Rethinking the Olympics: Graduate Seminar in Olympic Studies

PREAMBLE: This year’s edition of Kinesiology 9062(a), takes place less than a year before the Tokyo Games in the summer of 2020. Tokyo’s Games will present superlative competition, high drama, sobering ritual, and grand spectacle, along with, most assuredly, high drama, crises, controversy, question. Commensurate with the phenomenon of the Modern Olympic Games this course seeks to offer a graduate experience in the socio-cultural study of sport dedicated to an area of scholarly research to which Western University, its D. B. Weldon Library, Faculty of Health Sciences, School of Kinesiology, and International Centre for Olympic Studies (ICOS) have given extraordinary developmental priority over the past three decades in the form of bestowing considerable resources in developing a body of uniquely appropriate research materials, and more particularly, a gigantic expansion of attendant scholarly activity. This teaching/research area is sometimes referred to as OLYMPIC STUDIES. The Olympic research materials at Western are located mostly, but not exclusively, in the now over 30 year old ICOS, situated presently in the Arthur and Sonia Labatt Health Sciences Building (Room 317). The world-wide activities of the Centre, together with its rich research holdings, offers the graduate student significant opportunities for independent research and learning. The course focuses on a history of the Modern Olympic Movement through an investigative framework featuring several major agents of challenge and change (gender, commercialization, amateurism, racism, security, politics, boycotts, giganticism, image, exposure, the environment, protocol, and ritual, to name but a dozen prominent issues. The course concludes with a three day field trip (partly funded) to Lake Placid, New York (site of the 1932 and 1980 Olympic Winter Games, the world’s oldest and premier Olympic Winter Games Museum, and one of two United States Olympic Winter Team Training Centers), and, subsequently, on to Montreal for visits to the 1976 Olympic Summer Games facilities, a two hour Q and A session with Canadian IOC member Dick Pound in his Stikeman-Eliott Law Office Boardroom, and a lecture/presentation meeting at the headquarters of WADA (World Anti-Doping Association).

COURSE DESCRIPTION: The course, RETHINKING THE OLYMPICS: GRADUATE SEMINAR IN OLYMPIC STUDIES, focuses on three dimensions of the now 125 year history of the Modern Olympic Movement: (1) the antiquity heritage of the Games and their modern revival, (2) the problematic nature of the Games and the issues that such problematics raise, and (3) the present age of globalization and an Olympics future faced by severe challenges.

COURSE PREREQUISITES: Graduate student status. At least three prior courses at the undergraduate and or graduate level dealing with the socio-cultural study of sport (history, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, organization/management), or by permission of the instructor.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS: The final course evaluation of class members will depend on three factors: (1) attendance at weekly three-hour seminars, at which each student will be expected: (1) to take part in discussions, commentary, and debate based on weekly assigned readings (20%); (2) to construct a scholarly review of one book relevant to the course material (30%); and (3) to construct a term research work on a specifically-designed class project examining the various ramifications of a vexing problem facing the Modern Olympic Movement today (50%).

COURSE TEXT: None. All course readings listed below in bold print are books (4)—provided by the instructor or published on-line (not needed to be purchased). The journal articles/anthology chapters on the readings list (18) will be supplied to you in PDF form.

WEEKLY CLASS MEETINGS – Normally Thursdays, 1:30 to 4:30 PM, AHB 3R-07A

GENERAL COURSE OUTLINE / SCHEDULE / READINGS

Week 1: Thursday, September 12th

Introduction

Week 2: Thursday, September 19th

The Great Olympic Festival: Its Antiquity Heritage and Revival in the Modern Era

Readings


Week 3: Thursday, September 26th

**Reincarnation: Brits, Greeks, and Pierre de Coubertin in the Grand Restoration Project**

Readings


Week 4: Thursday, October 3rd

**A North American Awakening: The Olympics Arrive in the Psyche of the United States and Canada**

Readings


Week 5: Thursday, October 10th

**The Most Controversial Olympic Games – Berlin 1936**

Readings
Week 6: Thursday, October 17th

**Winning Hearts and Minds: The Cold War and Soviet-American Confrontation**

**Readings**


Week 7: Thursday, October 24th

**The Rise of Commercialism: The International Olympic Committee as a Corporate Giant**

**Readings**


Week 8: Thursday, October 31st

**Dark Moments: The Great Olympic Bribery Scandal**

Readings


Week 9: Thursday, November 7th

*Reading Week --- No Class Meeting*

Week 10: Thursday, November 14th

**Problematics in the Olympic World: Gender, Race, Hosting, Religion**

Readings


Week 11: Thursday, November 21st

*The Stigma of Performance Enhancement*

Readings


Week 12: Thursday, November 28th

*Globalization and Facing the Future*

Readings


Week 13: Dates to be Announced

*Course Trip to Montreal/Lake Placid*