not—think of that as like the 5 minutes before and after class when students are arriving and leaving.

## Course Description

### Rationale

In this course, students analyze sports fans and sports fandoms. It takes a wide view of what “sports” and “sports fans” mean, including those who might immediately come to mind—NFL fans, baseball card collectors, soccer/football pub crowds—as well as amateur sports enthusiasts, fans who make creative work, sports video game players, gamblers, and esports athletes and casters. Throughout the quarter, we will map out the relationships between sports fandom and identity, nationalism, industry, and technology.

The central question of the course is as follows: Why study sports fans and to what purpose could, should, and is that study put? This consideration motivates the five major units: defining sports fans, fan engagement, studying fans, fan practices, and digital sports fandom. Each of these modules asks their own smaller version of the central course question. By the end of the course students will develop their own nuanced and researched answer to this central question for sports fandom broadly as well as to one fandom of particular interest.

### **Student Learning Outcomes:**

By the successful completion of the course, students will be prepared to engage with the study, practice, and business of various sport fandoms. This means students will be able to...

1. Define who sports fans are with attention to intersectionality.
2. Compare and contrast the study of sports fandom and of media fandom.
3. Explain why sports fandom is important by connecting it to national and local politics, advertising and the economy, and culture and society.
4. Advise teams, organizations, digital companies, and fans themselves on how fans and sports industries can engage each other both ethically and productively.

### **Required Texts and Technologies**

- *Sports Mania: Essays on Fandom and the Media in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. (2009) Edited by Paul Haridakis and Adam Earnhardt. McFarland.
- All videos, podcasts, linked articles, and other multimedia resources are considered required texts. Each performs different functions for the week's unit, building on each other rather than repeating each other. **Be sure to ask for permission to view Panopto videos early if you need it.**
- Technology required: Computer with internet access, speakers or headphones, a way to take a digital photograph, a way to take a short video
- Skills required: Getting around D2L with ease, creating and submitting files, online chatting (discussion forum), creating and participating in VoiceThreads (tutorials provided in week 1)

### **Assignments:**

#### **Start Here Activities – 5%**

These are a number of activities in the first module, titled "Start Here." Read through the module information and follow along. Make sure that you participate in the self-introduction VoiceThread, have a photograph attached

to your D2L profile, and take the syllabus quiz. You'll receive pass/fail credit for completing all of these activities before the end of Wednesday in the first week.

### **Discussion Boards – 20%**

This is an upper-level course which asks students to engage with some dense academic writing as well as to think critically about their own experiences with and feelings about sports fandom. Discussion boards facilitate unpacking the readings and sharing notes on activities. Their purpose is to allow students to work together with the professor and each other to develop nuanced, accurate understandings of each week's content. Students are encouraged to test out arguments they may want to expand upon in their individual writing assignments and final project. Students are responsible for both reading and posting in the forums.

There will be one discussion board topic per "reading" (i.e. including videos and podcasts as well as written material). There will also be one discussion board topic per activity—these activities will often ask students to go experience some aspect of sports fandom out in the world or research an example online. To earn full credit, **students are responsible for making an initial post in EACH topic by 11:59PM WEDNESDAY and making two reply posts in ANY topics BY 11:59PM FRIDAY.** If there are 3 readings in a week, for instance, students must make 3 (initial posts) + 2 (reply posts) = 5 (total posts) that week for full credit. Students are more than welcome to make more posts than this. Read the discussion prompts and posting rubrics carefully.

### **Short Writing Assignments – 20%**

At the end of the first four modules, students will write a 500-700 word paper demonstrating their understanding of the module's content by making their own argument about an aspect of sports fandom. It should cite at least 2 of the course materials from the module. **Many assignments ask students to go out and experience an aspect of sports fandom themselves or to explicitly expand upon a discussion board thread—plan ahead.** References should be cited according to APA style. Each writing assignment will be available from the Monday morning start of the module and is due by 11:59 PM on the Tuesday following the module.

### **Comprehension Quizzes – 20%**

By the end of each module, students should have a thorough understanding of the content presented through lectures, readings, videos, and podcasts. They will develop this understanding both by posting in the discussion boards and by responding to others' posts. The quizzes assess this understanding through multiple choice questions. Quizzes are graded automatically through D2L.

**There will be five assessments throughout the course. Students may attempt each assessment up to three times before the module deadline.** Questions will be randomly drawn from a large bank, so you will be tested on the same concepts each attempt but will be unlikely to encounter the exact same questions each attempt. Quizzes open on Monday in the final week of each module and are due by 11:59 PM on the following Sunday (the final Sunday of each module).

### **Final Project – 35%**

At the end of the quarter, you should be fully literate in how to study fans from a number of different perspectives as well as in current popular and scholarly understandings of sports fandoms. You will demonstrate this knowledge by creating an in-depth analysis of one particular fandom of your choice.

The final project may take the form of a written paper (1200-1500 words), podcast (12-15 minutes), or short video (4-5 minutes), according to your preference. No matter what form you choose, this is a research and argument-based project.

Your final project, no matter its form, should incorporate:

- One outside (i.e. not included in the course materials) book **or** three academic articles related to your topic
- Three references to course sources (i.e. those explicitly required in the syllabus, including podcasts, interviews, etc.)
- Appropriate primary sources of information about your fandom (i.e. comments on internet forums, your observations of fan activities during a game, interviews with fans, news articles, team social media, etc.)

Citations should be in [APA style](#). For papers, these sources should be cited throughout as well as in a final Works Cited list. For podcasts or videos, these citations should be cited throughout if appropriate (i.e. when directly quoting or showing an image from a news article) with full citations included as a separate Works Cited document in your submission.

To help students develop their final projects and manage their time effectively, mini-deadlines for the project are scheduled throughout the quarter. The overall final project grade is calculated as a combination of these mini-deadlines and the final submission:

- Topic added as slide to class VoiceThread (10%)
- Outside sources submitted as answer to quiz (5%)
- Work-in-Progress with your outside sources in your own VoiceThread (20%)
- Feedback to classmates on their work-in-progress (10%)
- Final project content uploaded to Submissions folder (55%)

## Extra Credit

There are two ways to earn extra credit in this course: **participating in the Q&A Discussion Forum AND/OR attending an outside event related to the course content**. Extra credit points are added to the final grade total, making this a very generous option. Because of the generous extra credit, there will be no rounding up of final course grades. **Students may receive up to a maximum of 4 extra credit points.**

If you have a question about an assignment, course material, or expectation, chances are that someone else has that question too! Posting about it in the Q&A forum helps get everyone's questions answered more quickly. You will earn 1 extra credit point for asking a relevant (about course policies or content) and new (not already answered) question and 1 extra credit point for correctly answering a question asked by a classmate. The maximum extra credit points possible for Q&A forum participation is 2. The professor will also answer questions in the Q&A forum, generally before checking email at the end of each weekday.

Sports fandom is a living topic! No matter where you are physically—or what social media platforms you use—there are likely to be fascinating events, talks, podcasts, workshops, exhibitions, and similar things related to our course material. You're particularly encouraged to keep up with what is happening at DePaul, in your favorite sport, and/or with sports local to you. To receive extra credit for keeping up with outside events, a student must attend an event, talk, workshop, webcast, etc. that relates to the course material and then write a reflection on the experience. Students are encouraged to post any opportunities they see, particularly those happening at DePaul or accessible to comrades outside Chicago, in the Q&A forum and/or to email the professor so she can announce them to the class. If you have any questions about whether an event would "count" for this opportunity, please ask the professor before attending.

Extra credit reflections are due by the final project submission deadline. They can be turned in earlier, and **I strongly recommend that students write their reflections as soon as possible after they attend the event**. Reflections should be 300 - 500 words long. The content should describe the event, explain your feelings about the event, and explicitly connect those thoughts to at least two course readings. Reflections should also include a bibliography of the course readings and any other outside material mentioned. They should be submitted to the Extra Credit Event Reflections folder in the Submissions tab of D2L. They will be graded a 0, 1, or 2 depending on effort and adherence to guidelines. Late extra credit will not be accepted. The maximum extra credit points possible for event attendance and reflection is 2.

## Course Policies

### Grading

A: 90 – 100%, work meets all assignment criteria and displays originality and creative thought, no basic errors

B: 80 – 89%, work meets all assignment criteria but repeats material from lecture or readings without building on it, may have some minor errors that do not impede communication

C: 70 – 79%, work falls short on some assignment criteria and may have some conceptual errors in repeating material from lecture or readings, has errors that impede communication

D: 60 – 69%, work falls short on multiple assignment criteria and displays major errors in understanding or technique, has errors that impede communication

F: 59% and below, work does not attempt to fulfill assignment criteria and displays major errors in understanding or technique, has errors that significantly impede communication

Pluses and minuses will be given on the final course grade at the 3% marks. For example, 80-82% is a B-, 83%-86% is a B, 87%-89% is a B+. **Because of the generous extra credit option, there will be no rounding. For example, 92.9% will be an A-.**

Graded work will be assessed within 1 week of the due date, unless the work is turned in late. The professor will notify you if there is an unavoidable delay.

### Online Course Expectations

For some of you, this may be your first online course! For others, this is their preferred way to study. No matter which applies to you, know that this course is somewhat unique—the reason it is online is so that much of the time you would usually spend commuting to campus and attending class can instead be spent finding and engaging with sports fandom out in the world, both on and offline.

Here are some helpful guidelines:

1. **Be realistic about the coursework and how much time it will take.** Expect to spend 6-10 hours a week on this course and to check the course site at least 3-4 times per week as you keep up with each unit's material,

discussions, course updates, and assignment feedback. You might find it helpful to schedule regular times for yourself to do Sports Fandom work online—just as if you were taking a face-to-face course with regular lectures.

2. **Be prepared.** This course asks you to do significant independent work, both in digesting the material and in finding examples to analyze and present. You can find an online example or read a book chapter at the last minute, but it is significantly more difficult to do a field activity at the last minute.
3. **Calendar the deadline for each week.** Pay attention to due dates. The quarter system moves fast, and each module has an associated quiz.
4. **Check your email and the course D2L homepage for course updates regularly.** Emails will go to the account you have registered with DePaul, so make sure your email address is up to date in Campus Connect. The professor will generally communicate with the class through News updates, not mass emails, so it is essential to check them regularly.
5. **Practice good netiquette in your discussion board posts, VoiceThread comments, and elsewhere in the course.** We'll be thinking through things that people are passionate about, and that's great to show—but consider how it affects others. Flaming, offensive language, and personal attacks are just as unacceptable in an online class as they are in a face-to-face environment. Some specific suggestions:
  - a. Avoid auto-correct and spellcheck fails—proofread your writing, especially if posting from a phone!
  - b. Consider how your tone might come across to someone who has not met you face-to-face. Sometimes editing text after you've posted is not possible.
  - c. Create short, direct sentences in you VoiceThread and discussion board postings. This is more like class discussion than essay writing.
  - d. Avoid emojis and social media abbreviations or acronyms in your posts. This does not mean you can't write with flair and style—it just means you need substance as well. If something makes you lol, explain why rather than just replying with the expression.
  - e. Avoid using capital letters for emphasis; instead, use italics or boldface.

### Late Work

All assignments should be submitted in the method specified in the assignment instructions. If life happens, the short writing assignments and quizzes may be taken or submitted late. **Work that is turned in late (i.e. short writing assignments, final project topic, quizzes, etc.) will be penalized by one +/- reduction (3 points) per day that the work is overdue.** The “new day” begins at 12:01AM. To take a quiz after it has closed, you must document your extraordinary situation with the Dean of Students' office and contact the professor.

Because your classmates rely on your participation, **discussion forum posts cannot be made up or done late**. Think of posting late in a discussion forum as walking into an empty classroom and talking to the wall—not a very good use of anyone's time, right?

### **Academic Integrity and Plagiarism**

DePaul University is a learning community that fosters the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas within a context that emphasizes a sense of responsibility for oneself, for others and for society at large. Violations of academic integrity, in any of their forms, are, therefore, detrimental to the values of DePaul, to the students' own development as responsible members of society, and to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas.

Violations include but are not limited to the following categories: cheating; plagiarism; fabrication; falsification or sabotage of research data; destruction or misuse of the university's academic resources; alteration or falsification of academic records; and academic misconduct. Ignorance of appropriate citation procedures is not an excuse. Students coming from other national and academic traditions who have concerns about plagiarism being defined differently in the United States should consult with the professor as soon as possible to avoid any possible unpleasantness.

If the professor determines that a student has committed an academic integrity violation, in all cases that student will be reported to the university. In the course, there are three possible outcomes depending on the severity of the offense:

- Failing the assignment at 60%
- Non-acceptance of the assignment (i.e. failing at 0%)
- Failing the course

Conduct that is punishable under the Academic Integrity Policy could also result in additional disciplinary actions by other university officials and possible civil or criminal prosecution. Please refer to your Student Handbook or visit Academic Integrity at DePaul University for further details.

### **Accessibility**

Students seeking disability-related accommodations are required to register with DePaul's Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) enabling you to access accommodations and support services to assist your success. There are two office locations:

Loop Campus – Lewis Center #1420 – (312) 362-8002

Lincoln Park Campus – Student Center #370 – (773) 325-1677



Students are also invited to contact me privately to discuss your challenges and how I may assist in facilitating the accommodations you will use in this course. This is best done early in the term and our conversation will remain confidential.

### **Writing Center**

I strongly recommend you make use of the Writing Center throughout your time at DePaul. Writing Center provides free peer writing tutoring for DePaul students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

Writing Center tutors work with writers at all stages of the writing process, from invention to revision, and they are trained to identify recurring issues in your writing as well as address any specific questions or areas that you want to talk about. Visit [DePaul's Center for Writing-based Learning](#) for more information.

### **Sexual and Relationship Violence**

As a DePaul community, we share a commitment to take care of one another. Classroom relationships are based on trust and communication. Sometimes, material raised in class may bring up issues for students related to sexual and relationship violence. In other instances, students may reach out to faculty as a source of help and support. It is important for students to know that faculty are required to report information reported to them about experiences with sexual or relationship violence to DePaul's Title IX Coordinator. Students should also know that disclosing experiences with sexual or relationship violence in course assignments or discussion does not constitute a formal report to the University and will not begin the process of DePaul providing a response.

Students seeking to report an incident of sexual or relationship violence to DePaul should contact Public Safety (Lincoln Park: 773-325-7777; Loop: 312-362-8400) or the Dean of Students and Title IX Coordinator (Lincoln Park: 773-325-7290; Loop: 312-362-8066 or [titleixcoordinator@depaul.edu](mailto:titleixcoordinator@depaul.edu)).

Students seeking to speak confidentially about issues related to sexual and relationship violence should contact a Survivor Support Advocate in the Office of Health Promotion & Wellness for information and resources (773-325-7129 or [hpw@depaul.edu](mailto:hpw@depaul.edu)). More information is available at <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/hpw/shvp.html>.

Students are encouraged to take advantage of these services and to seek help around sexual and relationship violence for themselves as well as their peers who may be in need of support.

## **Course Schedule**

## Course Plan

The course is divided into five major modules, as follows:

- 1 – Defining Sports Fans
- 2 – Fan Engagement
- 3 – Studying Fans
- 4 – Fan Practices
- 5 – Sports Fandom Goes Digital

Deadlines for this course follow a pattern:

Each new unit opens on Monday at 7:00 AM (CST). Your first discussion posts are due by 11:59 PM (CST) each Wednesday, and your replies to classmates' discussion posts are due by 11:59 PM (CST) each Friday. Every other week, there is a module quiz and short writing assignment. The module quizzes are due on every other Sunday at 11:59 PM (CST), beginning with the first quiz after Week 2. The short writing assignments are due every other Tuesday at 11:59 PM (CST) the week after the module, beginning with the first short writing assignment due in Week 3. Final project deadlines occur on Sundays throughout the quarter, specifically in Weeks 3, 5, 9, and exam week. The deadlines are staggered so you will never have a short writing assignment and quiz due in the same week as final project-related content.

## Readings and Deadlines

\*\*Subject to change at the professor's discretion, with notice during at least the previous module\*\*

### Module 1: Defining Sports Fans

#### WEEK 1 (Jan. 6) – Who are Sports Fans?

- Watch: Who are Sports Fans? Intro Lecture
- Read: "Playing Dirty: On Reading Media Texts and Studying Sports Fans in Commercialized Settings" (SM)
- Read: "Challenging or Accommodating the Football System? A Case Study of Female Football Supporter Communities in Spain" Llopis-Goig & Flores
- **Due: Getting Started Activities (Jan. 8)**
- **Due: Discussion posts (Jan. 8 & 10)**

#### WEEK 2 (Jan. 13) – Fan Motivations

- Watch: Fan Identity and Motivation Intro Lecture
- Read: "Exploring the Roots of Sports Fanship" (SM)
- Read: ["My football fandoms, performance, and place" Waysdorf](#)

- Listen: ["Fandom and Self-Identification" Wertheim, Sommers, & Hirt](#)
- **Due: Discussion posts (Jan. 15 & 17)**
- **Due: Module 1 Quiz (Jan. 19)**
- **Due: Short Writing Assignment 1 (Jan. 21)**

## Module 2: Fan Engagement

### WEEK 3 (Jan. 20) – Spectacles and Events

(Note: Monday, Jan. 20, is MLK Day, and the university is officially closed.)

- Read: "Two Nations, Two Networks, One Game: An Analysis of the ESPN and Univision Telecasts of the 2002 Mexico-United States World Cup Match" (SM)
- Read: "The Whole World Isn't Watching (But We Thought They Were): The Super Bowl and U.S. Solipsism" Martin & Reeves
- Watch: "David Brown Interview"
- Watch: Spectacles and Events Intro Lecture
- **Due: Discussion posts (Jan. 22 & 24)**
- **Due: Final Project Topic (Jan. 26)**

### WEEK 4 (Jan. 27) – Rivalries and Anti-Fandom

- Read: "'Let the Domination Begin': Sports Fans' Construction of Identity in Online Message Boards" (SM)
- Read: "The Anti-Fan within the Fan: Awe and Envy in Sport Fandom" Theodoropoulou
- Listen: "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly of Sports Fandom" Weber, Cashio, & Tarver
- Watch: Rivalries and Anti-Fandom Intro Lecture
- **Due: Discussion posts (Jan. 29 & 31)**
- **Due: Module 2 Quiz (Feb. 2)**
- **Due: Short Writing Assignment 2 (Feb. 4)**

## Module 3: Studying Fans

### WEEK 5 (Feb. 3) – Sports Fandoms by the Numbers

- Read: "The Coping Strategies of Highly Identified Sports Fans: The Importance of Team Success on Tendencies to Utilize Proactive Pessimism" (SM)
- Read: "Exploring the Motives of Fantasy Sports: A Uses-and-Gratifications Approach" (SM)
- Watch: ["On the Ball: How Successful Marketers Engage Modern Sports Fans" Simmons Research](#)
- Watch: Sports Fandoms by the Numbers Intro Lecture
- **Due: Discussion posts (Feb. 5 & 7)**
- **Due: Final Project outside sources (Feb. 9)**

**WEEK 6 (Feb. 10) – Sports Fandoms as Cultures**

- Watch: “Allison Levin Interview”
- Read: “Patriots and Saints: How the NFL Helped America Cope with Terrorists and Natural Disasters” (SM)
- Read: “Right Place, Right Time: The Galvanization of Brooklyn During the Robinson Years” Pearson
- Watch: Sports Fandoms as Cultures Intro Lecture
- **Due: Discussion posts (Feb. 12 & 14)**
- **Due: Module 3 Quiz (Feb. 16)**
- **Due: Short Writing Assignment 3 (Feb. 18)**

**Module 4: Fan Practices****WEEK 7 (Feb. 17) – Collecting and Material Fandom**

- Watch: “Interview with Rusty Hatchell”
- Read: “‘Things’ - The Emotional Importance of Material Objects in Creating Fans’ ‘Homes’” Baker
- Watch: *Pelada* Boughen, Oxenham, Fergusson, & White
- Watch: Collecting, Amateur Sports, and Material Fandom Intro Lecture
- **Due: Discussion posts (Feb. 19 & 21)**

**WEEK 8 (Feb. 24) – Writing, Drawing, Photoshopping... Creative Fandom**

- Read: “The Florida Gator Nation Online” (SM)
- Watch: “Elise Vist Interview”
- Read: “From Smart Fan to Backyard Wrestler: Performance, Context, and Aesthetic Violence” McBride & Bird
- Watch: Creative Fandom Intro Lecture
- **Due: Discussion posts (Feb. 26 & 28)**
- **Due: Module 4 Quiz (Mar. 1)**
- **Due: Short Writing Assignment 4 (Mar. 3)**

**Module 5: Sports Fandom Goes Digital****WEEK 9 (Mar. 2) – Fantasy Sports**

- Read: “Virtual Sports Consumption, Authentic Brotherhood: The Reality of Fantasy Football” (SM)
- Read: “Fantasy Baseball: The Case for Competitive Fandom” Halverson & Halverson
- Watch: *Silly Little Game* Kurland and Jansen
- Watch: Fantasy Sports Intro Lecture
- **Due: Discussion posts (Mar. 4 & 6)**
- **Due: Final project work-in-progress presentations (Mar. 8)**

**WEEK 10 (Mar. 9) – Video Games and Esports**

- Read: "'It's (Not) in the Game': The Quest for Quantitative Realism and the *Madden Football Fan*" (SM)
- Read: "Professionalized consumption and identity transformations in the field of eSports" Seo
- Watch: "Interview with Will Partin"
- Watch: Video Games and Esports Intro Lecture
- **Due: Discussion posts (Mar. 11 & 13)**
- **Due: Module 5 Quiz (Mar. 15)**
- **Due: Final project feedback to classmates (Mar. 17)**

## **Exam Week**

### **WEEK 11 (Mar. 16) – Exam Week**

- **Due: Final project content (Mar. 20)**