

## SOCIOLOGY 647: Sociology of Sport.

### POSSIBLE BOOKS AND VIDEO/DVDS FOR BOOK/FILM REPORT

#### NOVELS.

Lefcourt, Peter. *The Dreyfus Affair*. Harper, 1992. A major league shortstop falls in love with his second baseman.

Malamud, Bernard. *The Natural*. This is the novel that was made into the movie of the same name. It's apparently much better.

#### BIOGRAPHIES AND EXPOSES

Bouton, Jim. *Ball Four: My Life and Hard Times Throwing the Knuckleball in the Big Leagues*. Chamberlain, Wilt. *A View from Above*. New York: Random House, 1991. His autobiography.

Coe, Sebastian. *Running Free*. His autobiography

Frazier, Joe. *Smokin' Joe: the Autobiography of a Heavyweight Champion of the World*.

Halas, George Stanley. *Halas by Halas: the Autobiography of George Halas*.

Henderson, Thomas and Peter Knobler. *Out of Control: Confessions of an NFL Casualty*. New York: Putnam, 1987. Drugs in pro football.

Kramer, Jerry. *Instant Replay*. Signet Books. 1969. The inside story of Lombardi's Packers, by an offensive guard..

Louis, Joe. *Joe Louis, my Life*.

Meggyesy, Dave. *Out of their League*. Berkeley: Ramparts Press, 1970. An expose of pro football by an outside linebacker.

Navratilova, Marina. *Martina*. Her autobiography.

Parrish, Bernie. *They Call it a Game*. New York: Dial Press, 1971. Another expose of pro football by a former player and official of the players association.

Simmons, Ira. *Black Knight: Al Davis and his Raiders*. The story of a team owner.

Sullivan, John Lawrence. *I can Lick any Sonofabitch in the House*. Autobiography of a famous fighter early in the century.

Underwood, John. *The Death of an American Game: The Crisis in Football*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1979. Yet another expose.

Webb, Bernice. *The Basketball Man, James Naismith*. Lawrence, KA: University Press of Kansas. Biography of the inventor of basketball.

Zaharias, Babe Didrikson. *This Life I've Led: My Autobiography by Babe Didrikson Zaharias as Told to Harry Paxton*.

VIDEOS/DVD's. Entertainment unless specified as documentary. (Look on the web site syllabus for SI's top 50 sports movies.)

42. (2013) The story of Jackie Robinson's first year in the major leagues. Brace yourself for many repetitions of the n-word; highly accurate portrayal.

61\*. (2001) Directed by Yankees die-hard Billy Crystal, the movie chronicles the 1961 season in which Roger Maris and Mickey Mantle were trying to break the Babe's single-season home run record. The film shows the amount of hatred that Yankees fans had for Maris.

Ali (2009) -The self-titled biopic covers Muhammad Ali's boxing career from 1964-1974 from his battles with Liston and Frasier, his conversion to Islam, and The Rumble in the Jungle with the grill man himself.

Any Given Sunday (1999) Al Pacino as a coach; Cameron Diaz as an owner. Oliver Stone directed.

The Bad News Bears. (1976). Little League run amok.

Bang the Drum Slowly. (1973) Robert DeNiro as a dying major leaguer.

Bend it Like Beckham. (2003) A Sikh girl in England defies her family to play soccer.

The Bingo Long Traveling All-Stars and Motor Kings (1976) James Earl Jones, Billy Dee Williams, Richard Pryor. Negro League players mutiny and form own league.

The Blind Side. (2009) Sandra Bullock won Best Actress for her performance in The Blind Side, the story of offensive lineman Michael Oher who currently plays for the Baltimore Ravens.

Body and Soul (1947) The ruthless world of professional boxing.

Breaking Away. (1979) Indiana kids become bicycle racers.

Bull Durham. (1988) Susan Sarandon, Tim Robbins, Kevin Costner. Minor league baseball in all its glory. #1 on many lists.

Chariots of Fire. (1981) British track athletes at the 1920 Olympics.

Cinderella Man. (2006) After years of being considered a washed up has-been, boxing hero James Braddock goes back into the ring.

Coach Carter. (2005) When Samuel Jackson arrives at his old California high school and becomes the head coach of a dying program, he becomes Coach Carter. Not only does Jackson teach his players how to play basketball at a higher level, but he helps them with their studies, allowing them to get scholarships and the chance to have better lives.

Cool Runnings (1993) Caribbean bobsled team tries for the Olympics.

Dogtown and Z-Boys. (2001). "It's a documentary about 1970's Venice Beach, California, which is where the most talented and devoted surfboarders under the sun devised an even cooler way to snag their adrenalin fix."

Eight Men Out (1988). The Black Sox scandal of 1919.

Fear Strikes Out (1957) Too much parental pressure leads to a nervous breakdown.

The Fighter. (2010) The Best Picture-nominated movie starring Mark Wahlberg and Christian Bale tells the story of a washed up fighter addicted to crack and his brother who is trying to make a name for himself as a boxer.

Friday Night Lights. (2004) A straight arrow coach ( Billy Bob Thornton ) leads Permian High to the 1988 Texas state semifinals. Not the documentary.

Girlfight (2000) Troubled young woman channels aggression into boxing. Won both the Director's Award and the Grand Jury Prize at the 2000 Sundance Film Festival

Glory Road (2006). The 1966 Texas Western Basketball team is the most important basketball team of all-time in terms of historical importance. Glory Road tells their story on the way to the national championship game against Kentucky in which head coach Don Haskins

started five black players against Kentucky coach Adolph Rupp and his star player Pat Riley. Sports and life once again come together as the team has to persevere segregation issues in the 1960s.

Heart of the Game. (2006) " It's too easy to describe The Heart of the Game as 'Hoop Dreams for girls,' but this winning documentary reaches beyond the clichés of your typical sports movie."

\*Hoop Dreams. (1994) Documentary following middle school kids with pro basketball aspirations. "A searing commentary on our social system..." says my book.

Hoosiers (1988) Gene Hackman takes a high school team to the tournament.

The Hustler. (1961) Jackie Gleason as Minnesota Fats. Is pool a sport?

Invincible (2006) Based on the story of Vince Papale, a 30-year-old bartender from South Philadelphia who overcame long odds to play for the NFL's Philadelphia Eagles in 1976.

The Jackie Robinson Story. (1950) My book says "straightforward bio of Robinson . . . fascinating as a social history ... pointed in its presentation of the racial issues." Ruby Dee, Jackie Robinson.

Joe Jackson. (1943) Documentary on world champion who scandalized the white world by his interracial relationships. Miles Davis jazz score.

Jerry Maguire. (1996) Sports agent has a crisis of conscience and loses all but one client. Cuba Gooding Jr., Tom Cruise.

A League of Their Own. (1992) The girls' all-American Baseball League, fictionalized. Featuring Tom Hanks, Gina Davis and Madonna, among others.

The Longest Yard. (1974) Burt Reynolds in a prison vs. the outside football game.

Million Dollar Baby (2004). Hilary Swank becomes a boxer. Directed by Clint Eastwood.

Miracle (2004). Film about the United States men's hockey team, led by head coach, Herb Brooks, that won the gold medal in the 1980 Winter Olympics.

Moneyball (2011) Loosely based on a true story of how Oakland Athletics manager Billy Beane's (Brad Pitt) successful attempt to assemble a baseball team on a lean budget by employing computer-generated analysis to acquire new players.

Murderball. (2005). Wheelchair rugby as played by the US team, between 2002 games in Sweden and the 2004 Paralympics.

National Velvet (1944) . Little girl rides horse in big race, is disqualified because of her sex. Elizabeth Taylor as a teen.

The Natural (1984). Story of a baseball player's ups and downs.

North Dallas Forty. (1979) Aging football player is exploited by his team management, along with everyone else. My book says "best gridiron film ever made". Nick Nolte.

Offside (2006) Struggle of Women in a country that excludes them from entering the stadiums.

Personal Best. (1982) Mariel Hemingway as a track star who has a Lesbian relationship while training for the 1980 Olympics.

The Pride of the Yankees. (1942) The life of Lou Gehrig, a relatively contemporary view. My book says "superb biography." Gary Cooper.

The Program. (1993) The dirty world of college football.

Pumping Iron. (1977) Arnold's debut. The world of body-builders. Documentary.

Raging Bull. (1980) Robert DeNiro again. SI says, "It's so widely (and deservedly) praised that no one points out that the stylized boxing scenes are utterly unrealistic."

Requiem for a Heavyweight (1962) Anthony Quinn as a washed up fighter.

Riding Giants. (2004). "A semiserious, often rollicking, multigenerational insider's look at the origins of surfing."

Remember the Titans (2000) Football and integration in the south in 1971. Loosely based on fact.

The Replacements (2000) Loosely based on the 1987 NFL strike, it is the story of quarterback Shane Falco (played by Keanu Reeves) getting a second chance in the NFL as a "scab" during a League strike after choking in the Sugar Bowl in 1996.

Rocky. (1976) The original one.

The Rookie. (2002) Dennis Quaid gets a second chance at the major leagues.

Rudy (1993) Rudy has always been told that he was too small to play college football. But he is determined to overcome the odds and fulfill his dream of playing for Notre Dame.

Seabiscuit. (2003) A long shot horse becomes a legend.

Slap Shot. (1977) Hockey in all its violent glory. Very funny. Lots of profanity. Paul Newman.

Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby (2006) "The best movie about NASCAR and possibly Will Ferrell's funniest. The movie was pitched to the studio with six simple words: Will-Ferrell-as-a-NASCAR-driver. You've got to love a movie that makes fun of its core demographic, and they STILL love it.

We are Marshall. (2006) When a plane crash claims the lives of members of the Marshall University football team and some of its fans, the team's new coach and his surviving players try to keep the football program alive.

\*When We Were Kings. (1996) Excellent documentary about the Ali - Foreman boxing match in Zaire in 1974.

White Men Can't Jump. (1992) Black and white basketball hustlers and their relationship.

The Wrestler (2008). "Thanks to both Aronofsky and Rourke it proves an honest and moving portrait of a man in the twilight of a career that's both made and destroyed him. Mickey Rourke and Marisa Tomei star.

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All of the books are available at the Madison Public Library or from me. The library also has the starred documentaries. The other films should be available at any video store or through Netflix (except "42").

If you have a favorite book or film that is not on this list or on the SI top 50, talk to me about it. It will probably be OK to use it. Note that SI also has some negative recommendations of really bad sports films. Those would be OK to use, too. They just have to have sociological content.

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### Instructions for Book/film Report

This book/film report should focus on sociological issues that are raised by the book or film you are reporting on. If one uses a sociological imagination, any narrative art form raises many issues regarding social relationships and social structure. Almost all of them, for example, deal with interpersonal relationships, and most will have some message to convey about those relationships. The first book on the list, for example, focuses on romantic relationships – in that case, sudden, unbidden homosexual attraction in the workplace (on the baseball diamond). Again, almost all will deal with one or more social structural issues of social location (race, class, gender), occupational conditions, money, power, status hierarchy, inequality, religion, politics, or social norms. In *The Dreyfus Affair*, race is involved (one of the players is white, the other is black), as are power (the owners), occupational conditions (what are one's rights in the workplace?), and, obviously, money (if we let them continue to play, will people come? If we don't, will we lose the pennant?).

The form the paper should take is as follows:

- no more than one page laying out the content of the book/film. What is the major focus or plot? Who are the main characters? What is the arc of the action – beginning, middle, and end?
- one page in which you point out at least three sociological issues raised by the book/film. For each, indicate what incidents in the book/film led you to think about this issue. If a point of view is being presented on this issue, what is it? If it is not clear, speculate. Whether the book/film overtly takes a point of view on the social issue, what thoughts were raised in your mind as a result of this incident?
- a final page in which you analyze each of the issues you raised under bullet #2. Why is this an important issue to think about in connection with sport? How does this issue demonstrate that sport is a microcosm of society? If there is a particular problem (e.g., as in my example, discrimination against gays in sports), how would you go about solving it in sport? In the larger society?

Exactly what you come up with will, of course, depend on the work you choose. Your paper should be three pages, double spaced, in a 10 or 12 font. Please number your pages, and have a bibliography consisting of the full reference to your work: Title, date, director, leading actors for a film.