

The Cold War as Sports History

W 1.30 – 4.00 pm

Hodson 313

Instructor: Dr. Victoria Harms (she/ hers)

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Office hours: Tuesdays, 10 am – 12 pm, Thursday 12 pm – 1 pm, and by appointment.

Office: Gilman 342. Please [sign up](#) for office hours.

Description

In this class, we will investigate how the Cold War has shaped the organization, practice, political use, and practices of sports on a national and international level as well as the roles athletes have played in the second half of the twentieth century.

Sports history facilitates engaging with and understanding the history of the Cold War as well as its legacies. This seminar is based on the premise that sports are as much a reflection of society as they are a constitutive part thereof. Race, gender, and class are concepts whose social construction took dramatic turns during and are manifested in Cold War sports history. We will discuss the ways in which sports confirm and consolidate but also challenge and change perceptions and social structures, expand and limit opportunities of self-fulfillment and social advancement.

Students are expected to engage with academic and non-academic literature on the topic, primary sources, documentary, and feature films. Expect to read between fifty to seventy-five pages of text per week. Occasionally, to prepare for class, you will also listen to 15-minute podcast episodes, and/ or watch a movie or documentary.

This is a discussion-based class. **To keep the assigned reading load manageable, we will regularly read several pages of material *in class*.** That will require concentrating for 10 minutes in silent study. **Expect 90% of the time in class to be group work.**

Communication is one of the foundational skills you develop at Johns Hopkins. This is a writing intensive class. Expect to write, revise, and improve your written assignments.

At the end of the semester, you will have achieved the following learning objectives:

- ✓ Assessing and summarizing secondary literature
- ✓ Conducting research independently and effectively
- ✓ Communicating research results and evidence-based arguments to your peers and in compelling, well-organized written form
- ✓ Analyzing and interpreting primary sources, including audio-visual material
- ✓ Leading and contributing to group discussions
- ✓ Visualizing arguments and findings
- ✓ Analyzing the social, political, cultural, and economic conditions that inform ideas about sports
- ✓ Understanding the social, cultural, political, and economic implications of sports

- ✓ Understanding how sports have shaped, challenged, and reinforced social constructions of race, gender, sexuality, and class
- ✓ Comprehending the global context of sports as well as its local implications
- ✓ Interviewing experts and eyewitnesses

Classroom etiquette

Our classroom constitutes a **safe** and a **brave space**.

- ✓ Our class is a community of learners. We come from different walks of life, our individual and historical experiences differ, and we celebrate these differences as a source of power, inspiration, and resilience.
- ✓ We respect one another's chosen identities, and engage in controversies with civility.
- ✓ Stay engaged. Understand that learning involves risks (letting go of old ideas, wrestling with new truths).
- ✓ Speak your Truth. Own your intentions *and* your impact.
- ✓ Experience discomfort. Courage and respect in the face of conflict.
- ✓ Expect and accept non-closure.

COVID-19 specific guidance

General information about COVID-19 related policies at the university can be found at this site: <https://covidinfo.jhu.edu/>

Assignments and Readings:

Please subscribe to the podcast "Sports in the Cold War," 2015-2016, *Cold War International History Project*, Wilson Center.

On Soundcloud: https://soundcloud.com/the-wilson-center/sets/sport-in-the-cold-war?utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing.

You can also find the show on Apple podcasts.

Recommended Readings (not required to purchase):

Boykoff, Jules. *Power Games. A Political History of the Olympics*. London, New York: Verso, 2016.

Dichter, Heather, and Andrew Johns, eds. *Diplomatic Games. Sport, Statecraft, and International Relations since 1945*. Louisville: University of Kentucky Press, 2014. (e-book available)

Edelman, Robert, and Christopher Young, eds. *The Whole World Was Watching: Sport in the Cold War*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2019. (e-book available)

Guttman, Allen. *The Olympics. A History of the Modern Games*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002.

Goldblatt, David. *The Games. A Global History of the Olympics*. London and New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2016.

Lenskyj, Helen Jefferson. *Gender Politics and the Olympic Industry*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Shaw, Tony, and Denise J. Youngblood. *Cinematic Cold War. The American and Soviet Struggle for Hearts and Minds*. University of Kansas Press, 2010.

Wagg, Stephen, and David L. Andrews, eds. *East Plays West. Sport and the Cold War*. Oxford: Routledge, 2007.

Grading: 30% Participation
30% Reading Notes
25% Essay I (open topic)
15% Essay II (movie)

Do not attempt to negotiate your final grade, please.

The official cut off between an A and an A- is 94.0. You have all semester to prove you are an "A student." Late complaints and negotiations are unfair to your peers and disrespectful to the instructor.

Participation: 30%

Make sure you come to class prepared and on time. Attendance does not equal participation. It is the most basic requirement for a college education. **If you miss more than two classes unexcused/ without legitimate reasons** (such as illness, conflicting athletic or academic obligations) **you will not receive a passing grade.**

We will spend most of class time in group work. You are expected to engage with the assigned material and your peers. Common rules of courtesy apply. Please treat everyone with kindness and respect.

You are encouraged to ask questions, even if only for clarification. This is *your* class, make the most out of it.

Reading Notes: 30%

For each meeting, you are expected to submit a short reading summary to canvas. These notes summarize *in your own words* the topic, main arguments and facts, the author(s) make and, if relevant, the evidence they use to corroborate their claims.

There will be times when you truly dislike this assignment. But it's worth your time. It will help you will hone your retention, writing and analytical skills.

Please submit your note on canvas. You will only be able to see the other contributions once you have submitted yours. Each note is graded on a scale of 1-5 with .25 increments.

Please make sure to submit your note **by 1.00 pm the day of**.

Independent Research Paper (12 pages): 25%

You are expected to submit an independent research paper that presents a meaningful, coherent, and convincing argument and demonstrates a sound use of primary sources and secondary literature.

You are free to discuss any topic of your choice (e.g. person, event, country, etc.) within Cold War sports history.

Please submit your **choice of topic** to the non-graded assignment on canvas **by March 14, 2025**, on canvas. Ideally, include a preliminary list of ideas, literature, and sources you wish to consult.

Deadline: April 3, 2025, EOD Canvas

Movie Analysis (8 pages): 15%

Pick a movie from the list below and analyze its content within the Cold War. You are expected to write a scholarly analysis of the movie, i.e. you have to analyze its content *and* situate it within Cold War sports history. This is an intellectual exercise that requires research, argumentative acumen, writing, and analytical skills.

You are free to take a specific angle or approach to the analysis as long as the paper renders meaningful results and coherent, conclusive arguments. **This assignment requires consulting secondary and primary sources.**

Please submit your **choice of movie** to a non-graded assignment on canvas **by April 11, 2025**. Ideally include preliminary ideas, literature, and sources you wish to consult.

Selection of movies:

- *Miracle on Ice*, dir. by Steven Hilliard Stern, 1981. [alternatively: *Miracle*, dir. by Gavin O'Connor, 2004.]
- *Rocky IV*, dir. by Sylvester Stalone, 1985.
- *The Miracle of Bern* [Das Wunder von Bern], dir. by Sönke Wortmann, 2003.
- *Children of Glory* [Szabadság, Szerelem], dir. by Krisztina Goda, 2006.

Deadline: April 25, 2025, EOD Canvas

General Expectations for Written Assignments

Please take note of the Johns Hopkins KAS rules for [academic integrity](#).

In addition to the formal requirements and assignment-specific expectations, essays are graded based on

- ✓ demonstrated independent research
- ✓ use of verifiable, trustworthy, and reliable secondary sources
- ✓ critical and analytical use of primary source
- ✓ clarity of argument
- ✓ language and delivery
- ✓ style of writing
- ✓ organization and structure of paper
- ✓ consistent and correct use of bibliographic references and citations

Formal requirements for written assignments

- Normal margins 1" top & bottom, 1"25 left & right
- 12 pt. font size, standard fonts: Times New Roman, Arial, Calibri, Cambria or similar.
- Double space
- Insert page numbers
- Add a title
- Add your (last) name to the document and the file name.
- List of references appears on a separate page (does not count towards page limit)
- Separate cover page optional
- Your choice of standard reference style (as long as it is complete, consistent, verifiable)

Schedule

Not all assignments require a reading note. However, you will need notes on all assignments for in-class discussions. For some, you find a worksheet on canvas, marked here accordingly. Please prepare accordingly.

January 22: Introduction (nothing to prep)

In-class readings: Wamsley, Kevin B. "The Global Sport Monopoly: A Synopsis of 20th Century Olympic Politics." *International Journal* 57, no. 3 (Summer 2002): 395-410.

Allison, Lincoln. "The Olympic Movement and the End of the Cold War." *World Affairs* 157, no. 2 (Fall 1994): 92-97.

January 29: The Modern Olympic Games

Allen Guttman, "The Most Controversial Olympics," in *The Olympics*, pp. 53-71.

Leni Riefenstahl, *Olympia* (1938).

Part I. **Festival of Nations**: WATCH all or at least approx. 0-23 mins, 38-48 mins, 52-55 mins, 1h33-1h55. Part II. **Festival of Beauty**: WATCH 0-7 mins, 1h08-1h29.

February 5: Cold War Sports

We will meet at the entrance to the Archeological Museum, second floor, Gilman Hall (it's located one floor down from the Atrium, entrance on the eastern side like the Hutzler Reading Room). Please expect a 30-minute workshop with the "Brundage Collection." No food or drinks allowed inside. No use of laptops. Please bring a pencil.

Allen Guttman, "In the Shadow of the Cold War," in *ibid.*, *The Olympics*, pp. 85-102.

Edelman, Robert, Anke Hilbrenner, and Susan Brownell. "Sport under Communism." In *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Communism*, edited by Stephen A. Smith, 602-616. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Beamish, Rob, and Ian Ritchie. "Totalitarian Regimes and Cold War Sports: Steroid 'Übermenschen' and 'Ball-Bearing Females'." In *East Plays West. Sport and the Cold War*, edited by Stephen Wagg and David L. Andrews, 11-26. Oxford: Routledge, 2007.

February 12: Early Cold War Dilemmas

Rinehart, Robert E. "Cold War Expatriot Sport: Symbolic Resistance and International Response in Hungarian Water Polo at the Melbourne Olympics, 1956." In *East Plays West*, pp. 45-63.

Rider, Toby C. "Eastern Europe's Unwanted: Exiled Athletes and the Olympic Games, 1948-1964." *Journal of Sport History* 40, no. 3 (Fall 2013): 435-53.

["The Black Spider,"](#) in [Sport in the Cold War](#), ep. 20 (podcast), 1 June 2016. 15 mins.

February 19: Race and Gender in US Sports

Montez de Oca, Jeffrey. "The 'Muscle Gap': Physical Education and US Fears of a Depleted Masculinity, 1954-1963." In *East Plays West*, pp. 123-48.

Thomas, Damion. "Playing the 'Race Card': US Foreign Policy and the Integration of Sports." In *East Plays West*, pp. 207-21.

"[John F. Kennedy and Hockey](#)," in [Sport in the Cold War](#), ep. 2 (podcast), 1 October 2015. 14 mins.

February 26: Muhammed Ali

Allen Guttman, "A Time of Troubles," in *ibid.*, *The Olympics*, pp. 126-140.

Episode 2: "Round Two: What's My Name? (1964-1970)," in *Muhammad Ali. A Film by Ken Burns*, with Sarah Burns and David McMahon. San Francisco, California, USA: PBS, 2021. (kanopy) (112 mins)

When we were Kings, directed by Leon Gast, 1996. (87 mins)

Eig, Jonathan, "[The Cleveland Summit and Muhammad Ali: The true story](#)," *Andscape*, June 17, 2017.

March 5: Gender and Cold War Sports

Blaschke, Anne M. "Running the Cold War: Gender, Race, and Track in Cultural Diplomacy, 1955–1975." *Diplomatic History* 40, no. 5 (2016): 826-844.

Witherspoon, Kevin B. "'Fuzz Kids' and 'Musclemen': the US-Soviet Basketball Rivalry, 1958–1975." In *Diplomatic Games*, edited by Heather Dichter and Andrew Johns, 297-326. Louisville: University Press of Kentucky, 2014.

In class, we will speak with Patrick McFarland, a former ABA basketball pro and an alumnus of St Joseph's who played under coach Jack McKinney. You can find excerpts from a book about the coach and that era of basketball at St. Joseph's on Canvas.

March 12: The Exceptional East Germany

Mertin, Evelyn. "Steadfast Friendship and Brotherly Help. The Distinctive Soviet–East German Sport Relationship within the Socialist Bloc." In *Diplomatic Games. Sport, Statecraft, and International Relations since 1945*, edited by Heather Dichter and Andrew Johns, 53-84. Louisville: University of Kentucky Press, 2014.

Dennis, Mike. "Sports, Politics, and 'Wild Doping' in the East German Sporting 'Miracle'." In *The Whole World Was Watching*, edited by Robert Edelman and Christopher Young, 126-42. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2019.

****March 14, 2024, EOD Choice of Topic Due****

Spring Break, March 17-21, 2025

March 26: Cold War Boycotts I

Allen Guttman, "The Era of the Boycott," in *ibid.*, *The Olympics*, pp. 141-163.

"The Forgotten African Olympic Boycott," in [Sport in the Cold War](#), ep. 34 (podcast), 18 February 2017. 20 mins.

Young, Simon. "Playing to Win: The Moscow Olympics and the Augmentation of Soviet Soft Power During the Brezhnev Era, 1975-1980," in García, Óscar J. Martín, and Rósa Magnúsdóttir, eds. *Machineries of Persuasion. European Soft Power and Public Diplomacy During the Cold War*. Berlin/ Boston: De Gruyter, 2019, 61-84.

****March 31, 2024, EOD: Open Topic Paper Due****

April 2: Cold War Boycotts II

Corthorn, Paul. "The Cold War and British Debates over the Boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympics." *Cold War History* 13, no. 1 (2013): 43–66.

Mertin, Evelyn. "The Soviet Union and the Olympic Games of 1980 and 1984: Explaining the Boycotts to their own People." In *East Plays West*, 235-252.

April 9: Commercialization

Wenn, Stephen. "Peter Ueberroth's Legacy: How the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics Changed the Trajectory of the Olympic Movement." *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 32, no. 1 (2015): 157-171.

Episode 6, "[Performance Enhancing Drugs](#)," in *Sport in the Cold War* (podcast), November 10, 2015. 15 mins.

Jennifer Wedekind, "The Commercial Games: Selling Off the Olympic Ideal," *Multinational Monitor* 29, no. 2 (September/ October 2008). URL: <https://www.multinationalmonitor.org/mm2008/092008/wedekind.html>.

****April 10, 2025, EOD: Movie Choice due****

April 16: Yugoslavia, the Outlier

Jovanovic, Zlatko. "The 1984 Sarajevo Winter Olympics and Identity- Formation in Late Socialist Sarajevo." *International Journal of the History of Sport* 34, no. 9 (2017): 767-782.

Timm, Annette F. "The Most Beautiful Face of Socialism." Katarina Witt and the Sexual Politics of Sport in the Cold War." In *The Whole World Was Watching: Sport in the Cold War*, edited by Robert Edelman and Christopher Young, 143-60. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2019.

In class, we will speak with two Hopkins alumnae, Nina Weiss and Marina Ayuso, who now work for NBC sports.

April 23: After the Cold War

David Goldblatt, part 8, chapters 1-3, "Boom! The Globalization of the Olympics After the Cold War," in *The Games. A Global History of the Olympics* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Co, 2016), 329-363.

Riordan, James. "Sport after the Cold War: Implications for Russia and Eastern Europe." In *East Plays West. Sport and the Cold War*, edited by Stephen Wagg and David L. Andrews, 272-88. New York: Routledge, 2007.

"The Unified Team at the 1992 Olympics," *BBC Sporting Witness*, November 23, 2024. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/w3ct5wfc>.

****April 25, 2025 EOD: Movie Analysis Due****

General policies

Absences

Absences are excused for illness, religious observance, participation in certain university activities, and other circumstances described in the [university's policies](#) and must be explained **at least 6 hours** before class. **If you miss more than 2 class unexcused/ without a legitimate reason, you will not receive a passing grade.**

Mental Health

Please note that a new university-wide website has been created to provide information on a wide variety of services available to support student wellness. You can find this website at <http://wellness.jhu.edu>.

If you are struggling with anxiety, stress, depression, or other mental health related concerns, please consider visiting the JHU Counseling Center. If you are concerned about a friend, please encourage that person to seek out their services. The Counseling Center is located at 3003 North Charles Street in Suite S-200 and can be reached at 410-516-8278 and online at <http://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/counselingcenter/>.

Academic Integrity

The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity. In this course, you must be honest and truthful. Ethical violations include cheating on exams, plagiarism, reuse of assignments, improper use of the Internet and electronic devices, unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery and falsification, lying, facilitating academic dishonesty, and unfair competition.

For more, see: <https://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/policies-guidelines/undergrad-ethics/>

Accommodations

Accommodations will be made for those who need them. Please come talk with me in the first two weeks of the semester to discuss your needs. Any student with a disability who may need accommodations in this class must obtain an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services, 385 Garland, (410) 516-4720, studentdisabilityservices@jhu.edu.

Religious holidays

Religious holidays are valid reasons to be excused from class. Students who must miss a class or an examination because of a religious holiday must inform the instructor as early in the semester as possible in order to be excused from class or to make up any work that is missed. More information may be found at the Religious and Spiritual Life (<https://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/campus-ministries/>) website.

Classroom Climate

I am committed to creating a classroom environment that values the diversity of experiences and perspectives that all students bring. Everyone here has the right to be

treated with dignity and respect. I believe fostering an inclusive climate is important because research and my experience show that students who interact with peers who are different from themselves learn new things and experience tangible educational outcomes. Note that you should expect to be challenged intellectually by me, the TAs, and your peers, and at times this may feel uncomfortable. Indeed, it can be helpful to be pushed sometimes in order to learn and grow. But at no time in this learning process should someone be singled out or treated unequally on the basis of any seen or unseen part of their identity.

If you ever have concerns in this course about harassment, discrimination, or any unequal treatment, or if you seek accommodations or resources, I invite you to share directly with me or the TAs. We will take your communication seriously and seek mutually acceptable resolutions and accommodations. Reporting will never impact your course grade. You may also share concerns with the department chair, , the Director of Undergraduate Studies, the Assistant Dean for Diversity and Inclusion, or the Office of Institutional Equity (oie@jhu.edu). In handling reports, people will protect your privacy as much as possible, but faculty and staff are required to officially report information for some cases (e.g. sexual harassment).

Sexual Assault Helpline

The Sexual Assault Helpline (410-516-7333) is a confidential service of the Johns Hopkins University Counseling Center. Trained professional counselors are available to students, and offer support, provide resources or answer questions 24/7.

Screen Policy

Laptops, smartphones, and other devices are both a boon and a distraction to higher education. You are discouraged from using social media, texting, chatting, email, and all class unrelated activities during class time. **Make sure all your devices are silenced.**