



**University of North Carolina at Wilmington
Department of Communication Studies
Honors 120: Sport as Popular Ritual
Spring 2007 section 307**



Course Information

Professor: Rick Olsen	Office: 231 Lakeside Hall
Phone: 962-3710	Office Hours: 11-11:50 MWF; 9-11 am TR
Email: olsenr@uncwil.edu	Feel free to drop by or schedule an appointment.
Class Time: Tues. 4-4:50	Class Location: RL 2007A (Wasn't that C3PO's cousin?)

“Moreover, we are seldom dealing with separate symbols, but with clusters made up of objects, actions, sounds, states, odors, contacts, each unit, act, or thing, at once itself and standing for more than itself, the ensemble making up more than the sum of its parts.” Victor Turner. Celebration (p. 19).

“Ritual is the voluntary performance of appropriately patterned behavior to symbolically effect or participate in the serious life.” Eric Rothenbuhler. Ritual Communication (p. 27).

“Sport is the ritual sacrifice of physical energy.” David Sansone. Greek Athletes and the Genesis of Sport (p. 37).

Syllabus

Course Description: This course examines various aspects of contemporary American and Olympic sport from the perspectives of ritual and, more broadly, symbolism. Sport is a significant part of our local and national culture—but what might that mean? The perspective of ritual offers a unique view of sport and raises many important questions. Here are a few of them: Why do we gather to participate in and celebrate the achievements of athletes? How do sporting events at every level function within their cultures? What national and local values are celebrated and symbolized at a Little League game? Does our participation in sport as athlete, fan in live attendance, or viewer, have ritualized dimensions? What is the power of sport as a social phenomenon?

Course Objectives: After completing this course the successful student will:

1. define and describe the concept of ritual,
2. articulate insights offered by a ritual perspective,
3. identify and describe contemporary rituals and ritual dimensions of sport
4. insightfully critique specific rituals of sport through casual and formal communication

Course Policies: You are expected to attend every class period. However, since life happens, you are allowed two absences without automatic penalty as a personal day. Use it wisely if at all. Any plagiarism will result in failure for that assignment and additional work by the student on all future assignments to prove that the work is the student's own. You are expected to check your email regularly. I will correspond with you at least weekly and such email constitutes “official” communication.

Honor Code: “It shall be the responsibility of every faculty member, student, administrator and staff member of the university community to uphold and maintain the academic standards and integrity of the University of North Carolina at Wilmington” (1997-1998 *Student Handbook and Code of Student Life* p. 91). All student work and conduct must in accordance with the academic honor code and other codes informing the university community.

Readings: There will be a variety of readings either on electronic reserve in the library or that are accessible electronically. Not textbook! But we will get “heavy” at times. Plow through it and come in with one good idea, favorite passage, points of agreement, points of disagreement and the like. Do this for EACH reading as these issues will form basis for our discussion—and help us to avoid pop quizzes!

Assignments and Grading: There are 100 points available for the course. I will be using a standard ten percent breakdown: 90% =A, 80-89%=B, etc. The assignments are as follows:

Leading class discussion	20
9-11 reaction paper	10
Term Project	50
Presentation of project	10
Class Participation	10

Assignment Descriptions

I offer these assignments all at once not to cause overload but so that you can manage your time as you need to. I realize that this may not be the only course you are taking and want you to be able to take the lead in owning your education and managing your coursework. If you have questions about any of these assignments be sure to ask them. Really, go ahead and ask.

Leading Class Discussion: Do you know it when you see it? That is a big part of critical thinking. In order to foster that trait, I want each person to bring in at least one artifact/example of what we are talking about in this class beyond the artifacts examined in the analysis paper. These examples might include articles in newspapers, artifacts from your own sports achievements, yearbooks, historical examples, movie clips, etc. The day you bring in your artifact you must also have created some good discussion questions as and/or a short activity to do on your session.

Term Project: You will have two options for the term project. **Option One:** Design a mascot for your high school, UNCW, or a new semi pro team in Wilmington or another SPECIFIC location that explicitly reflects core cultural values or local history. A short paper with 5-10 sources should accompany the some visualization of the mascot justifying your choices. Paper and presentation might also discuss basic moves or routines the mascot might engage in. **Option Two:** Select one or more concepts from this course and one artifact from the realm of sport and write an analysis paper that integrates the two in order to make sense of the artifact, the critical concept or both. We will talk more about this and as we read some examples the paper will become clearer. The papers will not be long, but should be polished. My basic expectations are 8-10 sources and 4-6 pages for the body of the paper. Follow APA or MLA style guide. We will also have informal but thoughtful presentations of your final projects to the class. These presentations should be planned and rehearsed. We will discuss time limits later in the semester.

Class Participation: Participation is a factor of two things: Did you attend class? Was the class better in some respects due to your membership? In the answer to these two questions lies your participation grade. Habitual silence/passivity will result in a grade of 0.

Schedule of Sessions

Date	Class Session	Reading/Homework Due
1-16	Welcome and Overview: Defining Sport	Welcome Back! Course overview and discussion of
1-23	Rituals of Hazing and Initiation and Pregame rituals LCD 1	Hawes: Dangerous Games OR Fischer: Abstinence from sex and other . . .
1-30	Sacred Space and Halftime Rituals LCD 7	Cochran: Masques for the masses: half-time show and other grotesqueries OR Trujillo & Krizek: Emotionality in the stands and in the field: Expressing . . .
2-6 JAX	Patriot Games: Sports and 9-11:	Examine one or more of the top sports magazines or USA Today from soon after 9-11-2001 and briefly (1 page single spaced) write about the following <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Which magazine did you examine? 2) Overall reaction to articles 3) Which article did you read closely 4) How did sport as ritual inform your understanding of the article 5) How did the article help you understand sport as ritual 6) Other thoughts or insights
2-13	The Big Three: Baseball: LCD 2 and 3	Evans: Baseball as Civil Religion
2-20	The Big Three: Football: LCD 4	Real: Super Bowl: Mythic Spectacle
2-27	The Big Three: Basketball: LCD 5	Wolff: Big Game, Small World
Spring Break		
3-13	Mascots Term Project Workshop: LCD 6	Read: Come in with several well formed ideas for papers and questions for me and others about the term projects.
3-20	The Olympics: LCD 8	Read Feldman: Hungry Games . . . OR do the activity below: Visit United States Olympic Committee website and go on a “scavenger hunt” for good examples of ritual and cultural ideals in the images and text of the website. Good places to look are in the NYC 2012 links the flag waving moments link—but dig around for others! Come in with some written comments that connect course themes with the artifacts—we’ll go to the website in class.
3-27	Ritual and Spectacle: World Wrestling	May: Cultural Politics and Professional Wrestling
4-3	Mediated Rituals: Fan Experiences: LCD 9	Eastman, & Riggs: Televised sports and ritual fan experiences
4-10	Sport as Ritual: We will debate the following resolution: “Resolved: Ritual provides the best way to understand the role of sport within the human condition.” Be prepared to use the readings you are assigned, other readings, examples from class and any other additional support!	Birrell: Sport as Ritual OR Blanchard: A conceptual dilemma. OR Harris: Macroscopic comparison of form
4-17	Final Project Presentations	Make class worth coming to!
4-24	Final Project Presentations	Make class worth coming to!
5-8	Final exam period is Tuesday from 3-6. We will use this to finish Final Project Presentations as needed	Make class worth coming to!