

GEORGIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

HTS 3073: Sociology of Sport
Fall 2026

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

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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 (2025 Release)**. New York: McGraw Hill. Other readings will also be required; they will be posted to Canvas as PDFs or hyperlinks to web readings.

COURSE OUTLINE

August 24 *Course Overview; The Sociological Imagination*

August 26 *Framing the Role of Sport in Society*
 Read: [International Sociology of Sport Association](#)

Social Processes and Sports

August 31 *The Sociology of Sport: What Is It and Why Study It?*
 Read: Coakley (p. 3-23)
"Do you find it normal to be so fat?" Weight stigma in obese gym users", Argüelles, Pérez-Samaniego, and López-Cañada (CANVAS)

Producing Knowledge about Sports in Society

Read: Coakley (p. 24-44)

"Strike a Pose! The Femininity Effect in Collegiate Women's Sport", Musto and McGann (CANVAS)

September 2

Sports and Socialization

Read: Coakley (p. 45-61)

"From Ritual to Record", Allen Guttman (CANVAS)

September 7

Official institute holiday -- Labor Day

September 9

Who Plays and What Happens to Them?

Read: Coakley (p. 62-80)

"Separating the Men from the Moms: The Making of Adult Gender Segregation in Youth Sports" Michael A. Messner & Suzel Bozada-Deas (CANVAS)

"The Path to Success? Myth and Reality" D. Stanley Eitzen and George H. Sage (CANVAS)

September 14

Organized Youth Sports

Read: Coakley (p. 82-118)

"Youth Sports: What Counts as 'Positive Development?' Jay Coakley (CANVAS)

September 16

Deviance and Doping in Sports

Read: Coakley (p. 119-157)

[Cheating, a history: 10 scandals that rocked the world of sports, USA Today](#)

September 21

Violence and Abuse in Sports

Read: Coakley (p. 158-210)

"Dynamics of Sport Groups with Special Reference to Football" Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning (CANVAS)

"The significance of 'situated learning' for doping in an elite sports community: an interview study of AAS-using powerlifters", David Hoff (CANVAS)

Social Status and Sports

- September 23 *Gender and Sports*
Read: Coackley (p. 211-262)
 "Effects of Gender and Sport Type on Intercollegiate Athlete's Perceptions of the Legitimacy of Aggressive Behaviors in Sport"
 Lori Tucker and Janet Parks (CANVAS)

 "Docile Bodies "Michel Foucault (CANVAS)
- September 28 *Race, Ethnicity, and Sports*
Read: Coakley (pp. 263-308)
 "Rethinking the Relationship between Sport and Race in American Culture: Golden Ghettos and Contested Terrain"
 Douglass Hartmann (CANVAS)
- September 30 *Social Class and Sports*
Read: Coakley (pp. 309-347)
 "Sport and Social Class", Pierre Bourdieu (CANVAS)

 "Social class, the elite hockey player career and educational Paths", Moret and Ohl (CANVAS)
- October 5&6 Fall Break
- October 7 *Age and Ability in Sports*
Read: Coakley (pp. 348-393)
 "Pugs at Work: Bodily Capital and Bodily Labour Among Professional Boxers" Loïc Wacquant (CANVAS)

 "Body Image and Prosthetic Aesthetics: Disability, Technology and Paralympic Culture", Tamari (CANVAS)
- October 12 **First Exam**

Social Institutions and Sports

- October 14 *Sports and the Economy*
Read: Coakley (pp. 394-414)
 "Impact of Student Fees on Winning in the NCAA" James T. Morton (CANVAS)

 "Professional Sport Franchises: Public Teams, Private Businesses", D. Stanley Eitzen and George H. Sage (CANVAS)

- October 19 *Sports and the Economy*
 Read: Coakley (pp. 414-439)
"Chicago Bears Leave Behind \$356 Million Stadium Debt as They Ditch City" (CANVAS)

"College Sports 101", Knight Commission (CANVAS)
- October 21 *Sports and the Media*
 Read: Coakley (pp. 440-477)
"It's Not About the Game" Cooky, Wachs, Messner & Dworkin (CANVAS)

"Sports, Labor and the Media: An Examination of Media Coverage of the 2011 NFL Lockout", Lewis and Proffitt (CANVAS)
- October 26 *Sports and Politics*
 Read: Coakley (pp. 478-493)
"Political Leadership and Stadium Development in Chicago: Some Cautionary Notes on the Uses of Regime Analysis", Larry Bennett and Costas Spirou (CANVAS)
- October 28 *Sports and Politics*
 Read: Coakley (pp. 493-515)
"Restoring the Balance: Dollars, Values, and the Future of College Sports", Knight Commission (CANVAS)
- November 2 *Sports and Education*
 Read: Coakley (pp. 516-563)
"An Ecological/Multisystem Approach to Understanding and Examining Women Coaches" Laura J. Burton & Nicole M. LaVoi (CANVAS)

"It Pays to Bend the Rules: The Consequences of NCAA Athletic Sanctions", Smith (CANVAS)
- November 4 *Name, Image, and Likeness: Student-Athletes and Higher Education*
 Read: **"Name, Image, and Likeness Rights in College Sports: Evaluation Year One of Much Overdue Reforms", Marc Edelman (CANVAS)**

[Ted Cruz Warns 'College Sports are in Chaos' as NIL Money, Transfer Portal Fuel 'Mini-NFL' Crisis and Push for NCAA Reform, BENZIGA](#)

November 9	<i>Sports and the City</i> Read: "Sports-Driven Urban Redevelopment in Chicago and Beyond", Costas Spirou and Larry Bennett (CANVAS) Why are Georgia taxpayers paying \$700m for a new NFL stadium? <i>The Guardian</i>
November 11	<i>Sports and Religion</i> Read: Coakley (pp. 564-599) "Capitalism, Protestantism, and Modern Sport", Allen Guttman (CANVAS)
November 16	<i>Sports and the Future</i> Read: Coakley (pp. 600-619) "Female Student-Athletes' Transition out of Collegiate Competition", Smith and Hardin (CANVAS) "2026 Global Sports Industry Outlook", Deloitte (CANVAS)
November 18	Second Exam
November 23	Visualizing Sport Presentations
November 25	No Class - Institute Holiday
November 30	Visualizing Sport Presentations
December 2	Visualizing Sport Presentations
December 7	Visualizing Sport Presentations
December 11	Final Assignment (BEFORE 3:00PM EST). Submissions after 3:00PM EST will not be accepted for full credit.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

ASSIGNMENT #1: Visualizing Sport (25% 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 (10%). 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: First Exam (25%) covers the first half of the course. The exam will consist essay questions and some T/F. **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: Second Exam (25%) covering the second half of the course. The exam will consist of essay questions and some T/F. **Make-up examinations are not allowed. Students, who do not take the test on the assigned day, will receive a score of 0.**

ASSIGNMENT #VI: Final Assignment (5%) should be posted via CANVAS. Reflect on your experiences and learning throughout the course by identifying the topics or concepts that captured your attention. Why these areas were meaningful to you, and how they shaped your understanding of the course material. As part of your reflection, consider any surprises, challenges, or unexpected insights that influenced your learning and discuss questions or ideas you would like to explore further. The submission should be no more than two pages (double-spaced, 12-point font). Submissions after 3:00PM EST, as recorded on CANVAS, on December 11th will not be accepted for full credit.

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, the Session Discussion Lead, and the Final Assignment will take place at the specific dates 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. Allowance of computers in the class for non-academic work may be adjusted by the instructor. 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
First Exam:	25% of final grade
Second Exam:	25% of final grade
Final Assignment:	5% of final grade

Grading Scale:

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