NOVELS.

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.
Coe, Sebastian. Running Free. His autobiography.
Halas, George Stanley. Halas by Halas: the Autobiography of George Halas.
Louis, Joe. Joe Louis, my Life.
Navratilova, 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.
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.


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


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.


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


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.


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 snap their adrenalin fix.”


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.


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.”


Hoosiers (1988) Gene Hackman takes a high school team to the tournament.
The Hustler. (1961) Jackie Gleason as Minnesota Fats. Is pool a sport?
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.
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.
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.
National Velvet (1944). Little girl rides horse in big race, is disqualified because of her sex. Elizabeth Taylor as a teen.
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.
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.


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.


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.


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.
SOCIOLOGY 647: Sociology of Sport.

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.