

The primary task of a useful teacher is to teach his students to recognize inconvenient facts—

I mean the facts that are inconvenient for their party opinions (Max Weber)

SOCCER AND GLOBAL POLITICS • INTA 3242, 8803 • Spring 2025

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Tuesday and Thursday: 930-1045: Habersham G 17

OFFICE HOURS Thursdays 1 to 1:50 near Blue Donkey in Student Center and by appointment

Syllabus can change at discretion of the faculty.

Zero tolerance for plagiarism and lack of appropriate required citations in formal written work

Lectures will include material not covered in readings and not all readings will be covered in

lectures. You are responsible for readings and lectures. Slides will NOT be posted.

NO SCREENS OF ANY KIND IN CLASS—phones, tablets, laptops. Failure to follow this policy

will result in asking you to leave class. You are free to leave the class if you need a screen and

attendance will not be taken. This is not a required course: if you cannot resist the urge to check

your phone, you should consider dropping the course.

**This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Social Sciences area.**

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in

foundational academic areas. This course will help students master course content, and support

students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcome:

- Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social, or geographic relationships develop, persist, or change.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following

Career-Ready Competencies:

- Intercultural Competence
- Perspective-Taking
- Persuasion

INTRO: In October, 2008 a terrible kidnapping took place outside of the city of São Paulo, Brazil.

A 21-year old took his former girlfriend hostage, eventually murdering her. The event was played

out for over 100 hours live on national television, yet some of the most dominant discourses were

not about violence but about soccer. Indeed, the president of the Palmeiras Soccer Club rushed to

the kidnapping site to try to negotiate the release of the hostage, only to have his good intentions

crushed by fans that started chanting team songs, forcing his negotiations with the kidnapper to halt.

After the episode ended in tragedy, the director of the SWAT team that botched the hostage rescue

attempt lamented that the week was horrible, but it would end much better if only Palmeires would

win the following Sunday.

Many traditional scholars would analyze this story as an example of mass hysteria resulting

from Latin American identity formation. The explosion of research on identity in the region has

largely ignored sport since it has been viewed as an end, not as a cause. Instead, many scholars have

focused on Anderson's Imagined Communities, which points to print culture as a critical factor in

national identity construction, or Tilly, Centeno, and Weber who argue that national wars against

foreign enemies make states and national identity. For Latin Americanists, both sets of arguments

are unconvincing, yet rarely have other causal factors been established as part of a systematic explanation of identity formation for South America.

Soccer is both the global game with 4 billion fans, uniting continents and nations, and a source of intense local identity and fracturing of national identity, resulting in street battles and violence in many cities. The pulling of identity towards a larger identity in Italy, Africa, and Brazil and the use of soccer to weaken national identity and favor local ideas of nationalism and citizenship is what makes soccer a fascinating and enduring element in international and comparative politics. This course will use readings, lectures, film, and a research project to explore soccer and politics. The students are expected to do the readings before class, to participate in class discussions, and to gain an understanding of the political dimensions of the beautiful game.

Identity is not the only political or social manifestation that can be highlighted through soccer. In fact, soccer is an excellent lens to examine and understand a great many of the key features of global politics, such as: Inequality, elections, gender representation, war, ethnic and religious divisions, global human trafficking, human rights, processes of globalization, dictatorship, corruption, diplomacy, propaganda, secession, institutions, imperialism/colonialism, fascism, racism, democracy, state recognition, and more.

This class will provide an orientation to soccer and politics. Books, newspaper readings, lectures, discussion, library assignments, and film will be the vehicles to gain an understanding. This course is reading intensive. You must be willing to engage the literature, focusing and turning off distractions. If you do not enjoy reading and are not willing to read before class, please drop the class.

There will be no attendance and no quizzes, but there are discussion questions for each session and those will be collected at the beginning of class on 7 random days (5 will count for 10 percent of your grade). Exams will be at least 50% from lectures. If you do not attend, make sure you have someone in class that you can get good notes from. Videos and short timely readings will also be assigned along with the readings. The discussion questions, videos, and any additional short readings will be posted by Sunday of each week.

**Course Description:** This course introduces students to the multiple ways in which soccer is a lens to understand social, cultural, economic, and political forces as well as the ways in which soccer acts as an agent for change.

There are multiple arenas of political life that can be shaped or explained through soccer. These include, for example:

1. the tensions between cosmopolitanism and tribalism (London vs. Buenos Aires)
2. language vs. blood/land as a source of primal identity in homeland societies (Athletic Bilbao vs. Barcelona).
3. Anarchism and fascism (Carsi vs. Lazio/Real Madrid)
4. Gender equity and social genderizing sport (Japan vs. USA vs. Norway)
5. Government using sport in bread and circus to distract the population (see Italy under Mussolini, Iran and North Korea in World Cups, Brazil and Argentina in 2013.)
6. Democracy vs. electoralism: Fifa, AFA, and more
7. Colonialism and imperialism: FIFA in Africa, baseball in Nicaragua and Cuba vs. soccer in Costa Rica.
8. Religion and Politics: The Maradoniano church, San Lorenzo and the Pope, Atlanta FC, Turkey and Iran rejecting and later embracing soccer.

9. Identity formation in immigrant societies (Garra Charrua in Uruguay and embrace of Brazilian ethnicity)
10. Core, Periphery and Semi-Periphery. Can the US ever enter the core or global soccer powers? The Elk Horn effect. The David Beckham effect? The Dirk Nowitzky effect?
11. Folklore and rationalization. Spain in World Cups and Euro Cups.
12. The allure and failure of Pharoanic projects, megaevents, the allure of modernization theory for development. Why did South Africa build so many stadia that they did not need? Why is there a huge stadium in Leiria Portugal and Cuiabá Brazil? Soccer explains Lukes 3<sup>rd</sup> face of power and Galtung's harmony of interests between global elites at FIFA and elites in their own countries through glamour and construction money.
13. The limitations of facebook, twitter, technology to start a revolution. Al Ahly in Egypt and the truce in Istanbul. What is the relationship between technology, soccer, and politics?
14. Diego Maradona, Argentina, and the Paradox of Plenty.
15. What is a state? What is a citizen? Frank Zappa, Gibraltar, Palestine, UN vs. FIFA and the power of enforcement, CONIFA, Western Sahara vs. Cascadia.
16. Federalism, regionalism, and western expansion—Portland Timbers and Cuiabá American football.
17. Soft Power, small states using soccer to expand power and improve reputation
18. Human trafficking, Cambodia
19. Gendered sports, Women with Balls
20. Booms and busts of commodities, Anzi
21. Malapportionment for entry and hosting, CONMEBOL v Africa. How many votes does England really have? Or China? Or USA?
22. Path Dependency and soccer training in the USA v soccer powers and the future of women
23. Keeping politics out of sports☺ Poppies and flyovers. Just shut up and dribble. China and national anthem protests in Hong Kong vs. Taking a Knee Megan Rapinoe in USA.
24. Embracing diversity vs. rejecting, France vs. Italy. Game of our lives podcast.
25. Neoliberalism variances: Entertain and win at all costs, play ugly and win at all costs, plus with style cheap and try to win, gut it out and survive in top league
26. Power of international institutions. FIFA vs. UN (Guatemala etc)
27. Are firms like fraternities? Euphoric hives gone awry? Chelsea human rights NGO president and Syracuse fraternity
28. Technology and soccer—such as Erdogan in Turkey to control the crowd, the tension of VAR
29. Inequality differences of club teams, USA (on team) vs. Europe (between teams), two level games,
30. Post Materialist Values: Union Berlin, Big Lebowski, St. Pauli
31. Antisemitism and cultural appropriation, Atlanta, Palestino, Beitar, Spurs, Chelsea
32. Faces of Power
33. Resistance of the weak (Liverpool fans over prices, Afghan women, Hong Kong v. China and booing the anthem.
34. Strangling out the passion and type one and type two errors. From Hillsborough to the German Rebellion. To flare or not to flare. To stand or not to stand.
35. Civil Society and social capital—Hinchada Unida. Should hooligans be encouraged?
36. Why do some countries become soccer countries and some become baseball or cricket or rugby countries?
37. Human rights and the Carsi
38. Soft Power and diplomacy (mega events vs. sponsoring, Neymar as act of defiance, Man City vs. PSG)
39. Politics and Corruption: Soccergate and FIFA
40. Prospect theory and Pep's strategy

41. Control: Banning football for all and anti-modernization (or just banning women)
42. Funding and constructing stadia for power and influence: The Chinese Belt and Road Initiative and soccer stadia
43. Americanization of soccer: franchises, more scoring, VAR and fairness.
44. Plato, regime types, soccer governing for teams, Sugar Daddies, benevolent dictators, electoralism not democracy (Barcelona and Madrid), Germany and *rerum Novarum*
45. Traveling teams for independence movements (Algeria, Republican forces Spain) and regionalism. The Catalan and Basque national teams, why there is a united Ireland national team for all sports (rugby etc) except Soccer. Why Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, Gibraltar etc. have FIFA teams but Catalonia and Basque Country do not.
46. How football and firms explain ANTIFA, and why some left-wing firms have turned more right-wing in recent years (Roma)
47. Gentrification: Cleaning up the stadiums, ousting the firms, that pathologizing of hooligans. Gangs and alternative treatment in Ecuador. *Hinchada unida*.
48. Globalization: Outward from UK with missionaries, merchant marines, railway and port workers, English high schools. Globalization reversed 1<sup>st</sup> hinchada in Uruguay spreads, Torcida Split brings firms from Brazil 1950, songs on the terraces from San Lorenzo to around the world (use example of Turf song and Despacito)

#### Learning Outcomes:

Student will demonstrate the ability to describe the social, political, and economic forces that influence social behavior.

Cultural and ethical awareness. Students will become more aware of the diversity of cultural and ethical systems in the world. Able to understand and articulate key issues with respect for a range of different variables.

Students will demonstrate understanding of soccer as both a lens for understanding political and social concepts and dynamics and as a causal variable for change.

Students will demonstrate the ability to write a persuasive compelling argument.

Students will demonstrate the ability to understand the relationship between technological change and social/political change through soccer and the effect of technology on the game.

#### BOOKS and READINGS

This is a reading intensive senior level/graduate course. You must enjoy reading to succeed in this course. We will heavily rely on the class Youtube page for videos at <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLGiYM9U10QPS5sDEcXErjyXp11OeOeSMI>. Each class will include one theoretical/conceptual element. I will not use slides, except for images, films, figures, etc., so I will not have slides to share if you miss class. If you miss class, do NOT send an email asking what you missed. You should come to office hours or get the material from someone in class.

Schedule of Readings, Exams, and Assignments (all reading will be in Files of Canvas or free access at [library.gatech.edu](http://library.gatech.edu). Many of the readings are from the forthcoming book *Globalization, Innovation, and Soccer: The Beautiful Game in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Routledge. Edited by Kirk Bowman and John Boyd.) **NOTE: Additional brief readings from the *Guardian* or similar and short videos will also be sent out by the Sunday of each week and are required.**

January 7: Why is this the most important class you will ever take at GT. Listen to podcast Episode 1 of American Fiasco (The Dream On Team):

<https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/american-fiasco/podcasts/2> )

January 9: Gaming the World Chapter 1 PDF in Files

January 14: Gaming Chapter 2 PDF in Files

January 16: Bar-On, Tamir (2017) "Three Soccer Discourses", *Soccer & Society*, 18(2-3), 188-203.

January 21: The differences that matter between soccer and other sports: Chapter from Laurent Dubois "The Language of the Game" PDF in files: Readings by Eduardo Galeano, *Of Sun and Shadows*, in files.

January 23: Breznitz, Dan, *Innovation and Soccer*. PDF in Files.

January 28: Cas Mudde. *Soccer and Civil Society*. PDF in Files.

January 30: John Boyd. *Ultras, Innovation and Socio-Political Engagement in Morocco*. PDF

February 4: Luisa Turbino Torres. *Soccer Feminist Fandom Activism as a Catalyst for Sporting Innovation in Brazil*. PDF

February 6: Dilara Hakimci. *Soccer Fans as Civil Society in Turkey*. PDF

February 11: Alberto Fuentes and Linda Duong. *Innovation in Urban Planning and Soccer: The Case of Station Soccer*. PDF

February 13: Karl Hancock. *Soccer for Good in Suddenly Heterogeneous Finland*. PDF

February 18: Mbali Hlongwane, Kirk Bowman, and Brooke Boucher. *Using Soccer Data from Professional Teams to Train Young Women Analysts: The Case of Pink Codrs and Kaizer Chiefs FC*. PDF.

February 20: Declan Abernethy, *New Media and Female Empowerment for US Women's Soccer Players*. PDF.

February 25: Jordan Artis, Kirk Bowman, and Kieran Ferguson, *The Rise and Plateauing of US Women's Soccer as the World Innovates to Catch Up and Play Leap Frog*. PDF

### Attendance Policy

Attendance is strongly encouraged. At least 50% of exam content will come from classes. There will be exam questions on readings that are not covered in lectures. To succeed, carefully read before class. Ask questions. Professor will NOT share slides or class notes. Please, do not ask. There will be discussion questions for each reading sent out one week before the class for that assignment. I will not take attendance, but on 7 random days I will request your written response to the discussion questions. You must bring your responses printed to class. NO LATE SUBMISSIONS. 5 of those 7 will count for 10 per cent of your grade.

February 27: NO CLASS, watch YouTube Video Welcome to Berlin Mother\*^&^#% @& at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IF\\_1k\\_0ACj8&t=17s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IF_1k_0ACj8&t=17s)

March 4: Midterm Exam

March 6: Felipe Arocena, *Innovation in Uruguay Soccer*.

March 11: Guest Lecturer, Dr. Brenda Elsey. Reading TBA.

March 13: Bowman & Goguillon, *The Causes and Consequences of the Americanization of the Game in Europe*. PDF in Files

March 18: Spring Break

March 20: Spring Break

March 25: Kirk Bowman and Candy Zeng. *Greening the Game or Greenwashing*. PDF

March 27: LIBRARY DAY to work on paper, all citations and outline due on April 1.

April 1: Brannagan, Paul Michael and Richard Giulianotti (2017) "Soft Power and Soft Disempowerment: Qatar, Global Sport and Football's 2022 World Cup Finals", *Leisure Studies*, 34(6), 703-719.

Ndlovu, Sifiso Mxolisi (2010) "Sports as Cultural Diplomacy: The 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa's Foreign Policy", *Soccer & Society*, 11(1-2), 144-153.

### Listening:

**CBC (2022) "[How the World Cup in Qatar Is Kicking Off a Conversation about 'Sportswashing'](#)", 20 November.**

April 3: Brazil and Corinthian Democracy. Nadal reading. PDF. Socrates film in class.

April 8: Argentina. Nadal reading PDF.

April 10: Women in Iran, 4-part podcast <https://30for30podcasts.com/pinkcard/>

April 15: Spain, Morbo reading on Basque Country, Fear and Loathing on Barcelona/Real Madrid

April 17: Africa. "White Witchdoctor" PDF.

April 22: Last Day of Class

May 1, 8 to 10:50: Final Exam

<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x20z6cv>

## ADAPTS

The professor will work with ADAPTS so that all students have an equal opportunity for success. For information on ADAPTS, see <http://www.adapts.gatech.edu/>

### Honor Code Statement:

Plagiarizing is defined by Webster's as "to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own: use (another's production) without crediting the source."

If caught plagiarizing, you will be dealt with according to the GT Academic Honor Code.

For more information see: <http://www.honor.gatech.edu/plugins/content/index.php?id=9>

This is a reading intensive course. If you do not like to read or do not have the time to read a solid hour or two per class meeting, then this is NOT the course for you.

### Grading:

Midterm: 30%

Final: 35%

Research Paper: 25%

5 of 7 reading discussion sheets: 10%

There may be extra credit opportunities.

This is an upper division/graduate class. You are to write a 13-16 page paper (15-20 for graduate students) on one of the 48 socio-political themes of soccer from the list above in a particular case or a topic that you choose with the permission of the instructor. You must cite and include at least 2 books, 5 **academic** articles, and one interview. More information and complete rubric to come.

## ChatGPT

I am not a big fan of AI for research for intellectual and [environmental](#) (!) reasons, though I do not ban its use. However, you *must* take full responsibility for any AI-generated materials you incorporate in your course products. *If* you include AI-generated materials in your course products, you must cite it like any other reference material. All information incorporated into course assignments must be verified, ideas must still be attributed, and facts must be true.

Professor reserves the right to make necessary changes to syllabus.