

Science, Technology, and Sports

Last Updated: Thu, 01/01/2026

Course prefix: HTS

Course number: 3089

Section: A

CRN (you may add up to five):

33134

Instructor First Name: Declan

Instructor Last Name: Abernethy

Semester: Spring

Academic year: 2026

Course description:

Sport is, of course, a human creation. However, many have come to think of sport as a natural endeavor, and, therefore, as neutral. In this course, we will deconstruct the idea of sport through the lenses of science and technology studies to better understand how sport is created by people and how sport conversely co-creates and reinforces elements of human culture. By approaching sport through science and technology studies, we will explore:

- What constitutes “sport,” science, technology, and performance.
- The sociological phenomena relevant to the intersection of science, technology, and sports.
- Literature concerning debates on the role of technology in supporting and contesting social inequalities through sports.
- How scientists describe and interpret perceived human differences (e.g., race, sex/gender) as they are related to sport performance.
- Literature on the impact of science and technology on athletic performance.
- Literature regarding safety, risk, and the role of medicine in sports.
- Debates surrounding cyborg athletes
- Debates questioning the role of technology in officiating
- The potential ramifications of sports gambling
- How technological developments alter sports leagues, media, and fandom
- Questions concerning athletics and environmental issues

Course learning outcomes:

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

Additional Learning Outcomes: By the end of the semester students will be able to:

- Identify and understand major debates influencing the role of science and technology in sports cultures, including but not limited to those on performance-enhancing drugs and equipment, sex verification, and gambling.
- Understand how social, political, and/or economic forces shape the impact of sports-related scientific research and technological innovation.
- Apply historical and sociological methods to develop and communicate evidence-based arguments on contemporary sport, science, and technology issues.
- Use written and oral forms of communication to construct compelling arguments. Students will demonstrate that they have met this learning outcome through course discussion, memos, and other written work.
- 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 course discussion, group work on quizzes and memos,

and peer feedback on blog posts.

Required course materials:

All readings or other materials will be available in pdf form on Canvas or easily accessible online. Please do note that the readings for this class will be challenging. Therefore, even if a reading seems short, be prepared to take the time to read it carefully.

Grading policy:

Assignment Types:

There are several types of assignments for this course: Engagement, Blogs, Quizzes, Memos, the 3 Minute Thesis and Self-Assessments. You'll find deadlines and rubrics for each of these in our course schedule (at the end of this syllabus) and on Canvas.

Engagement 20%:

This is a discussion-based course, meaning your learning depends on regular attendance and active participation. Engagement credit reflects both being present and being prepared to contribute to class activities and discussions.

Engagement Points

- Each class meeting is worth **1 engagement point**, for a total of **22 possible engagement points** during the semester (We have a little over 14 weeks of class, but not all will have engagement expectations).
- To earn an engagement point for a class session, you must:
 - Attend the class session (arriving within the first 10 minutes and not leaving early), and
 - Complete the in-class engagement activity (such as an attendance question, discussion, or short reflection) based on the assigned readings and preparation.

Allowed Absences

- You may miss **up to two (2) class sessions for any reason** with no penalty. These absences will not reduce your engagement score and do not require documentation or use of tokens.

- Beyond these two absences, each missed class will normally result in the loss of **one engagement point**, unless:
 - You have arranged an alternative engagement assignment in advance, or
 - You use the **Flexibility Token System** to erase the missed engagement.

Tardiness and Early Departure

- Arriving more than **10 minutes late** or leaving more than **10 minutes early** is treated the same as a missed class for engagement purposes and will normally result in the loss of that day's engagement point.
- If you are present for most of the class and complete the engagement activity, partial or full credit may be granted at the instructor's discretion.

Illness and Excused Absences

- If you are sick, **do not come to class**.
 - You will be offered an **alternative engagement assignment** so that you can earn credit without using a token.
- If you seek medical attention, please do not send documentation directly to the instructor. Instead, submit documentation to the Office of Student Life, who will notify the instructor as appropriate.
- Students with documented personal emergencies or participation in Institute-approved activities (e.g., athletic events, field trips) may make up missed engagement work and are expected to attend all other class sessions.

Communication Expectations

- You do not need to contact the instructor for short-term issues affecting a single class session. Use the built-in flexibility of the course (free absences or tokens).
- If an emergency or ongoing situation will affect **more than one week of class**, please contact the instructor as soon as possible so that a longer-term plan can be created.

Blogs 20%: Students will be expected to create and run their own blog around a theme of their own interest as it intersects the course to help develop their thinking on course content. When you have blog assignments you will be expected to write at least 300 words (but more is great!) that cover the topic, lectures, and readings as well as conversations we've had in class during the week. These will assess your general understanding of the topic and its broader application. In addition, students will be asked to incorporate one additional source/piece of media of their finding to add to their response each week. Some blog posts will have targeted prompts, but most will allow students the creativity and flexibility to engage with content on their own. Students will also be expected to meaningfully comment (a total of at least 100 words) on at least one other classmate posts.

Blog posts responses are due Sunday at midnight Eastern time for their corresponding week unless otherwise stated. Responses are due by the following

Sunday. There will be 7 total blog posts and peer comment opportunities (subject to change).

Three Minute Thesis (20%): At the end of the semester, students will use what they have learned through their blogging as it relates to course content and their interest/major to present a three-minute critical presentation to the class. Presentations can be written and orally performed in class or students may turn them into 3-minute multimedia presentations. More information will be provided during the semester.

Quizzes (20%): After each module (4 total), students will take short quizzes to demonstrate their knowledge of the material. 5% each.

Memos/White Papers (10%): Working in small groups, students will produce two two-to-three-page memos during the course that will put into practice writing skills and utilize course materials to sway sporting leaders to a particular perspective on a topic.

Self-Assessments (10%): At three points throughout the semester, you will be asked to do self-assessments and reflections on your goals, your work, and learning. At the beginning of the semester, you will write a statement in which you set your personal goals for the course (2.5%). You will also write two self-assessments (one midway through the semester, 2.5%, and one at the end of the semester, 5%) in which you reflect on the learning process, evaluate your performance, and situate what you are learning in the class in relation to your life and potential career. The last reflection functions in lieu of a Final Exam. The self-reflection assignment will require you to synthesize what you've learned during the semester and reflect on the course. The assignment will be graded on a pass/fail scale. More information will be shared closer to the assignment date.

Grading Scale:

A = 90-100%

B = 80-89

C = 70-79

D = 60-69

F = 0-59

Grades for each category are weighted as listed above. This means that each grade subcomponent will be calculated as a percentage. The scores for each category are then combined for your final grade. For example, if you average 95% on your writing responses, you will have earned 28.5 out of 30 % for this grade category. If you have questions about this please ask sooner rather than later.

Turn Around Time: I will do my best to return assignments with feedback within 7 business days of their submission but know that I'm not perfect!

Attendance policy:

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Academic honesty/integrity statement:

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.

Core IMPACTS statement(s) (if applicable):

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