

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
School of Recreation, Health, and Tourism

SPMT 323
America and the Modern Olympics (3 credit hours)
Spring 2010

DAY/TIME:	M 7:20 p.m.-10:00 p.m.	LOCATION:	Robinson A101
PROFESSOR:	Chris Elzey	EMAIL ADDRESS:	celzey@gmu.edu
OFFICE LOCATION:	TBA	PHONE NUMBER:	703-993-2098
OFFICE HOURS:	M 5:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m.	FAX NUMBER:	703-993-2025

PREREQUISITES

There are no prerequisites for this course.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

SPMT 323 “is designed to provide students [with] an understanding of the role played by the United States in the modern Olympic movement. The primary focus is on the United States [and its] relationship with the modern Olympics from the earliest days of the games up through the Cold War period and beyond.” (University catalogue)

COURSE OBJECTIVES

After completing America and the Modern Olympics, students will be able to demonstrate competency in the subjects of:

- The ancient Olympic Games
- The origins of the modern Olympic Games
- The United States’ contributions to the early Olympic Games
- American popular culture and the Olympic Games
- International politics and the Olympic Games
- Issues of race, gender and ethnicity within the Olympic movement
- American self-perception and the Olympic Games
- Commercialization of the Olympic Games
- Professionalism and the Olympic Games
- The Olympic Games in a post-Cold War world
- American athletic leadership within the Olympic movement

COURSE OVERVIEW

The goal of SPMT 323 is to understand the ways in which the United State’s participation (and non-participation) in the Olympic Games illuminated important aspects of American culture, society and history, and impacted the development of the Games. To that end, the course will explore matters relating to: the beginning of the modern Olympics; American imperialism and the Olympics, mass culture and the Olympics; international relations and the Olympics; race, ethnicity and gender and the Olympics; commercialism and the Olympics; terrorism and the Olympics and American notions of sporting exceptionalism. Much of the class time will be devoted to lecture. You must attend class. Should you not attend class and miss an exam, a doctor’s note or some other form of sufficient documentation is required to take the make-up test.

REQUIRED READINGS

Matthews, George R. *America’s First Olympics: The St. Louis Games of 1904*. Columbia, MO. University of Missouri Press, 2005.

Large, David Clay. *Nazi Games: The Olympics of 1936*. New York. W.W. Norton & Company, 2007.

Maraniss, David. *Rome 1960: The Olympics That Changed the World*. New York: Simon & Schuster. 2008.

Hoffer, Richard. *Something in the Air: America Passion and Defiance in the 1968 Mexico City Olympics*. New York: Free Press, 2009.

Brownell, Susan. *Beijing's Games: What the Olympics Mean to China*. Lanham, MD. Rowman & Littlefield, 2008.

Other readings assigned as warranted.

ASSIGNMENTS, EXAMS AND EVALUATION

There will be three exams. Each will count equally toward your grade. There also will be several unannounced quizzes, which can take one of several formats: multiple choice questions, short answer questions, identifications, essay question. I will drop your lowest quiz score and use the other scores to calculate the average. In addition, you will be responsible for completing five short assignments. No more than two pages, the assignments will cover each of the five books assigned for the class. You are to provide a brief synopsis of the book, the author's major points, your views (if you liked it or not, and why), and questions about the book. The questions may touch upon matters directly discussed in the book and/or contextual issues of American culture, society and/or history. Each student will be responsible for presenting one assignment to the class, during which time you will lead class discussion. Class participation will also count toward your grade.

GRADE BREAKDOWN

Exam #1	20 percent
Exam #2	20 percent
Exam #3	20 percent
Assignments	20 percent
Quizzes	10 percent
Class participation	10 percent

Grading Scale

A = 94 – 100	B+ = 88 – 89	C+ = 78 – 79	D = 60 – 69
A- = 90 – 93	B = 84 – 87	C = 74 – 77	F = 0 – 59
	B- = 80 – 83	C- = 70 – 73	

COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to change)

January 25: Introduction; the Ancient Olympic Games

February 1: Origins of the Modern Games and American Imperialism

February 8: Discussion Matthews, *America's First Olympics*; From Ballyhoo to the Great Depression: the Games during the 1920s and early 1930s

February 15: A Great Rancor: the American Debate over Participation in the 1936 Berlin Olympics

February 22: Discussion Large, *Nazi Games*; screening: *Olympia* and *The Fight*

March 1: **Exam**; U.S. vs. U.S.S.R.: The Cold War Finds a New Venue

March 8: No class

March 15: Cold War Olympics (cont.); International Politics and the Olympics during the 1950s

March 22: Discussion, Maraniss, *Rome 1960*; The Civil Rights Movement and America's Quest for Gold

March 29: **Exam**; Black Consciousness Comes to the Games

April 5: Discussion Hoffer, *Something in the Air*; screening: *Fists of Fury*

April 12: The 1972 Munich Games: Unlike Any Other

April 19: The 1980s: America Resurgent; the 1980s: the Decade of the Olympic Boycott

April 26: The Dream Team and the Olympics in a Post-Cold War World; screening: *Barcelona '92*

May 3: Atlanta Commercializes the Games; Discussion Brownell, *Beijing's Games*

May 10: **Final exam (7:30 p.m.-10:15 p.m.)**



- ❖ All students are held to the standards of the George Mason University Honor Code [See <http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#Anchor12>]
- ❖ University policy states that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the professor
- ❖ Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform the instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester [See www.gmu.edu/student/drc]
- ❖ For additional School of Recreation, Health, and Tourism information, please visit the website at <http://rht.gmu.edu>