

**SOCI 120T**  
**Sports Violence**  
*Prof. Jeff Tirshfield*

Fall 2023  
Time: Thurs 5:00 – 7:50  
Location: SSB 101  
Course TA: No TA, just me

email: jtirshfi@ucsd.edu  
Office Hours: Tues 2:00–3:00, an on-campus  
coffee house to be named

**Course Information:**

On November 13, 1982, Ray Mancini bludgeoned with his fists and caused the death of Duk Koo Kim. The altercation was witnessed by thousands and viewed by millions. Mancini was not convicted of a crime; he was not charged with a crime. True, the altercation took place inside a boxing ring and not on a street corner or in a bar, but the fight took place within a jurisdiction where the taking of human life is criminalized. What about this killing differentiates it from other forms of the taking of human life?

Kim's death is but one manifestation of violence in sport, an extreme example. The sport of boxing may be considered an extreme example of violence in sport: the objective being to strike another human being with violent intent. Yet, other sports have the potential for equal violence. Not only do football players hit each other within the rules of the game, they also regularly hit each other after play has ceased... again, this presumes violent intent. And what of hockey? The gloves are often shed as two or more players grab each other with one hand and twirl balletically on the ice, propelled by force generated via the pummeling of the other with a free fist. Lest we not forget soccer. What, you say? Soccer has comparatively little violence, absent a bump or trip to upset the other side's momentum or thwart a goal attempt. But what of the fans who regularly attend matches with the intent of meeting supporters from an opposing side to engage in a melee of taunting threats, bottle tossing, and the occasional punch or two... or three?

Violence in sports runs the gamut. It is both normalized and valorized; it is part of the game and ancillary to it; it is why some watch and why others turn their gaze away. And interestingly, it appears that the Nation-state not only allows it, it also encourages it—interesting, no?

We begin by examining the connections between conceptions of violence and the social values we attribute to being human; is there a moral imperative to the human condition? From an understanding of the social construction of the values and moralities of humanity, we progress to the theories and practices of constructing and using definitions of violence. We aim to use those theories and definitions to better understand sports violence. The bulk of this class will be empirical examinations of sports and sportive violence in action, where we apply the aforementioned philosophical and theoretical frameworks to examples and empirical studies. In summary, the goal of this class is to delve into the study of sports violence from a variety of theoretical perspectives and to use that knowledge to deconstruct, examine, and attempt to understand sports violence in action.

Please note the readings for this course are presented on a weekly basis—see the attached schedule. **I expect you will have read the assigned material before that week's lecture—including the first week's materials. For example, please read the Week 2 reading material before the lecture for Week 2.**

By reading the assigned materials, you will be prepared to engage during lectures and produce some original research. Near the end of the first lecture (today), I will suggest several research topics. Works from prior classes have addressed the theoretical frameworks to explain sports violence, the relationship of the civilizing process to sports violence, ethnographic research into specific forms of sports violence—observation, as well

as participant observation; forms of grappling sports violence; pugilistic sports violence; violence in ball sports; spectator violence; and the relationship of sports violence to violence in other areas of social life. For those interested, I am currently writing on the relationship of the State and the law to sports and sportive violence—yes, there is a difference.

At the end of the second lecture, I will open the Canvas Project/Paper portal (under the people tab) for you to sign up for a paper group or solo project. I will discuss this and course grading during the first lecture... today.

You are expected to attend lectures (yea, all of them). I plan to seek your input and participation—a small victory for supporters of Socrates and Hegel everywhere. If you are not in attendance, you can't share—and not sharing can have a negative impact on your grade.

Oh, one more thing: I am here for you. I teach because I view education as a calling and because I learn just as much from you as you learn from me. That learning feeds back into my research; it's sort of an autopoietic system, but as such, it requires both you and I to contribute. I am happy to meet with you during office hours, when I practice *jiu-jitsu* or *yoga*, or at another mutually convenient time. I love to talk shop. Use me as a resource; I know stuff; that's why they pay me the big bucks.

### Evaluation:

- Paper topic, along with a discussion concerning theory and methods  
Due: Tuesday, October 24<sup>th</sup> (10% of Course Grade)
- Midterm: Tuesday, November 7<sup>th</sup> (20% of Course Grade)
- Rough draft of your paper, accompanied by a reading list  
Due: Tuesday, November 21<sup>st</sup> (10% of Final Grade)
- Presentation: Presentation of your paper and findings  
Due: Tuesday, December 5<sup>th</sup> (10% of Final Grade)
- Paper: Final paper  
Due: Tuesday, December 12<sup>th</sup> (40% of Final Grade)
- Class Participation—hint: if you're not in attendance, you cannot participate...  
Assessed: December 12<sup>th</sup> (10% of Final Grade)

### Required Materials:

-  Readings for the first week of class are posted on the course **Canvas.UCSD.edu website and can be found in the Course Reader**
-  Wacquant, Loïc. 2004. *Body and Soul*. Oxford University Press at the **UCSD Bookstore, a local bookstore, or an online bookseller**
-  Collins, Randall. 2008. *Violence: A Micro-sociological Theory*. Princeton University Press at the **UCSD Bookstore, a local bookstore, or an online bookseller**
-  Arendt, Hannah. 1969. *On Violence*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. Online at: **<https://archive.org/details/Hannah-Arendt-on-Violence/page/33/mode/2up>**
-  PDFs contained in the SOCI120T Sports Violence Reader—available at Cal Copy, 3251 Holiday Court, #103, La Jolla, CA 92037 (Villa La Jolla Plaza--just off campus) – 858-452-9949. **To purchase a downloadable PDF or mailed hard copy of the reader, please click (or cut and paste) the following URL: <https://calcopyucsd.com/products>**

The syllabus may (will) be updated throughout the course to address relevant **social** phenomena or social facts (for you Durkheim fans).

### Note on the (non)use of Electronics:

Please place all electronics on silent mode during lectures. Also, cool it with the fuzzy kitty videos, TikTok influencer talks, YouTube fail videos, phone calls, and yes, even texting. You think you may be able to multitask—research into the subject suggests that you can't—but I am easily distracted.

**Academic Integrity:**

Students should be familiar with UCSD's regulations concerning plagiarism and the integrity of scholarship. Plagiarism is serious, and suspected cases will be referred to UCSD's Office of Academic Integrity. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or cheating, please ask me.

**ChatGPT and the like:**

Generative AI tools are just that: tools. Please don't rely on them to write your papers, fact-check your work, or provide or verify sources. These tools work tremendously fast, yet they are hugely buggy—hallucinations are but one issue. Remember, these tools use the information provided by their programmers and the Internet to inform their responses to your queries, and the Internet is riddled with—to quote the title of an excellent book by Harry Frankfurt— *[On] Bullshit*.

Use these tools to explore and experiment. Question their results... our brains are still infinitely better and are more capable of addressing socially constructed ethical dilemmas.

## Schedule

**Week 1 [10/03]: Applying General 'Theories of Violence' to Sport** – An overview of macro-sociological, micro-sociological, psychosocial, behavioral, and genetic theories of violence

- Eller. 2006. *Theoretical Approaches to Violence*. 31-60 (Canvas and Reader)
- Jackman. 2002. *Violence in Social Life*. 387-408 (Canvas and Reader)
- Sapolsky. 1997. *The Trouble with Testosterone: Will Boys Just Be Boys?* 14-19 (Canvas and Reader)

**Week 2 [10/10]: Applying General 'Theories of Violence' to Sport** – An overview of macro-sociological, micro-sociological, psychosocial, behavioral, and genetic theories of violence (cond)

- Collins. 2008. Excerpts from *Violence: A Micro-sociological Theory*. [General Theory]. 1-29; 34-35; 39-43; 73-94; 128-133 (Book)
- Collins. 2008. Excerpts from *Violence: A Micro-sociological Theory*. (Sports Violence Specific). 134-155, 282-334. (Book)

**Week 3 [10/17]: Applying 'Philosophies of Violence' to Sport and Exploring 'Power' and the Connection of the State to Sports and Sportive Violence**

- Garver. 1968. *What Violence Is*. 1-5 (Reader)
- Betz. 1977. *Violence: Garver's Definition and a Deweyan Correction*. 339-351 (Reader)
- Arendt. 1970. Excerpt from: *On Violence*. 35-56 (Section II) (Online at Archive.Org)
- Bodin and Robéne. 2014. *Sport and Civilisation: Violence Mastered?* 2079-2099 (Reader)

**Week 4: [10/24]: Some History of Sports Violence; A Bit on the Law and Sports Violence**

- Smith. 1983. *What is Sports Violence?* 33-44 (Reader)
- MLR. 1976. *Consent in Criminal Law: Violence in Sports*. 148-179 (Reader)
- Poliakoff. 1987. Excerpts from *Combat Sports in the Ancient World*. 89-115 (Reader)
- Guttman. 1983. *Roman Sports Violence*. 7-18 (Reader)
- **ASSIGNMENT DUE:**
  - **Paper Topic, along with a discussion concerning theory and methods**

**Week 5 [10/31]: The Civilizing Process, the Social Contract, and the Acceptance of Certain "Normative Levels" of Violence in Society and Sport**

- Hobbes. 1651. Excerpt from *Leviathan*. 63-65 (Reader)
- Elias. 1978. Excerpts from: *The History of Manners*. xi-xviii; 3-7; 53-84; 102-108; 122-134 (Reader)
- Dunning. 1990. *Sociological Reflections on Sport, Violence and Civilization*. 65-78 (Reader)
- Elias. 1986. *The Genesis of Sport as a Sociological Problem*. 88-112 (Reader)
- Elias. 1986. *An Essay on Sport and Violence*. 150-174 (Reader)

**\*\*\*MIDTERM EXAM, TUESDAY, November 7<sup>th</sup>; lecture to follow\*\*\***

**Week 6 [11/07]: *The Leisure Class, Sport and Sports Violence; Sports Violence and Masculinities***

- Veblen. 1899. *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. 2-12 (Reader)
- Elias and Dunning. 1983. Excerpt from: *The Quest for Excitement in Leisure*. 63-90 (Reader)
- Bourdieu. 1978. *Sport and Social Class*. 819-840 (Reader)
- Atyeo. 1979. Excerpt from *Blood & Guts*. 85-121 (Reader)
- Messner. 1990. *When Bodies are Weapons: Masculinity and Violence in Sport*. 94-104 (Reader)
- **Midterm, followed by Lecture**

**Week 7 [11/14]: *Sports Violence as an Extension of Other Forms of Social Violence; Sports Violence and Social Capital***

- Wacquant. 2004. *Body and Soul*. The whole shebang (Book—it is exceptionally well-written)

**Week 8 [11/21]: *Sports Violence: Violence that is part of the rules; Sportive Violence: Violence that Occurs Outside the Rules of the Game***

- Atyeo. 1979. Excerpt from *Blood & Guts*. 188-237 (Reader)
- Sheard. 2004. *Aspects of Boxing in the Western Civilizing Process*. 15-28. (Reader)
- **ASSIGNMENT DUE:**
  - **Rough Draft of Paper, accompanied by Reading List**

**Week 9 [11/28]: *Sports Voyeurism and Antinomian Violence***

- Jones, et al. 1993. *Blood Sports and Cherry Pie*. 63-75. (Reader)
- Phillips. 1983. *The Impact of Mass Media Violence on US Homicides*. 560-567. (Reader)
- van Bottenburg and Heilbron. 2006. *De-Sportization of Fighting Contests*. 259-279 (Reader)
- Dunning et al. 1988. *Football Hooliganism as a Social Phenomenon*. 1-31 (Reader)

**Week 10 [12/05]: *Paper Presentations***

**\*\*\*FINAL PAPER DUE TUESDAY DECEMBER 12<sup>th</sup>, NO LATER THAN 10:00 PM\*\*\***