

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY  
College of Education and Human Development  
School of Sport, Recreation and Tourism Management  
SPMT-322 – 001 —Football and American Culture (3)  
Fall 2021  
Monday- 7:20-10:00pm- West Bldg 1001- Fairfax

PROFESSOR: Dr. Matt Gilchrist                      EMAIL ADDRESS: [Mgilchr1@gmu.edu](mailto:Mgilchr1@gmu.edu)  
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OFFICE HOURS: Mon 7:20-10 pm or by apt

**PREREQUISITES/COREQUISITES:** None

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Designed for the student to gain an understanding of the past and present role of football in American culture. Focuses on the development of college, professional and high school football over the past 120 years and contemporary issues in football culture are analyzed such as debates over racial symbols and mascots, the question of professionalizing division one college football, and tailgating and televisual football cultures.

**COURSE OVERVIEW**

The learning experiences in this course are afforded through film, readings and completion of assignments. Some films will be completed by the student outside of class time. These films will be housed at Campus Library or can be rented/streamed. Hard to find films will be viewed in class. After films and discussions, students complete written unit assignments.

**COURSE DELIVERY METHOD**

This course will be delivered using a lecture format. This course will include in class and out of class film viewings, as well as discussion. Weekly attendance is expected, along with participation in class discussions.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

The student will be able to:

1. Understand the role of football in American culture.
2. Understand the operation of football as a cultural institution.
3. Understand the historical development of football in America.
3. Critically analyze football themed film and literature.
4. Reflect on his/her relationship to football.

**Expectations:**

1. All assigned reading should be completed before submitting written assignments.
2. All written assignments must be typed (computer word processing is recommended) and submitted in Hard Copy (emailed only in extreme circumstances).
3. Students must abide by the Honor Code, guided by the spirit of academic integrity.

**Class Attendance/Participation:**

It enhances your academic success to be in class; therefore, you should attend ALL scheduled class meetings in accordance with George Mason policy. Students will be penalized for absences or excessive tardiness, after two class periods missed. Any student who attends fewer than 60% of the classes will not pass the course. Students are expected to attend the class periods of the courses for which they register. In-class participation is important not only to the individual student, but to the class as a whole. Because class participation may be a factor in grading, instructors may use absence, tardiness, or early departure as de facto evidence of nonparticipation. Students who miss an exam with an

acceptable excuse may be penalized according to the individual instructor's grading policy, as stated in the course syllabus.

**PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR:** Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.

**REQUIRED TEXT:**

Grisham, John (2003). *Bleachers*. New York: Bantam Dell.

**RECOMMENDED READINGS:**

Michael Oriard, *Reading Football*

Michael Oriard, *King Football*

Michael Oriard, *Brand NFL*

**REQUIRED FILM VIEWING:**

*Rites of Autumn: The Story of College Football (IC)*

**High School:** *School Ties; Remember the Titans; Friday Night Lights*

**College:** *Knute Rockne: All-American; The Junction Boys; We Are Marshall; The Program*

**Pro:** *The History of Pro Football(IC); Leatherheads; North Dallas Forty ; Monday Night Mayhem; Any Given Sunday, Draft Day, Concussion..*Most films are readily available in on various online platforms (ie: Vudu, Netflix, Amazon etc as well as many being in the Library or will be shown in class (IC).

**COURSE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION**

This course will be graded on a point system, with a total of 100 possible points. All written work should be submitted in hard copy by 7:20 pm, on the dates they are due.

	<b>Points</b>
Requirements	
Written Assignments	
#1 Units 1-2 (13 points each)	26
#2 Units 3-4 (13 points each)	26
#3 Units 5-6 (13 points each)	26
Final Exam Presentation	16
<i>Participation</i> -Students must attend class in order to participate in the discussions generated by the readings/films. Contribution will be evaluated based on number and quality of questions asked or answered and opinion provided when asked.	<u>6</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

**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:**

Class meetings are scheduled Monday nights from 7:20-10:00pm. Written work can be completed as Units are completed during the semester. Submission dates and formal meeting dates listed below. Email discussions will also be conducted.

\*Any circumstance arising that is not explicitly addressed in this syllabus, or by George Mason University policy, is implicitly governed under the auspices of common sense and will be dealt with using the instructor's discretion.

*Note: Faculty reserves the right to alter the schedule as necessary.*

**COURSE OUTLINE:** (Mon- 7:20-10 pm)

Day	Date	Tentative Topics Covered	Readings/Films Due:
Monday	23-Aug	Intro- History of Football <i>Rites of Autumn (Disc 1)</i>	
Monday	30-Aug	Unit 1: College Football- <i>Rites of Autumn</i>	
Monday	6-Sept	<b>LABOR DAY- NO CLASS</b>	
Monday	13-Sept	Unit 2: College Football- <i>Knute Rockne- All-American</i>	
Monday	20-Sept	Pro-Football- <i>History of Pro Football</i>	<i>Watch Leatherheads</i>
Monday	27-Sept	Discuss <i>Bleachers</i> ; Unit 3; <i>Junction Boys</i>	<b>SUBMIT UNIT 1-2 Assignment</b> Complete <i>Bleachers</i>
Monday	4-Oct	CTE- Effects of Football- Watch <i>Concussion</i>	<i>Watch Friday Night Lights</i>
Monday	11-Oct	<b>FALL BREAK- NO CLASS</b>	
Monday	18-Oct	Unit 4: Racism in Football- <i>School Ties</i>	
Monday	25-Oct	Unit 4: Racism- <i>Remember the Titans</i>	
Monday	1-Nov	Unit 5: Winning & Capitalism- <i>The Program</i>	<b>SUBMIT UNIT 3-4 Assignment</b> <i>Watch Any Given Sunday</i>
Monday	8-Nov	Unit 5: Capitalism <i>Draft Day</i>	
Monday	15-Nov	Unit 5: <i>Monday Night Mayhem</i>	
Monday	22-Nov	Unit 6: Remdemption & Tragedy- <i>We are Marshall</i>	<i>Watch Invincible</i>
Monday	29-Nov	Unit 6: Redemption: <i>Invincible/FINAL EXAM PRESENTATION</i>	<b>SUBMIT UNIT 5-6 Assignment</b>
Monday	6-Dec	<b>READING DAY (NO CLASS)</b>	
Monday	13-Dec	<b>FINAL EXAM (7:30)</b>	

**UNIT ONE: The Rise of Football as an American Institution and the Preeminence of College Football to the 1960s**

Assignment: Watch the *Rites of Autumn* and participate in class meetings that examine the emergence of college football as an American institution during the Autumn months of each year. Complete the following essay question in 3-4 pages:

What factors led to the rise of football as an American pastime? Why was football first located in colleges of the northeast? How and why did it expand to be a national game by the early 1900s? What factors led to the popularity of college football? What key changes took place in the game between 1900 and the 1960s? How did those changes impact the sport and its wider cultural following?

**UNIT TWO: Professional Football on the Margins**

Assignment: Watch *The History of Pro Football* and *Leatherheads*. Complete the following essay in 2-3 pages:

How, why and where did professional football first emerge? Why was it not treated with the same seriousness as college football before the 1960s? What role did Red Grange play (see similar character in *Leatherheads*) in legitimizing professional football? Why was the 1958 NFL Championship so important to the emergence of pro football from the shadow of college football?

**UNIT THREE: Football, Masculinity and American Culture**

Assignment: Watch *The Junction Boys*, *Knute Rockne: All-American & Concussion*, and read *Bleachers*. Complete the following in essay format in 2-3 pages:

Many social theorists have examined violence and masculinity in society. The famous French theorist Michel Foucault discusses this in works such as *Discipline and Punish* and discusses how formal institutions such as the military, prisons,

and schools create order in society. Others talk about things like “the ritual sacrifice of human energy” as a need in society that is manifested particularly in sports.

In football, abuse of young men and their bodies is accepted in ways that would not be accepted in wider society outside of the military or prison. How and why did it become acceptable for young men to be pushed to the limit in football and why do we continue to accept it in our society? Why are boys and girls bodies treated differently? How do people react when a girl wants to play football? Have there been changes in training since the days of Rockne and of Bear Bryant?

Can you argue that based on new medical evidence, that perhaps the costs of playing the game are greater than the rewards? Given the effects of CTE and other means of damaging one’s body, what, would you predict, may be the long-term effects of the game in the future?

#### **UNIT FOUR: Football, Race and Ethnicity**

Assignment: Watch *School Ties*, *Remember the Titans*, *Friday Night Lights*, and refer to relevant sections in *Rites of Autumn* and other films. Complete the following in essay format in 2-3 pages:

Why was ethnicity such an important factor at elite schools up to the 1960s? Did football help to change attitudes? What role did football play in race relations in high school football in the South in the 1970s and 1980s? What factors led to the end of segregation in football?

#### **UNIT FIVE: “Winning is the Only Thing”: Football and American Capitalism**

Assignment: Watch *North Dallas Forty*, *Any Given Sunday*, *Friday Night Lights*, *Monday Night Mayhem*, *Draft Day* and *The Program*. Complete the following in essay format:

Masculinity and violence are integral parts of American football culture as we have seen. Why is violent behavior so central to measuring success in modern American culture? Why are players willing to sacrifice their health and even their lives for the sake of success in football? What limits are there to this and what changes can you see to the violent nature of football culture in recent times? How much of this is related to the “selling” of football as a commodity?

#### **UNIT SIX: Football, Tragedy and Redemption**

Assignment: Watch *We Are Marshall*, *Remember the Titans*, *Friday Night Lights*, *Invincible*, *Draft Day* and read *Bleachers*. Address the following:

Football demands so much of its adherents, players, coaches, and fans. Why does football generate such powerful emotions from those involved with it? How do teams and communities respond to adversity in and through football? Has the culture of America and football changed from that of the 1950s through 1990s? How has today’s media/social media affected the sport of football, and how organizations may be run?

**FOR EACH UNIT, YOU SHOULD ANSWER THE QUESTIONS THOROUGHLY, USING EXAMPLES FROM EACH OF THE REQUIRED SOURCES. EACH UNIT SUBMISSION SHOULD BE APPROXIMATELY 3-4 PAGES.**

**UNITS 1-2 DUE IN HARD COPY ANYTIME BEFORE 7:20 pm SEPTEMBER 27<sup>th</sup>.**

**UNITS 3-4 DUE IN HARD COPY ANYTIME BEFORE 7:20 pm NOVEMBER 1<sup>st</sup> .**

**UNITS 5-6 DUE IN HARD COPY ANYTIME BEFORE 7:20 NOVEMBER 29<sup>th</sup>.**

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## Core Values Commitment

The College of Education and Human Development is committed to collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice. Students are expected to adhere to these principles: <http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/>.

## GMU Policies and Resources for Students

### *Policies*

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the Mason Honor Code (see <http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code/>).
- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing (see <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/>).
- Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their Mason email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students **solely** through their Mason email account.
- Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with George Mason University Disability Services. Approved accommodations will begin at the time the written letter from Disability Services is received by the instructor (see <http://ods.gmu.edu/>).
- Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be silenced during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

### *Campus Resources*

- Support for submission of assignments to Tk20 should be directed to [tk20help@gmu.edu](mailto:tk20help@gmu.edu) or <https://cehd.gmu.edu/aero/tk20>. Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to <http://coursessupport.gmu.edu/>.
- For information on student support resources on campus, see <https://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/student-support-resources-on-campus>
- Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking:  
  
As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Responsible Employee,” and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason’s Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1202. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason’s confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703-380-1434 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. You may also seek assistance from Mason’s Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing [titleix@gmu.edu](mailto:titleix@gmu.edu)

For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, please visit our website <https://cehd.gmu.edu>.

## COVID -19 SYLLABUS ADDENDUM

### SAFE RETURN TO CAMPUS AND REMOTE LEARNING GUIDANCE FOR STUDENTS ENROLLED IN CEHD COURSES

Both a Safe Return to Campus and Successful Remote Learning Depend on YOU.

All students are required to take Safe Return to Campus Training prior to visiting campus: it is, however, recommended for all Mason students. Training is available in Blackboard.

Students are required to follow the university's public health and safety precautions and procedures outlined on the university Safe Return to Campus webpage.

All students in face to face and hybrid courses must also complete the Mason COVID Health Check daily, seven days a week.

- You may not come to class if you receive a Yellow or Red email response to the Mason COVID Health Check.
- You may only come to class if you receive a Green email response to the Mason COVID Health Check.
- If you suspect that you are sick or have been directed to self-isolate, quarantine, or get testing do not go to class.
- Faculty are allowed to ask you to show them that you have received a Green email and are thereby permitted to be in class.
- Disability Services: Students unable to participate in a course in the manner presented, either due to existing disability or COVID comorbidity risk, should seek accommodations through the Office of Disability Services.

**Campus Closure:** If the campus closes or class is canceled due to weather or other concerns, students should check Blackboard, Mason email, or the Mason website for updates on how to continue learning and information about any changes to events or assignments.

**Participation and Make-up Work:** CEHD instructors will work with students to find reasonable opportunities to make up class work or assignments missed due to documented illness. Begin by contacting your instructor for guidance. For further assistance, students may contact their program and the CEHD Office of Student and Academic Affairs (cehdsaa@gmu.edu).

**Technology Requirements:** Activities and assignments in CEHD courses regularly use the Blackboard learning system. Students are required to have regular, reliable access to a computer with an updated operating system (recommended: Windows 10 or Mac OSX 10.13 or higher) and a stable broadband Internet connection (cable modem, DSL, satellite broadband, etc., with a consistent 1.5 Mbps [megabits per second] download speed or higher).

Additionally, CEHD course activities and assignments may regularly use web-conferencing software (Blackboard Collaborate / Zoom). In addition to the requirements above, students are required to have a device with a functional webcam and microphone. In an emergency, students can connect through a telephone call, but video connection is the expected norm.

### Course Materials and Student Privacy:

- All course materials posted to Blackboard or other course site are private; by federal law, any materials that

identify specific students (via their name, voice, or image) must not be shared with anyone not enrolled in this class.

- Video recordings of class meetings that include audio or visual information from other students are private and must not be shared.
- Live Video Conference Meetings (e.g. Collaborate or Zoom) that include audio or visual information from other students must be viewed privately and not shared with others in your household.
- Some/All of your CEHD synchronous class meetings may be recorded by your instructor to provide necessary information for students in this class. Recordings will be stored on Blackboard [or another secure site] and will only be accessible to students taking this course during this semester.

### **Testing with LockDown Browser:**

CEHD courses may require the use of LockDown Browser and a webcam for online exams. The webcam can be built into your computer (internal webcam) or can be the type of webcam that plugs in with a USB cable (external webcam). Information on installing and using LockDown Browser may be found [here](#).

You will need the following system requirements for online exams:

- Windows: 10, 8, 7
- Mac: OS X 10.10 or higher
- iOS: 10.0+ (iPad only)
- Must have a compatible LMS integration
- Web camera (internal or external) & microphone
- A reliable internet connection
- Prior to your first exam, you must install LockDown Browser following the step-by-step instructions linked above.
- To ensure LockDown Browser and the webcam are set up properly, do the following:
  - Start LockDown Browser, log into Blackboard and select your course.
  - Locate and select the Help Center button on the LockDown Browser toolbar.
  - Run the Webcam Check and, if necessary, resolve any issues or permissions your computer prompts.
  - Run the System & Network Check. If a problem is indicated, see if a solution is provided in the Knowledge Base. Further troubleshooting is available through the ITS Support Center.
  - Exit the Help Center and locate the practice quiz.
  - Upon completing and submitting the practice quiz, exit LockDown Browser.
  - When taking an online exam that requires LockDown Browser and a webcam, remember the following guidelines:
    - Ensure you're in a location where you won't be interrupted.
    - Turn off all other devices (e.g. tablets, phones, second computers) and place them outside of your reach.
    - Clear your desk of all external materials not permitted — books, papers, phones, other devices.
    - Before starting the test, know how much time is available for it, and that you've allotted sufficient time to complete it.
    - Remain at your computer for the duration of the test. Make sure that your computer is plugged into a power source, or that battery is fully-charged.
    - If the computer or networking environment is different than what was used previously with the Webcam Check and System & Network Check in LockDown Browser, run the checks again prior to starting the test.

To produce a good webcam video, do the following:

- Do not wear a baseball cap or hat with a brim that obscures your face.
- Ensure your computer or tablet is on a firm surface (a desk or table). Do NOT have the computer on your lap, a bed, or any other surface where the device (or you) are likely to move.

- If using a built-in (internal) webcam, avoid tilting the screen after the webcam setup is complete.
- Take the exam in a well-lit room and avoid backlighting, such as sitting with your back to a window.
- Remember that LockDown Browser will prevent you from accessing other websites or applications; you will be unable to exit the test until all questions are completed and submitted.

