WS 310-5: Special Topic: Women, Sport and Culture

Dr. Delia Douglas

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES
“Sport is a women’s issue because on playing fields, male athletes learn to talk about and think about women and women’s bodies with contempt….It’s a women’s issue because the media itself cheers for men’s sports and rarely covers women’s, thereby reinforcing the notion that men are naturally more athletic….And it’s a women’s issue because female sport participation empowers women, thereby inexorably changing everything.” (excerpt from The Stronger Women Get, The More Men Love Football, M.B. Nelson, 1994, pp. 9).

Much of mainstream feminist theory has not considered sport and physical activity a critical area of inquiry. The course begins from the assumption that sport is a key element of culture which plays a significant part in the construction and representation of our social identities. Drawing upon analyses from cultural studies, sociology and sport studies, this course examines women’s involvement and experiences in this realm of social life. We will look at both popular and theoretical sources in our interrogation of the historical and social context in which women participate and make sense of their sporting experiences. Some of the topics that we will explore include sport and the media, homophobia, racism, sexual harassment, as well as the cultural politics of sporting celebrity. The course format includes lectures, discussion, media viewing (e.g., print media and the film “Bend It Like Beckham”) in addition to student presentations. One of the goals of this course is to enhance students’ awareness of the complex relationship between women, sport and society so that we can become more critical sport consumers and participants.

COURSE READER:
This course will use a reader which contains all of the relevant readings. Available at the university bookstore

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
This course asks you to read carefully, to listen attentively to lectures, and to make constructive contributions to class discussions. But most of all, it asks you to work successfully with your fellow students to create a climate where ideas and argument matter, where everyone is respected for the part that they can contribute, and where we learn to agree and to disagree intelligently and productively. It is important to respect the needs of others that are trying to learn. We each hold many different views. In this regard, one of the aims of this class is to enhance our arguments and knowledge claims by locating our ideas, so that our insights and arguments, can from a process that makes use of what we can learn from one another.

EVALUATION
Attendance and participation: 15%
In class midterm: 25%
Media Report: 20%
Final paper: 40%

Prerequisites
60 credit hours

The Department of Women’s Studies encourages clarity of thought and expression and good writing. Students will be evaluated on these skills in all courses given by the Department.