

HTS 4001A Syllabus

Seminar in United States History: Football and Modern America (4 Credits) - Fall 2026

Instructor Information

Instructor: Dr. Johnny Smith
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General Course Information

***This syllabus is subject to copyright law and may not be distributed or posted on any websites without permission of the instructor.**

****This syllabus is subject to revision at the instructor's discretion. All changes to the syllabus will be announced in class and shared on Canvas.**

Course Description

In this class we will examine the historical significance of football in modern America. The purpose of this seminar is to understand how football became an American cultural institution and the country's most popular spectator sport. We will consider how football has reflected and responded to changes in American life and how people have found meaning in the game. Thinking critically, will investigate what football can teach us about the history of capitalism, class, education, ethnicity, gender, labor, law, politics, race, religion, technology, and violence.

Course Format

Students will produce a substantial independent research paper (20-25 pages) on a topic related to the history of American football. This research paper must be based on primary sources and engage relevant historiography. Throughout this seminar we will discuss weekly readings and explore what it means to be a historian, the research process, and the craft of writing. At the end of the semester, students will deliver a formal, oral presentation summarizing their research conclusions during the School of History and Sociology's Fall Undergraduate Research Symposium.

Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course students should be able to:

- Describe the history, politics, and culture of football throughout modern American history
- Explain how football reflected and responded to changes in American life throughout history
- Conduct independent historical research based on a collection of unique primary sources

- Formulate scholarly arguments with evidence and defend their historical interpretations orally and in writing

Required Course Materials

Books:

Michael Oriard, *Sanctioned Savagery: A History of Violence in American Football* (2025)

Michael Oriard, *King Football: Sport & Spectacle in the Golden Age of Radio & Newsreels, Movies & Magazines, The Weekly & The Daily Press* (2001) – Available as an eBook at the GT Library

Richard C. Crepeau, *NFL Football: A History of America's New National Pastime* (2014) – Available as an eBook at the GT Library

In addition to the assigned books, students will be required to read journal articles, book chapters, and primary sources, all of which will be provided by the instructor and shared on Canvas. See the course schedule below for the full list of readings.

Grading Policy

Participation in Seminar Discussions (75 points)
 Preliminary Bibliography and Proposal (25 points)
 Annotated Bibliography and Revised Proposal (50 points)
 Outline (25 points)
 Draft Paper (50 points)
 Peer-Review Writing Exercise (25 points)
 Final Presentation (50 points)
Final Paper (100 points)

400 Total Points

Grading Scale

A: 100 – 90% (400 – 360 points)
 B: 89 – 80% (359 – 320 points)
 C: 79 – 70% (310 – 280 points)
 D: 69 – 60% (279 – 240 points)
 F: 59% or lower (239 points or lower)

Description of Graded Components

Participation in Seminar Discussions (75 points): Students must consistently participate in class discussions. You are expected to offer thoughtful comments and ask relevant questions. Students should come to class prepared to ask questions about the reading and offer insight about the subject. If you attend class, but fail to demonstrate that you completed the readings, I reserve

the right to mark you absent for that day. Furthermore, I may conduct reading quizzes to determine whether students have completed the readings prior to class.

Preliminary Proposal and Bibliography (25 points): Your preliminary bibliography will consist of sources that you intend to consult. You must include at least three scholarly sources (books/journal articles) and three primary sources. Your bibliography should follow the format in the *Chicago Manual of Style*. In the same document, you will write a proposal about two pages long. A good research proposal clearly outlines the scope of your topic and the key questions that will be addressed. Your proposal must describe your research methods, sources, and the historical significance of the selected topic. You should also address any concerns you have about pursuing the topic or problems you have faced in your preliminary research. I do not expect students to provide a thesis in their initial proposal. Your preliminary proposal and bibliography are due on **October 7**.

Peer-Review Writing Exercise (25 points): Students will be asked to provide feedback on a classmate's proposal. Additional information on this activity will be provided later in the semester.

Annotated Bibliography and Revised Proposal (50 points): The annotated bibliography will consist of an extensive list of secondary and primary sources. For each source listed, students should write about a paragraph explaining the relevance of the source to their topic and how you plan to use it. All entries should follow the format described in the *Chicago Manual of Style*. The annotated bibliography serves two purposes: (1) it should help students think about how they are going to use their sources; (2) students will demonstrate that they have located quality sources that will allow them to execute their project.

Additionally, after receiving feedback from the instructor on the initial proposal, students should explain how they have revised the focus of their project. Revised proposals and annotated bibliographies are due on **October 21**.

Essay Outline (25 points): Outlining a paper helps writers organize their ideas. It should also challenge you to consider how you will use your sources, develop an argument, and defend your thesis with evidence. Each outline must include an introduction, thesis statement, and an overview of your paper. The outline does not need to follow a specific format, but it should have a clear structure that you can follow. Essay outlines are due on **October 28**.

Essay Draft (50 points): The most significant assignment in this course is an extensive research paper based on primary and secondary sources. Students will receive a detailed handout that outlines the guidelines and standards for the draft and final paper. Students will submit a polished draft by 11:59 pm on **Sunday, November 22**.

Final Presentation (50 points): Students will make a formal presentation discussing all aspects of their project. All students are required to bring two guests to attend their presentations. The instructor will provide a detailed handout that outlines the guidelines and standards for the final presentations. Student presentations will take place during the HSOC Research Symposium on **November 18**.

Final Paper (100 points): Research papers will be graded using a clear criterion based on the following: (1) following instructions; (2) quality of research; (3) citations; (4) quality of writing; (5) organization; (6) use of evidence; (7) and analysis of the material. Students will receive a detailed handout that outlines the guidelines and standards for the final paper. **All final papers must be submitted to the instructor in person on December 9 at 12:30 pm. No late final papers will be accepted.**

U.S. History Seminar: Football and Modern America: Course Schedule – Fall 2026

August 26: Course Introduction

- **Reading:**
 - (1) Erin C. Tarver, “College Football Is Here. But What Are We Really Cheering?,” *New York Times*, August 21, 2017
 - (2) Josiah Royce, “Football and Ideals,” *The Harvard Illustrated Magazine*, November 1908, 40-47

September 2: Historiography

- **Reading:**
 - (1) Kurt E. Kemper, “Reconciling the Consequences of Modernity: College Football As Cultural History,” in *A Companion to American Sports History, First Edition*, Edited by Steven A. Riess, (2014): 202-220
 - (2) Anthony Santoro, “Professional Football,” in *A Companion to American Sports History, First Edition*, Edited by Steven A. Riess, (2014): 221-245

September 9: Football History: A History of Violence – Part II

- **Reading:** Michael Oriard, *Sanctioned Savagery: A History of Violence in American Football* (2025): Introduction through chapter five

September 16: Football History: A History Violence – Part II

- **Reading:** Oriard, *Sanctioned Savagery*: Chapter six through epilogue

September 23: One-on-one meetings with Dr. Smith – Old Civil Engineering G21

September 30: One-on-one meetings with Dr. Smith – Old Civil Engineering G21

October 7: King Football: Part I

- **Reading:** Michael Oriard, *King Football: Sport & Spectacle in the Golden Age of Radio & Newsreels, Movies & Magazines, The Weekly & The Daily Press* (2001): Introduction through Chapter 6
- **Assignment: Preliminary Proposal and Bibliography Due**

October 14: King Football: Part II

- **Reading:** Oriard, *King Football*: Chapter 7 through 10
- **Assignment: Peer-Review Activity**

October 21: America's Game: Pro Football Part I

- **Reading:** Richard C. Crepeau, *NFL Football: A History of America's New National Pastime* (2014): Introduction through chapter 6
- **Assignment: Revised Proposal and Annotated Bibliography Due**

October 28: America's Game: Pro Football Part II

- **Reading:** Crepeau, *NFL Football*: Chapters 7-12
- **Assignment: Essay outline due**

November 4: One-on-one meetings with Dr. Smith – Old Civil Engineering G21

November 11: One-on-one meetings with Dr. Smith – Old Civil Engineering G21

November 18: Final Presentations – Undergraduate Research Symposium (Location TBD)

November 22: Drafts of Final Paper Due by 11:59 PM

November 25: NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING

December 2: Dr. Smith returns drafts

December 9: FINAL PAPER DUE AT 12:30 PM

Course Policies

Attendance and Professionalism

Attendance for this seminar is mandatory. **Students are expected to attend all class meetings but may miss one meeting without penalty** (excluding a class where a student is scheduled to present or meet with me individually). For every absence thereafter, students will be penalized one full letter grade.

Class begins on time and tardiness will not be tolerated. If you know in advance that you are going to be late please notify me. I also expect that you will always respect your classmates and the instructor. I will not tolerate sleeping in class, texting, or using your computer for any purposes other than taking notes. Students should also check their Georgia Tech email on a

regular basis, especially the day before class to ensure that they receive all announcements from the instructor.

Late assignments: 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 a due date without an excuse will receive a drop in letter grade every two days beyond their due date.

Academic Integrity

In this course, we will conduct ourselves as a community of scholars, recognizing that academic work requires the highest standards of academic integrity. Students are expected to follow the [Georgia Tech Honor Code](#). All assignments and submitted work 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.

Students are prohibited from plagiarizing or cheating on written assignments. Plagiarism is defined by Webster's as "to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own; use another's production without crediting the source." That means that students are prohibited from copying the words of others and presenting them as their own. This includes submitting written work generated by artificial intelligence (AI).

Students are not allowed to use ChatGPT or Generative AI applications in this course for any reason. Using ChatGPT or AI to conduct research or complete written assignments will be considered cheating.

If I suspect any student has violated the Georgia Tech Honor Code or the rules outlined in this syllabus, I will report them to the Office of Student Integrity. **Students who cheat on assignments or plagiarize written work will receive an F on the assignment and may also fail the course.** All students are responsible for understanding and complying with Georgia Tech rules.

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 Outcome:

- 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

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, [contact the Office of Disability Services](#) (404-894-2563) as soon as possible to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

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.

