

# GEORGIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

*HTS 3073: Sociology of Sport*

Fall 2026

Monday/Wednesday  
(11:00-12:15PM)

## **Costas Spirou, PhD**

*Classroom:*

*Office: Old Civil Engineering (OCE) 108A*

*Office Hours: Mondays 10am to 11am or by appointment*

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Changes to the course syllabus can be made by the instructor but must be announced in the class. The updated syllabus will be posted in CANVAS and Syllabus (central hub for Georgia Tech course syllabi).

## **GENERAL COURSE INFORMATION**

**Description:** This course examines what constitutes “sports” as a powerful social institution that both reflects and shapes society. Through a sociological lens, students will investigate how this activity intersects with various social issues, including its relationship to education, policy, media, deviance, violence, as well as gender, race, and class. The course begins with an introduction to major sociological perspectives, including functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism, and how they can be applied to the study of sport. It analyzes the ways in which organized competition both reinforces and challenges social inequalities, cultural norms, and power structures. Students will engage with key theories and apply them to contemporary and historical examples across professional, collegiate, and recreational contexts. Topics may include the commercialization of athletics; the role of media and technology; identity formation; activism and protest; and the social impact of mega-events such as the Olympics. Additional focus will be placed on the globalization of sport, including the influence of corporate sponsorships, branding, and the growing power of media industries. Students will investigate how these activities are consumed and represented across various platforms and how this shapes public perception, identity, and cultural meaning. By the end of the course, students will develop critical thinking skills to better understand the broader social significance of sport and its role in everyday life, as well as the ability to analyze current issues and debates within this domain.

**Course Learning Outcomes:** At the end of this course students should be able to:

1. Describe the historical contexts, which helped create and continue to shape the growth of US sports. Students will demonstrate that they have met this learning outcome through discussion, writing assignments, and exams.

2. Discuss the political and economic forces shaping sports and sporting experiences. Students will demonstrate that they have met this learning outcome through course discussion, class debates, written work, and exams.
3. Understand the social and cultural dimensions of sports. Students will demonstrate that they have met this learning outcome through class debates, writing assignments, and exams.
4. Understand the relationship between sports and related social institutions (e.g., economy, education, media, etc.). Students will demonstrate that they have met this learning outcome through discussion, writing assignments, class debates, and exams.
5. Demonstrate a working knowledge of core sociological concepts, theories and methodologies. Students will demonstrate that they have met this learning outcome through course discussion and exams.
6. Use written and oral forms of communication to construct compelling arguments. Students will demonstrate that they have met this learning outcome through class discussion, class debates, writing assignments, and exams.
7. Demonstrate a deeper understanding of the course materials through collaborative learning and discussions with peers. Students will demonstrate that they have met this learning outcome through class discussion and class debates.
8. Assess the potential of sport as a platform for social change and political expression. Students will demonstrate that they have met this learning outcome through course discussion and exams.

**Prerequisites:** None

### **Required Course Materials**

Textbook: Coakley, J. (2025). **Sports and Society: Issues and Controversies (13th edition)**. New York: McGraw Hill (Abbreviated by *SS/C*). E-Book **ISBN10:** 1264144539 or **ISBN13:** 9781264144532. Other readings will also be required; they will be posted to Canvas as PDFs or hyperlinks to web readings.

### **COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**

#### **ASSIGNMENT #1: Visualizing Sport (25% of final grade)**

Sport is more than just competition. It is a rich social space where identities are performed and cultural meanings are created and contested. This assignment asks you to step into the field as an observer and documentarian. By attending a live sporting event and capturing original photographs, you will analyze how sport functions as a social institution in real time.

**Assignment Description:** Students will attend a live sporting event of their choice (e.g., school, community, amateur, or professional level). While at the event, you will take a series of original photographs that capture meaningful moments, interactions, and structures within the sporting environment. These images will serve as the foundation for a sociological analysis of sport in practice. Choose an event that allows for meaningful observation of participants, spectators, and the environment. You will submit a visual portfolio accompanied by written “capstones”

(analytical captions) for each image, as well as a short reflective essay connecting your observations to course concepts. This assignment encourages you to “see” sport differently. Not just as a game, but as a dynamic social world. Your goal is to make the familiar unfamiliar by uncovering the deeper social meanings embedded in everyday sporting experiences.

**Photo Collection:** Include 6–10 original photographs at the event. Photos should go beyond gameplay and capture sociologically relevant elements, such as:

- Crowd behavior and fan culture
- Social dynamics or representation
- Signs of commercialization (ads, sponsorships, branding)
- Social interactions (coaches, players, families, staff)
- Space and access (seating arrangements, facilities, inclusion/exclusion)

**Capstones (Analytical Captions):** Each photo must include a 150–250-word caption. Captions should include:

- Describe what is happening in the image
- Interpret the image using at least one sociological concept or theory from the course
- Explain why the moment is sociologically significant

**Reflective Essay (750–1,000 words):**

- Provide an overview of the event (who, what, where, when)
- Reflect on your overall observations and experience
- Identify key sociological themes that emerged across your images
- Integrate at least 2–3 course concepts or readings
- Discuss how this assignment changed or deepened your understanding of sport as a social institution

**5. Submission Format:**

- Submit a single document or presentation that includes:
  - Photos embedded with corresponding captions
  - Reflective essay at the end
- Ensure all images are clearly visible and properly organized

**Evaluation Criteria:**

- Depth of Sociological Analysis (application of concepts and theories)
- Quality and Relevance of Photographs (thoughtfulness, originality, connection to themes)
- Clarity and Insight of Capstones (strong description and interpretation)
- Integration of Course Material (effective use of concepts/readings)
- Overall Organization and Presentation

### **Ethical Considerations:**

- Be respectful when taking photos; avoid disrupting the event
- Do not photograph individuals in a way that invades privacy or causes harm
- Follow venue rules regarding photography

**ASSIGNMENT #II:** Class Participation and Attendance (10%). Class participation is critical to the success of the course for the class will consist mainly of guided discussion with brief lectures. Students are expected to attend every class on time prepared to discuss the materials assigned for that date. If a student misses classes, the class participation grade will automatically be lowered by a letter grade. If a student misses numerous classes, an F in the course will be assigned.

**ASSIGNMENT #III:** Readings Discussion Lead (15%). Students will identify a session date/readings when they'll contribute to the course by preparing key questions from the assigned essays. These questions (2 to 4) will also help shape the in-class discussion. Of course, all students are expected to read the assigned readings and participate. The questions (must be submitted to the instructor on the relevant session) and the comprehensive nature of the discussion lead is worth 15% of the final grade.

**ASSIGNMENT #IV:** MIDTERM Exam (25%) covers the first half of the course. The exam will consist primarily of essay questions. **Make-up examinations are not allowed. Students, who do not take the test on the assigned day, will receive a score of 0.**

**ASSIGNMENT #V:** FINAL EXAM (25%) covering the second half of the course. The exam will consist primarily of essay questions. **Make-up examinations are not allowed. Students, who do not take the test on the assigned day, will receive a score of 0.**

### **Policies for Attendance, Missed Exams, Late Assignments, Extra Credit, etc.:**

*Attendance AND Participation:* Attendance will be taken in every class period, and this, along with your engagement in discussions, will determine the classroom participation grade listed above. Your full attendance is expected, and it is critical that you attend all scheduled class sessions. Do not come to class late, and/or do not leave early as this will impact your participation grade. Students that miss classes on numerous occasions will receive "0" points on participation.

*Late assignments:* The two exams, the *Visualizing Sport* project, and the Session Discussion Lead assignment will take place at the specific date as conveyed by the instructor via the course syllabus or another communication. The policy for late assignments is that you will need a documented health, funeral, or university sponsored excuse for turning in late assignments at full credit. Assignments turned in after their due dates without a documented excuse will receive a drop in a full letter grade every two days beyond their due date.

*Academic Integrity:* Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. All work submitted must be original and properly cited. Plagiarism, cheating, or any form of academic dishonesty will result in immediate consequences as outlined in the university's academic integrity policy. In this course, we aim to conduct ourselves as a community of scholars, recognizing that academic study is both an intellectual and ethical enterprise. You are encouraged to build on the ideas and texts of others; that is a vital part of academic life. You are also obligated to document every occasion when you use another's ideas, language, or syntax. You are encouraged to study together, discuss readings outside of class, share your drafts during peer review and outside of class, and go to the Writing Center with your drafts. In this course, those activities are well within the bounds of academic honesty.

However, when you *use* another's ideas or language—whether through direct quotation, summary, or paraphrase—you must formally acknowledge that debt by signaling it with a standard form of academic citation. Furthermore, the use of generative AI (i.e., ChatGPT, etc....) is explicitly prohibited unless otherwise noted. Even one occasion of academic dishonesty, large or small, on *any* assignment, large or small, can result in failure for the entire course and referral to Student Judicial Affairs. For more information, please see the [Academic Honor Code](#).

### ***Religious Observance Policy***

Students who are absent because of participation in a particular religious observance will be permitted to make up the work missed during their absence with no late penalty, provided the student informs the course instructor of the upcoming absence, in writing, within the first two weeks of class, and provided the student makes up the missed material within the time frame established by the course instructor. Exercising one's rights under this policy is subject to the Georgia Tech Honor Code. The course instructor is responsible for establishing reasonable deadlines and/or make-up material for the missed work, and for clearly communicating this information to the student. Students may choose to appeal to the Student Academic and Financial Affairs Committee of the Academic Senate for formal approval of this type of absence.

### ***Incompletes***

Incompletes will be given only under extreme circumstances and in accordance with the published university policies. In order for a student to be considered for an incomplete, they should be a regular attendee, and they must be doing passing work in the course. That means that at least 70% of the semester and 70% of course assignments, demonstrating satisfactory progress must take place. The instructor will determine whether or not to grant an incomplete. (please see <https://registrar.gatech.edu/info/incomplete-grades>).

**Accommodations:** I am happy to accommodate you if you have a disability. Please notify me as soon as possible and be sure that you are also working with ADAPTS—the Office of Disability Services (<https://disabilityservices.gatech.edu/>).

**Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement:** At Georgia Tech, we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between

faculty members and the student body. [The Student-Faculty Expectations](#) articulate some basic expectations that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class.

**Recordings of Class Sessions and Required Permissions:** Classes and class recordings may not be recorded or distributed by students without the express consent of the instructor unless it is according to accommodations granted by the Office of Disability Services. Class recordings, lectures, presentations, and other materials posted on Canvas are for the sole purpose of educating the students currently enrolled in the course.

Students may not record or share the materials or recordings, including screen capturing or automated bots, unless the instructor gives permission. Digitally proctored exams may require students to engage the video camera, but those recordings will not be shared with or disclosed to others without consent unless legally permitted.

### ***Other Policies***

No electronic devices of any kind may be used during exams.

- NO CELL PHONES IN CLASS since research shows that those devices can cause disruption. However, students may use computers in class only for academically related work. All other uses of computers will be deemed to be causing a disturbance.
- There is no extra credit provided for this course.
- The instructor will not accept work that has been submitted for another course in this course.
- Students causing a disturbance or engaging in disruptive behavior (as deemed so by the instructor) will be asked to leave the class and will be referred to Student Judicial Affairs.
- Please see more information <https://catalog.gatech.edu/rules/21/>.

### ***Core IMPACTS***

- This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Social Sciences area.
- Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.
- This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question: How do I understand human experiences and connections?
- Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcomes: Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social or geographic relationships develop, persist or change.
- Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies: Intercultural Competence, Perspective-Taking, Persuasion.

**Grading Policy**

The final grade will be determined based on the following criteria:

Participation and Attendance:	10% of final grade
Session Discussion Lead:	15% of final grade
Visualizing Sport:	25% of final grade
Midterm Exam (essay):	25% of final grade
Final Exam (essay):	25% of final grade

**Grading Scale:**

A	90-100
B	89-80
C	79-70
D	69-60
F	Under 60 points