Course description

Soccer –known as fútbol in Spanish or futebol in Portuguese- is, without doubt, the single most popular sport in the world. In most countries of Latin America it has become the national pastime, the only exceptions being the Caribbean countries of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, and Venezuela, where baseball occupies that place. This seminar will offer students the opportunity to explore and understand the complexities of Latin American societies using soccer as a cultural and sociological window. At a more general level, it will also allow them to think critically about the social, cultural, and political implications of sports and entertainment in contemporary societies. We will discuss, among other issues, the reasons why soccer captured the imagination of Latin Americans; the relationship between the dissemination of soccer and patterns of cultural, political, and economic change; the connections between soccer and the shaping of national identities in the region; the manipulation of soccer by military regimes in the 1970s; the racial, class, and gender dynamics behind soccer as a practice and a spectacle; the recent appearance of violent soccer fans and their connections with contemporary economic and social trends such as the spread of neo-liberalism and the forces of globalization; and the use of soccer as a marker of identity by Latin American immigrants in the United States.
Course policies

1. Students are expected to attend lectures consistently. A passing grade will be hard to achieve without regular attendance. Students must also consistently read the assigned materials before the class meetings and actively participate in class discussions.

2. A common form of academic dishonesty, plagiarism, will not be tolerated. Students must become familiar with the University of Oregon rules about this issue. More information will be offered at the appropriate time.

3. An atmosphere of mutual respect, tolerance, and fairness will be enforced by the instructor. Students must behave in ways proper to an academic environment--i.e. no talking, eating, or newspaper reading during lecture. Cell phones, i-pods, and other electronic devices can not be used during class. Laptops are allowed ONLY for note-taking. If a student uses his/her laptop for other purposes during class time (web browsing, chatting, reading e-mail), he/she will be banned from bringing a laptop computer to the classroom.

4. “Incomplete” grades will be granted only in cases of extreme need and only to those students that have an acceptable record of class attendance and have at least a C average in their evaluations. Students that need an “incomplete” grade must make arrangements with the instructor on or before the last week of classes.

5. The University of Oregon has taken steps to try to minimize the impact of the H1N1 influenza pandemic. Please take a few minutes to review the UO’s information web page at http://em.uoregon.edu/h1n1/ and read the “Planning Assumptions and Response” document whose link appears on that page. Consult with the instructor if you have questions or concerns about this issue.

Course requirements

1. Attendance and participation: 10%. Students are expected to do the readings in advance and come to class prepared to participate in class discussions. The completion and quality of the homework assigned throughout the term will also be taken into account.

2. Midterm exam: 20%.

3. Two written exercises: 10% each. These will be in-class or take-home short exercises based on the course readings. Dates are offered below.

4. Group project: 20%. Students will be divided into groups of 4 or 5 to work on collective projects. The final product will be a 10-page paper and a 15-minute power-point presentation about some aspect of the history of soccer in Latin America. More information will be offered in class.

5. Final exam: 30%
Course Readings:

The following books will be available for purchase at the UO bookstore. They will also be placed on reserve at Knight Library:


In addition, a series of articles and book chapters will be available electronically through blackboard. STUDENTS MUST PRINT ALL OF THEM AND ORGANIZE THEM INTO A READING PACKET DURING THE FIRST WEEK OF CLASSES.

Schedule of topics and readings

Week 1: Soccer in Latin America today: An overview

Readings:


Eduardo Galeano, “Football, Myth and Reality.”

Week 2: Latin American Soccer in a Globalized World

Readings:

Alan Gilbert, “From Dreams to Reality: The Economics and Geography of Football Success,” in Miller and Crolley, eds. *Football in the Americas*.


Week 3: Movie and discussion: “Maradona. The Hand of God”

Reading:


In-class written exercise # 1. Question will be distributed in class.

Week 4: Soccer Players as Cultural Icons

Readings:


Week 5: Soccer, National Style, and the Question of Identity

Readings:


Pablo Alabarces, “Football Fans and the Argentine Crisis of 2001-02: The Crisis, the World Cup and the Destiny of the Patria,” in Miller and Crolley, eds. *Football in the Americas*.


Week 6: Soccer Rivalries, Social Identities, and Violence

Midterm exam: November 3

Readings:


Week 7: Soccer and Politics: From Populism to Military Dictatorships

Readings:


Week 8: Soccer Fans and Masculinity

Reading:


Second written exercise.

Week 9: Soccer and the Latino diaspora


Nov. 27: Thanksgiving holiday. No class.

Week 10: Group Presentations

FINAL EXAM: Wednesday, December 9, 8:00 am.