

HTS 2015 Syllabus

History of Sports in America, Section A, 3 Credits
Fall 2026

Instructor Information

Instructor: Dr. Johnny Smith
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Office Hours: T/R 3:00 – 4:00 (please email in advance for an appointment)

General Course Information

Description

In this course students will examine the American sporting experience from the nineteenth century through the twentieth century. The class will focus especially on the rise of organized sports and the historical relationship between sport and society. We will investigate fundamental questions about the history of sports, including: Why have Americans invested so much time, money, and energy into sports? What have sports meant to Americans at different points in the past? And how have politics influenced the history of American sports?

Course Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Identify pivotal events and changes in the history of American sports
- Describe the importance of sports throughout American history
- Explain how politics influenced the history of American sports
- Evaluate historical facts and interpretations based on secondary and primary sources

Required Course Materials

- Johnny Smith, *Jumpman: The Making and Meaning of Michael Jordan*

Note: Books can be purchased at the Georgia Tech bookstore or online at Amazon.com. In addition, students are required to read secondary articles and book chapters as well as primary sources, all provided by the instructor.

Readings

In addition to one book, I have assigned two kinds of required readings: secondary sources and primary sources. Secondary sources, often written by historians and biographers, synthesize information and provide interpretations of historical events.

Students will also be asked to read primary sources. Historians use primary sources—original documents and artifacts—to record, describe, and interpret the past. Primary sources provide direct links to past events and allow historians to understand those events. Historians use primary sources as evidence for making arguments about the past. Newspaper articles, diaries, letters, and court transcripts produced in the past are examples of primary sources. We will discuss primary sources throughout the course.

Grading Policy

Grading Scale: 350 Total Points

A: 100 – 90% (350 – 315 points)

B: 89 – 80% (314 – 280 points)

C: 79 – 70% (279 – 245 points)

D: 69 – 60% (244 – 210 points)

F: 59% or lower (209 points or lower)

Description of Graded Components

Exams: Three (3) in-class exams will be given, each worth up to 100 points. Each exam will include a multiple-choice/true-false section and an essay section asking you to respond to a prompt based on an assigned reading. You are required to write your essay answers in a blue book. Blue books can be purchased at the Georgia Tech bookstore. The dates for the exams can be found in the course schedule below.

Reading Quizzes: Six (6) in-class reading quizzes will be given, each worth up to 10 points. I will drop your lowest quiz score, counting only your five (5) highest scores. Quiz questions will come from assigned readings. **If you miss a quiz or are late for a quiz without an approved excuse, you will not be allowed to schedule a make-up.** The dates for the quizzes will be announced in class.

It is a student's responsibility to be in class for all exams and quizzes. If you miss an exam or a quiz, then you will receive a zero. If you have a verifiable medical emergency or an officially excused absence from the Institute, then I will allow you to make-up an exam or quiz. All makeup exams will be completely written tests. You must have documentation of an emergency; otherwise, I will not grant a make-up.

Course Policies

Attendance and/or Participation

This course requires regular attendance and engagement from students. Although I do not grade attendance, students are strongly encouraged to participate in all class meetings. If a student must miss class due to illness, they should get lecture notes from a classmate and meet with the instructor to discuss any questions they may have about the lecture material.

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.

I expect all students adhere to professional standards of classroom etiquette. That means students will arrive on time prepared to listen attentively, take notes, and participate in meaningful class discussions. It also means students will demonstrate respect for classmates and the instructor. Cell phones should be put away and turned on silent for the duration of class. Although I will allow students to use laptops exclusively for notetaking, using technology for activities unrelated to class is strictly prohibited.

Office Hours and Communication

Students should read the syllabus calendar at the beginning of every week. Students should also check their email and Canvas announcements page daily. You can email me to make an appointment for office hours. I will try to respond to your message within 24 hours. Please keep in mind that I try to keep my work time limited to M – F between 9 AM and 5 PM EST. Student emails submitted outside of those times will often take longer for a reply. **Please do not email me using Canvas; email me directly using my GT email: jsmith427@gatech.edu.**

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity and obey the **Georgia Tech Honor Code**. Students must take exams and quizzes entirely on their own without the assistance of any other person or the use of search engines or artificial intelligence. Plagiarism, cheating, or any form of academic dishonesty will result in immediate consequences as outlined in the university's academic integrity policy. Furthermore, unauthorized use of any previous semester course materials, such as tests, quizzes, homework, and any other coursework, is prohibited in this course. Using these materials will be considered a direct violation of academic policy and will be dealt with according to the GT Academic Honor Code.

Students must complete all writing assignments on their own. Students are prohibited from plagiarizing or cheating of any kind 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 tools like ChatGPT. **Students are not allowed to use ChatGPT or any AI tools or applications in this course. Using ChatGPT or AI to complete written assignments will be considered cheating.**

If I suspect any student has violated the Georgia Tech Honor Code, I will report them to the Office of Student Integrity. **Students who cheat on exams or quizzes 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.

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.

Recordings of Class Sessions and Required Permissions

Classes may not be recorded by students without the expressed written consent of the instructor. Class recordings, lectures, presentations, and other materials posted on Canvas are for the sole purpose of educating the students 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.

CLASS SCHEDULE

***Please note that 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.**

****Students should complete assigned readings before coming to class. Readings are available on Canvas under the Files tab.**

Week One

- **August 24:** Course Introduction: What is the history of American sports?
- **August 26:** Baseball: The Origins of the "National Pastime"
 - **Read:** John Montgomery Ward, "Is the Base-Ball Player a Chattel?" *Lippincott's Magazine*, August 1887

Week Two

- **August 31:** The Origins of American Football
 - **Read:** Kathleen Bachynski, Chapter One: "The Modern Knight Errant: Nation, Race, and the Origins of American Football" in *No Game For Boys To Play: The History of Youth Football and the Origins of a Public Health Crisis*, 9-27
- **September 2:** Sports in the Progressive Era
 - **Read:** Senda Berenson, "The Significance of Basket Ball for Women," in *Basket Ball for Women* (1903), 31-45

Week Three

- **September 7: LABOR DAY – NO CLASS**
- **September 9:** Jack Johnson and the Era of Great White Hopes
 - **Read:** Randy Roberts, "Emperors of Masculinity: John L. Sullivan, Jack Johnson, and Changing Ideas of Manhood and Race in America," in *Sport, Race, and Ethnicity* (2011), 41-76

Week Four

- **September 14:** The Black Sox Scandal
 - **Read:** Joe Jackson, Confession before the Grand Jury of Cook County, Illinois, September 28, 1920, excerpt in Steven A. Riess, *Major Problems in American Sports History*, Second Edition (2015), 313-318
- **September 16:** The Colossus of Clout: Babe Ruth's America
 - **Read:** Jules Tygiel, "New Ways of Knowing: Baseball in the 1920s" in *Past Time: Baseball as History*, (2001), 64-86

Week Five

- **September 21:** The Golden Age of Sports: The 1920s
- **September 23:** The Honor of the South: Ty Cobb, Bobby Jones, and Georgia's Great White Sports Heroes

- **Read:** Benjamin G. Rader, “‘Matters Involving Honor’: Region, Race, and Rank in the Violent Life of Tyrus Raymond Cobb,” in *Baseball In America and America In Baseball* (2008), 190-215
- **Read:** Eric Steagall, “The Spirit of Atlanta: Bobby Jones, Golf, and the New South, 1919-1930,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* vol 106, no. 4 (2022): 297-322

Week Six

- **September 28: EXAM ONE**
- **September 30:** Sports and the Great Depression

Week Seven

- **October 5: Fall Break – No Class**
- **October 7:** Race, Sport, and Global Politics: Jesse Owens and Joe Louis
 - **Read:** Barbara J. Keys, “Nazism and Olympism: Berlin, 1936,” chapter from *Globalizing Sport* (2006), 134-157
 - **Read:** Johnny Smith and Randy Roberts, Ch. 9, “The American Gestapo,” in *The Fight of His Life: Joe Louis’s Fight for Freedom During World War II* (2025), 191-216

Week Eight

- **October 12:** Baseball’s Great Experiment: Jackie Robinson
 - **Read:** Jimmy Cannon, “Lynch Mobs Don’t Always Wear Hoods,” *New York Post*, May 13, 1947
 - **Read:** Jules Tygiel, “Jackie Robinson: ‘A Lone Negro’ in Major League Baseball,” from *Sport and the Color Line* (2003), 196-220
- **October 14:** Scandal Time: Sports and the 1950s
 - **Read:** Lane Demas, “We Play Anyone: Deciphering the Racial Politics of Georgia Football and the 1956 Sugar Bowl Controversy” (2010), 72-101

Week Nine

- **October 19:** The King of the World: Muhammad Ali
- **October 21:** The Trial of Muhammad Ali: *Cassius M. Clay, Jr. vs. United States* (1971)

Week Ten

- **October 26:** “America’s Game”: The Rise of Pro Football
 - **Read:** Thomas B. Morgan, “The Wham In Pro Football,” *Esquire*, November 1959, 97, 99, 101-102
- **October 28: EXAM TWO**

Week Eleven

- **November 2:** Dynasty and Dissent: John Wooden and UCLA Basketball in the Age of Campus Unrest
- **November 4:** The Rivalry: Bill Russell, Wilt Chamberlain, and the Rise of the NBA

Week Twelve

- **November 9:** Curt Flood, Marvin Miller, and the Fight for Free Agency

- **Read:** Peter Seitz, “The Arbitrator’s Ruling in the Case of John A. Messersmith and David A. McNally and the Coming of Free Agency in 1975,” excerpted in Steven A. Riess, *Major Problems in American Sports History*, Second Edition (2015), 413-417
- **November 11:** Billie Jean King and the Women’s Revolution in Sports
 - **Read:** Jaime Schultz, Chapter Five: “From Women in Sports to the New Idea of Beauty,” in *Qualifying Times: Points of Change in U.S. Women’s Sport* (2014), 123-148

Week Thirteen

- **November 16:** The Sport of the South: NASCAR
- **November 18:** Do You Believe in Miracles? Olympic Hockey and the Cold War

Week Fourteen

- **November 23:** America’s Team: The Rise of U.S. Women’s Soccer Team
- **November 25: THANKSGIVING BREAK – NO CLASS**

Week Fifteen

- **November 30:** It’s Not About the Bike: The Rise and Fall of Lance Armstrong
- **December 2:** Watch *The Price of Gold*

Week Sixteen

- **December 7:** Discuss *Jumpman*; Final Exam Preparation
- **December 16: Final Exam (9:30am – 10:45am)**

