



Soccer

Media, Art, Society

The great Brazilian athlete Pele once called soccer the “beautiful game”—a sport second to none in inspiring memorable performances, grand passions, deep commitments, potent conflicts, media spectacles, and artistic representations. Soccer is a ritual through which cultural identities and relationships are constituted and viewed, but it is also big business today, a global industry engaging millions of viewers, consumers, and dollars every week. This course explores the relation of international soccer to various political, economic, and cultural dynamics. In a series of cross-cultural case studies, it will investigate the game's relationship to issues such as political power, globalization, gender, migration, economic and social inequality, national identity, and transnational commerce. We will discuss the history of the game and the development of its tactics, as much as we will study the particularities of soccer in Germany, Spain, England, and the United States. Finally, this course will address the representation of soccer in various artistic media such as literature, film, and video installation art.

Short Description

Explores the relationship of soccer to political power, globalization, mass media, gender, migration, economic inequality, national identity, and transnational commerce. Covers the history of the game and its tactics. Additional attention given to the representation of soccer in various artistic media such as literature, film, poetry, and video art.

COURSE INFORMATION

Class Time	MWF 11:15 -12:05
Room	Commons Center 335
Instructors	Lutz Koepnick John Sloop
Email	lutz.koepnick@vanderbilt.edu john.m.sloop@vanderbilt.edu
Office Hours	> Koepnick: W 2:30 – 4 [Furman 130 Zoom (Meeting ID: 967 9523 7195)]; or by appointment. > Sloop: by appt.

GRADE DISTRIBUTION

Attendance & Participation	15%
Student Presentation	15%
Mid-term Exam	15%
Final Project	20%
Journal	20%
Final Self-Assessment	5%
Student-led Discussion	10%

Some of the work and grades you receive this semester are based on group efforts. We value true collaboration and even distribution of workloads. The display of collaboration in fact is one of the criteria of grading. In most cases, we will therefore give each group member the same grade. In some rare cases, however, we may have to deviate from this should some individual group members clearly fail to do their share.

Grading Scale: A (94-100%); A- (90-93%); B+ (87%-89%); B (83-86%); B- (80-82%); C+ (77-79%); C (73-76%); C- (70-72%); D (60-69%); F (below 60%)

REQUIRED TEXTS

The following texts will be required. You will need to purchase these books as physical copies and bring them to class on days when assigned:

- Franklin Foer, *How Soccer Explains the World* (ISBN: 978-0061978050)
- Eduardo Galeano, *Soccer in Sun and Shadow* (ISBN: 978-1568584942)
- Simon Critchley, *What We Think About When We Think About Soccer* (ISBN: 978-0143132677)
- Laurent Dubois, *The Language of the Game* (ISBN: 978-0465094486)

COURSE POLICIES

A NOTE OF DEADLINES AND WORKFLOW

We have prepared all kinds of work modules on Brightspace to help you prepare, complement, and reflect on what we do during our weekly meetings. Please be aware of the sequencing of work modules each week. You will be asked to carry out various activities before or possibly after our meetings. We will remind you of deadlines for different module components each week, but it is important that you stick to these deadlines and the workflow they reflect to learn effectively.

READINGS

Readings should be completed as noted in the course schedule. Not everything in the reading will be covered in class. Thus, it is important that you read closely and take notes. You are responsible for the content in the readings even when the material does not come up explicitly in class. If you do not understand elements of the reading, you should feel free to ask questions in class or in office hours. To honor our mobile technology policy, please make sure to purchase all required books as physical copies and bring them to class when assigned.

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION:

15% percent of your grade is based on your attendance & participation. We want to stress that we have very high expectations for your participation. DO NOT TAKE this portion of your grade as a given, as it often is in courses. You are expected to come to class having done the reading. Good participants are ready to jump into class discussion every day. Their comments and questions are informed by the reading, and they will have examples from the reading to support their observations. Above all, they are respectful of other students and are consistently thoughtful in their comments.

To be clear, if you simply attend class and do not actively participate, you will receive a failing evaluation in terms of participation. While we understand that different people have different levels of comfort in class participation, everyone can respond to questions, offer

opinions, and note agreement/disagreement with other comments. We may ask you, for example, to give voice to a comment you have written in your journal about the readings. Doing so is a moment for you to participate. Take that moment.

You are expected to attend all sections. Arrive on time so as not to disturb others. Students who are disruptive during the seminar will be asked to leave and may suffer a penalty on their final grade because of this behavior. You may miss three classes without excuses. A student who for whatever reason misses more than three classes may expect a penalty for every subsequent absence on the final grade. We will drop your combined Attendance & Participation by one full grade should you miss four or five classes, by two full grades should you miss six or seven classes, and by three full grades should you miss eight or nine classes. Students who miss ten classes will receive an automatic F for their Participation & Attendance grade, and students who miss more than ten class will fail the class altogether independent of their performance in any other aspects of the class. There is no mechanism to make up for excessive absences, excused or unexcused.

Near midpoint in the class, we will provide you with a current participation grade. This will not be 50% of your evaluation; it will be more of letting you know what grade your current level of participation would warrant. You will still have some time after that to adjust your participation evaluation.

MOBILE TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM

Laptop/tablet use in lectures is not allowed except in special approved cases. Using your laptop or tablet to take notes often leads to checking email and social media or browsing the internet. This hinders your learning and has also been shown to distract those around you. If you, with our explicit permission, will use your laptop or tablet in class, please sit in one of the side sections of the seminar room or lecture hall. Phones need to stay in bags and pockets throughout the entire class period; smart watches need to be turned off. In certain cases, we may ask you to use laptops, tablet computers, or smart phones in class to carry out certain activities. Otherwise, please keep them off your desk.

PAPERS, PROJECTS, AND EXAMS

There are six principal assignments for this class: one midterm and one final project, one group presentation, your ongoing journal, one student-led discussion of class materials, and your final self-assessment. A student who does not complete all six of these assignments may fail the class regardless of the grades earned on the other assignments. Make-up exams are ONLY possible for emergencies and for religious holidays with advance notice (see policy below).

PRESENTATIONS

Each student will be asked to prepare as part of a group of students one ten-minute presentation for dates set in the beginning of the semester. These presentations will either address the dynamic of select soccer rivalries in various leagues (week 6); how different countries and cultures have dealt with the legacy and/or resurgence of racism (week 11); or provide

an overview of the narrative arc of the soccer series discussed in week 9. Please read about more detailed expectations below. Students will sign up for their presentation slot during the second week of the semester. The task of these presentations is to provide a detailed, well-researched overview of the subject matter. It should also outline different positions within existing controversies without taking sides. Use no more and no less than five PowerPoint slides in support of your presentation but ensure that you do not simply read the content of these slides to your audience. Face and speak to your audience, not the projection of your slides. Take a moment at the end or the beginning of your presentation to reveal your sources. This is a group effort; make sure to share the workload evenly and truly collaborate. Each group member will submit a brief note about their contribution to the group effort and collaborative work.

FORMAT OF PRESENTATIONS

Rivalries: Length of presentation: 10 minutes. Q&A: 6-8 minutes. No more and no less than 5 PowerPoint slides. Identify some of the most important historical, cultural, social, religious, and/or ethnic tensions that energize the rivalry. What do we need to know to understand why these teams always clash with each other? Discuss at least two different scholarly sources that offer different viewpoints on this conflict and weigh them against each other. What do these clubs and their fans do today to negotiate the legacy of these conflicts? No need to offer a detailed account of the history of each club and their players. Focus on how their rivalry illuminates larger social/cultural conflicts and can only be understood in terms of these conflicts. Conclude your discussion with some short comments on your sources and be prepared to answer possible questions.

Soccer and Race: Length of presentation: 10 minutes. Q&A: 6-8 minutes. No more and no less than 5 PowerPoint slides. Identify some of the most important historical, cultural, social, religious, and/or ethnic tensions that inform the role of race in these soccer contexts. You may talk about a few instances to illustrate your findings but focus more on contextualization and overview. What do we need to know about the history of racial relations to understand the role of race in soccer? How does soccer's politics of race echo or counteract the overall politics of race. Discuss at some length at least two different scholarly sources that offer different viewpoints on this conflict and weigh them against each other. Conclude your discussion with some short comments on your sources and be prepared to answer possible questions.

Streaming Soccer: Length of presentation: 10 minutes. Q&A: 6-8 minutes. No more and no less than 5 PowerPoint slides. Tell us about the main narrative arc of the show. What are the basic themes and conflicts, what are some of the main protagonists and locations. Assume you talk to people who have never heard about the show. In the middle, discuss for about 5 minutes two different thorough reviews of the show or scholarly engagements with it and weigh in their different approaches. Also: discuss for a couple of minutes some of the most striking formal features, be it related to cinematography, sound design, or acting style. Since your fellow students have seen a few select episodes, conclude your presentation with three

questions they will be able to discuss critically in light of your presentation and their own viewing of the episodes in questions.

STUDENT-LED DISCUSSIONS

Each student will be asked to lead as part of a group the discussion of an assigned film/reading/topic for about 30 minutes, typically on a Friday. Your task will be to deliver a clear, correct, and concise summary of the day's film, reading, or topic in question (5 minutes); make connections between the materials and lectures of the week (3 minutes); outline at least two perspectives different scholars or writers have taken on the issue in question (5 minutes); queue up several interesting discussion questions that connect the viewing or reading to larger issues of our class (5 minutes); and last but not least solicit broad participation and back-and-forth engagement with your fellow students (12 minutes). In all of this, it is critical that you as a group show joint evidence that you prepared yourself thoughtfully for this task. Given the size of our class, each group may stage controversial debates about different viewpoints between individual group members for the class in general to kick off a broader discussion. This is a group effort; make sure to share the workload evenly and truly collaborate. Lacking collaboration before and during the presentation will result in lower grades for all group members.

Leading discussion is tricky—it relies on knowledge and advance planning and performance, as well as attentive listening and connective on-your-foot thinking. You may use PowerPoint slides in support of your presentation, but do not use more than three slides and ensure that you do not simply read the content of these slides to your audience. Face and speak to your audience, not the projection of your slides. Each group member will submit a brief note about their contribution to the group effort and collaborative work.

JOURNAL

Each student will be asked to maintain a journal throughout the semester. You are expected to write about 150 words about assigned readings or assigned topics before each actual meeting. This writing can be formal or less formal, it may summarize main points, ask questions about the reading, make unexpected connections, bring things into conversation. As you will notice, our syllabus and Brightspace modules will suggest certain topics for specific days; please use these suggestions as points of departures. We may use your comments to guide classroom discussion and look for thoughts, observations, and questions that may help us conduct class more effectively. Though these entries will not be shared at first with other students, you are encouraged to use them also to probe possible contributions to class or reflect about past classes. Most journal entries are due before class: please submit each journal entry no later than 2 hours before a class in question. Some are due after class as noted in the syllabus and in Brightspace: submit them no later than 24 hours after the session in question. For all entries, please write directly into the Brightspace entry site and post your thoughts there; do not use links to some running document elsewhere. We will formally assess your accumulated journal entries three times during the semester: after week 5, after week 9, and after week 14. You are expected to have at least 10 separate entries in this journal for each of the three periods in question. 8 submissions will potentially

drop the grade for this category to B, 7 to C, less than 7 to D, and less than 5 to an F. No late submission for this assignment is possible.

FINAL PROJECT

Each student will work with one or two other students on a final project on soccer-related topic of their choice. This can take the form of a 10-15 page paper, a fifteen minute podcast, or a 10 minute video. Other creative approaches to the format are encouraged. A 300-word written abstract of your project is due on November 11, 2024, no matter what format you chose. When submitting the final version, each group member will be asked to submit a brief note about their contribution to the group effort and collaborative work. This is a group effort; make sure to share the workload evenly and truly collaborate. Lacking collaboration before and during the presentation will result in lower grades for all group members. If you chose to submit a creative project, make sure to add a 500-word document to your group-submission detailing your approach, process, and final result.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: We will not tolerate plagiarism or other violations of Vanderbilt's Honor System. The use of AI technologies when writing papers, exams, or presentations is not allowed and will be considered as a form of plagiarism. For more information, see: http://www.vanderbilt.edu/student_handbook/the-honor-system/.

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS: The Departments of German, Russian and East European Studies and Communication Studies are committed to making educational opportunities available that respect and welcome students of all backgrounds, identities, and abilities. If there are circumstances that make our learning environment and activities difficult, if you have medical information that you need to share with us, or if you need specific arrangements in case the building needs to be evacuated, please let your instructor know. This class is designed to be an effective learning environment for all students, but it is up to you to initiate discussion with your instructor if you need additional support. If appropriate, you should also contact the Vanderbilt Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action, and Disability Services Department (EAD) to get more information about specific accommodations.

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS: Students who expect to miss classes, examinations, or any other assignments as a consequence of their religious observance should provide us with notice of the dates of religious holidays on which they will be absent no later than by the beginning of week 2.

OFFICE HOURS: We are happy to talk to you during scheduled office hours (and by appointment) about the materials in this class. If you want to discuss your performance in the class or a grade earned on a paper or exam, you must bring with you your notes from lectures, readings, and screenings to the meeting.

Course Schedule

Student-led class discussion

Student presentations

Week 1: Introduction

August 21, 2024 | “Why Soccer Matters” (LK)

- Introduction
- Rory Smith, “A Bleak View of Soccer’s Future Misses the Full Picture”
- Study the syllabus carefully and watch the various videos on Brightspace about class policies.

August 23, 2024 | “Why Soccer Matters” (JS)

- Simon Critchley, *What We Think About When We Think About Soccer* (xiv-81)
- JOURNAL (due before class): What do you expect from studying soccer this semester?

Week 2: Soccer Between Play and Commerce

August 26, 2024 | Soccer and Commerce (JS)

- Terry Eagleton, “Football: a dear friend to capitalism”
- Franklin Foer, *How Soccer Explains the World* (89-140)
- JOURNAL (due before class): Discuss two thoughts that stand out from the Foer text about how soccer explains the world today.

August 28, 2024 | Soccer and Play (LK)

- Simon Critchley, *What We Think About When We Think About Soccer* (82-169)
- 🎬 *Short Plays* (2014, dir. Daniel Gruener, sel., 13 min)
- JOURNAL (due before class): Reflect on your reading of the Critchley text.

August 30, 2024 | The Super League and its Discontent

Student-led discussion about “The Super League and the Tension between Money and Play in Soccer Today”

- New York Times: [“How the Superleague Fell Apart”](#)
- Minidocumentary: [“The Rise & Fall of the Superleague”](#)
- JOURNAL (due after class): Reflect on today’s student-led discussion. Identify one aspect you agreed and one you disagreed with.

Week 3: The Language of the Game

September 2, 2024 | The Language of the Game (LK)

- Laurent Dubois, *The Language of the Game* (1-123)
- JOURNAL (due before class): What does it mean to speak of soccer as a language?

September 4, 2024 | The Language of the Game (JS)

- Laurent Dubois, *The Language of the Game* (125-271)
- JOURNAL (due before class): Discuss one quote from today's reading that stood out for you.

September 6, 2024 | Soccer Writing

Student-led discussion about "The Poetry of Soccer: Eduardo Galeano's Writing on Soccer" (I)

- Eduardo Galeano, *Soccer in Sun and Shadow* (1-40, 232-236)
- JOURNAL (due after class): Pick one of Galeano's texts assigned for today and discuss what you liked or disliked about it.

Week 4: American Exceptionalism? I

September 9, 2024 | Soccer and American Exceptionalism (Part 1) (LK)

- Andrei S. Markovits, "The Other 'American Exceptionalism': Why is There No Soccer in the United States?"
- JOURNAL (due before class): Is Markovits right? Is there no soccer in the US?

September 11, 2024 | Soccer and American Exceptionalism (Part 2) (JS)

- David Wangerin, "Soccer in a Football World" (15-44)
- Joshua Robinson and Jonathan Clegg, *The Club: How the Premiere League Became the Richest, Most Disruptive Business* (chapter 1)
- JOURNAL (due before class): Summarize Wangerin's main points and arguments.

September 13, 2024 | Soccer in America

Student-led discussion about "Soccer in America: The New York Cosmos"

- 🗣️ [*Once In A Lifetime: The Extraordinary Story of the New York Cosmos*](#)
- JOURNAL (due after class): Reflect on today's student-led discussion

Week 5: American Exceptionalism? II

September 16, 2024 | Soccer and American Exceptionalism (Part 3) (JS)

- Benedict Anderson, “Imagined Communities”
- Bunk, “From Football to Soccer” (121-163)
- JOURNAL (due before class): What’s Anderson’s point to speak of “imagined” communities?

September 18, 2024 | Soccer and American Exceptionalism (Part 4) (JS)

- Gail Newsham, “A League of Their Own” (114-136)
- JOURNAL (due before class): Share some initial thoughts about the role of gender in contemporary soccer

September 20, 2024 | Soccer and Politics

Student-led discussion about “Franklin Foer on Soccer and Politics”

- Franklin Foer, *How Soccer Explains the World* (7-34, 141-166)
- JOURNAL (due after class): Disagree with one thing you heard in today’s student-led discussion about Foer’s text.

Week 6: On Rivalries

September 23, 2024 | El Clasico and Other Rivalries (LK & JS)

- Mariann Vaczi, “‘The Spanish Fury’: A political geography of soccer in Spain”
- Franklin Foer, *How Soccer Explains the World* (193-216)
- Assessment of Journals / 1
- JOURNAL (due before class): List a few reasons that fuel the rivalry between Barcelona and Madrid, as discussed by Franklin Foer.

September 25, 2024 | Student Presentations: Rivalries I--What is at Stake?

- Celtic Glasgow vs Glasgow Rangers
- River Plate vs Boca Juniors
- Hamburger SV vs St. Pauli Hamburg
- JOURNAL (due after class): Respond to today’s presentations

September 27, 2024 | Student Presentations: Rivalries II--What is at Stake?

- Partizan Belgrade vs Red Star Belgrade
- AS Roma vs. Lazio Roma
- Galatasaray Istanbul vs Fenerbahce Istanbul
- JOURNAL (due after class): Respond to today’s presentations

Week 7: Soccer and Warfare I

September 30, 2024 | War with Other Means (JS)

- Simon Kuper, “Soccer Against the Enemy”
- David Goldblatt, *The Ball is Round* (chapter 7)
- JOURNAL (due before class): Respond to the Kuper reading for today

October 2, 2024 | Soccer during the Nazi Period (LK)

- David Goldblatt, *The Ball is Round* (chapter 9)
- 🎬 *Olympia* (1938, dir. Leni Riefenstahl, sel., 5 min)
- 🎬 *The Miracle of Bern* (2003, dir. Sönke Wortmann, 118 min)
- JOURNAL (due before class): Write two short reviews of *The Miracle of Bern*, one recommending the film for viewing, the other not

October 4, 2024

Student-led discussion about “Soccer and War”

- JOURNAL (due before class): Should Russia be allowed to compete in international tournaments such as the FIFA Worldcup? Offer pros and cons.

Week 8 | Soccer and Warfare II

October 7, 2024 (LK)

- 🎬 *The Keeper* (2018, dir. Marcus Rosenmüller)
- JOURNAL (due before class): Can soccer heal national conflicts? How does *The Keeper* address this issue?

October 9, 2024

- Mid-term

October 11, 2024

- No class: Fall Break

Week 9 | STREAMING SOCCER

October 14, 2024 | Ted Lasso

- 🎬 Season 3, Episodes 6 & 7: “Sunflowers” & “The Strings that Bind Us”
- Student Presentation: *Ted Lasso: Seasons 1&2*
- Student Presentation: *Ted Lasso: Season 3*
- JOURNAL (due after class): Respond to today’s presentations

October 16, 2024 | | Welcome to Wrexham

- 🎬 Season 1, Episode 1 & 9: “Dream” & “Welcome Home”
- Student Presentation: *Welcome to Wrexham*
- JOURNAL (due after class): Respond to today’s presentation

October 18, 2024 | Beckham

- 🎬 Episode 1: “The Kick”
- Student Presentation: *Beckham*
- JOURNAL (due after class): Respond to today’s presentation

Week 10 | Gender and Sexuality

October 21, 2024 | Soccer and Gender Norms (JS)

- Kaelberer, “Gender Trouble on the German Soccer Field”
- Moreira, “Marta past Messi: (Re)definitions of Gender and Masculinity, Patriarchal Struggles”
- Assessment of Journals / 2
- JOURNAL (due before class): Summarize Kaelberer’s and Moreira’s arguments

October 23, 2024 | | Soccer Homophobia (JS)

- Gaston et al., “From Hegemonic to Exclusive Masculinities in English Professional Football: Marking a Cultural Shift”
- JOURNAL (due before class): What’s critical about the cultural shift described in Gaston’s essay?

October 25, 2024 | Offside

Student-led discussion about Offside

- 🎬 *Offside* (2006, dir. Jafar Panahi, 88 min)
- JOURNAL (due after class): Respond to today’s discussion

Week 11 | Soccer and Race

October 28, 2024 | | Soccer and Race (JS & LK)

- Antonio Rüdiger, [“This Article Will Not Solve Racism in Football”](#)
- Andrei Markovits and Lars Rensmann, *Gaming the World: How Sports Are Reshaping Global Politics and Culture* (chapter 1 and 5)
- [“Soccer Looks Different When You Can’t See Who’s Playing”](#)
- [“European soccer is having another reckoning over racism – is it time to accept the problem goes beyond bad fans?”](#)
- JOURNAL (due before class): Share some thoughts about Rüdiger’s intervention

October 30, 2024 | Student Presentations: Soccer and Race

- France
- Italy
- Argentina
- JOURNAL (due after class): Respond to today's presentations

November 1, 2024 | Soccer and Slave Trade

Student-led discussion of *Diamantes Negroes*

- 🎬 *Diamantes Negroes* (2013, dir. Miguel Alcantud, 98 min)
- Ini-Obo Nkang, "How the search for football's next big thing is fueling a modern-day slave trade"
- JOURNAL (due after class): Respond to today's discussion

Week 12 | Soccer and Art

November 4, 2024 | Athletic Beauty (LK)

- Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *In Praise of Athletic Beauty* (sel)
- JOURNAL (due before class): According to Gumbrecht, what defines the beauty of athletic performances?

November 6, 2024 | Is Soccer Art? (LK)

- 🎬 *Zidane: A 21st Century Portrait* (2007, dir. Douglas Gordon and Philippe Parreno)
- Michael Fried, "Absorbed in the Action"
- JOURNAL (due before class): Identify and discuss three of the most memorable moments of the *Zidane* film

November 8, 2024 | Galeano's Poetry of Soccer

Student-led discussion about Eduardo Galeano's writing

- Eduardo Galeano, *Soccer in Sun and Shadow* (59-60; 84-85; 95-97; 103-104; 107-108)
- JOURNAL (due after class): Respond to today's discussion

Week 13 | Soccer in Nashville and Beyond / Soccer and Big Data

November 11, 2024

- Abstract of final project due

November 13, 2024

- Guest Speaker: Larry Berg, Owner Los Angeles FC and Grasshoppers Zurich

November 15, 2024 | Soccernomics (JS)

- Kuper and Szymanski, *Soccernomics* (chapter 1)
- Rory Smith, “The Rise of the Outsiders”
- JOURNAL (due before class): Does data and soccer go together?

Week 14 | Soccer in Nashville and Beyond / Soccer and Big Data

November 18, 2024

- Guest Speaker, Darren Ambrose, Head Coach Vanderbilt Soccer

November 20, 2024 | Optimizing Performances by the Numbers (LK)

- Schoenfeld, “How Data (and Some Breathtaking Soccer) Brought Liverpool to the Cusp of Glory”
- Statsbomb 360: [Line-Breaking Passes and Ball Receipts in Space](#)
- *The Athletic*: “Explained: The 10 Commandments of football analytics”
- JOURNAL (Due before class): Respond to two of the 10 commandments of The Athletic

November 22, 2024

Student-led discussion about “Soccer and Data”

- JOURNAL (due after class): Respond to today’s discussion
- Assessment of Journals / 3

Week 15 | Extra Time

December 2, 2024

- TBD

December 4, 2024

- TBD