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Course title:	More than just a game - Football as a philosophical, anthropological and sociological subject
Language of instruction:	English
Contact hours:	48 (6 per day)
ECTS-Credits:	4

Course description

There are many reasons for the global success of football. The game fulfils our longing for triumph and endorses our knowledge of failure. It produces heroes and losers, demonstrates that we have to fight to reach our aims, but also shows the importance of cooperating and interacting. Thus football acts as a theatre of existence, in which life can both mirror and transcend itself.

The class will take a look behind the scenes and identify the mechanisms that make football so popular. They lie partly in the game's structure itself, partly in its connection to other cultural fields, like religion, or war.

Because football is a game that is always "more than just a game", it is an appropriate subject for philosophy and cultural studies. At first sight, of course, this relation seems to be counterintuitive. Traditionally, particularly philosophy was defined as a purely mental activity while football in reverse was reduced to a physical combat game. But we will see that one of the characteristics of modern philosophy is to involve the body in the process of thinking, while football urges a specific intelligence from its players. Thus, the class will explore the cultural and philosophical references of football and vice versa, the ludic and bodily aspects of philosophy. By this, we will gain a new perspective on football as well as on philosophy. In addition to that, the focusing on the specific subject "football" can show the different approaches as well as the overlaps between the individual sciences.

Student profile

Students from all faculties interested in the subject.

Prerequisites

None

Course requirements

Active participation and two short essays (approx. 3-5 pages)

Grading

Active participation: 30 %

First essay: 35 %

Second essay: 35 %

Reading

A reader will be provided at the beginning of the class.

Course schedule

Date	Program
Friday, January 5, 2018	<p>A proletarian sport? The sociology and history of football</p> <p>Football used to be regarded as a sport of the lower classes. Nevertheless, it was invented at English boarding schools as a compensation to the usual disciplining. From there, football spread out in all social classes and finally, due to the British Empire, around the world. We will explore the origins of the sport as well as its historical transformations from a sociological perspective.</p>
Tuesday, January 9, 2018	<p>Borders, thresholds and transgression. The structure of the game</p> <p>Like all games that are played on a field, football is about the transition of space. The game’s dynamics originate in the confrontation between the defending team trying to set boundaries and the attacking team’s breakthrough of those boundaries. Even the purpose of the game (the goal) is marked as a transgression. We will first analyse the transgressive structure of the game (with the help of videos and selected moves) and thereafter compare it to other transgressive structures. While for example the philosophical transgression traditionally refers to extramundane entities (“transcendence”), the transgression in football remains in the boundaries of the game.</p> <p>Excursion: Olympic Stadium, Home of Berlins 1st League club “Hertha BSC” and of the German cup final*</p>
Thursday, January 11, 2018	<p>Rules and competition. The culture of the game</p> <p>1. Competition: The aim of most games is victory. These Games are contests that produce winners but inevitably losers too. The cultural achievement of games in general is based on the fact that they allow fights and rivalry but at the same time provide a framework so they cannot get out of hand.</p> <p>2. The Rules: Rules are the most important instrument in establishing this framework, in this transforming of conflicts into contests. The referee of the game is present on the field itself – he is both judge and participating observer. The rules are neither situated</p>

	<p>outside of the game nor are they unalterable in the history of the game. They are in a permanent state of flux and can be altered by the game's development. Wittgensteins theorem "Making up the rules as we go along" also applies to football rules.</p> <p>We will explore how the rules and the competitive character of football interact or conflict with each other.</p>
<p>Friday January 12, 2018</p>	<p>Football and violence</p> <p>Violence is part of the game. The game does not distinguish between violence and non-violence but between violence that is permitted (duels, tacklings and so on) and violence that isn't (fouls). Football fascinates because it allows violence to a certain degree. On the other hand, it always tries to control this violence.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Violence outside the game: Hooliganism as a culture of violence that wants to lead football back to its brutal origins. 2. Violence inside the game: Fouls, tricksters, violent conducts (on the basis of videos showing legendary acts of violence like Zidane's headbutt or Schumacher's foul on Batiston). <p>We will analyse how football enacts violence and at the same time excludes it.</p>
<p>Tuesday, January 16, 2018</p>	<p>Football and art</p> <p>Not only do we call outstanding football players "artists", but also do "true" artists repeatedly refer to football in their work. Based on selected examples like Peter Handke's football poems, we will discuss how the verbalization of an actual "mute" game works and how the transition of football to high culture changes football and its perception.</p> <p>Excursion: Football Street Art, Wall Paintings and Graffiti in Berlin*</p>
<p>Thursday, January 18, 2018</p>	<p>The "sacred field". Football and religiosity</p> <p>The aim of this lecture is to make clear how and why football has – like many other games - an intimate relationship to religion. Thus we will explore football as a secular form of religion with regard to</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the general origin of games in religious ceremonies and cults 2. the religious spatiality: the "templum" as a defined

	<p>space that divides the profane from the sacred can be compared to the football field</p> <p>3. rituals (fan chants, religious worship of special players (Maradona) and so on</p>
<p>Friday, January 19, 2018</p>	<p>The head, the foot and in-between. An anthropology of football</p> <p>Football prohibits the use of the culture-forming and gestural organ – the hand. In contrast, the game gives priority to the “dirty” close-to-earth organ: the foot. By this, football not only reverses the cultural order but also the bodily order. This revaluation creates the game’s specific appeal. Furthermore, football demands – because of his tactical and spatial nature – a specific intelligence: a “bodily thinking” that is also very important for modern philosophy. We will explore how football is of peculiar interest for an anthropological thinking.</p>
<p>Tuesday, January 23, 2018</p>	<p>Football between emotional spectacle and tactical analysis</p> <p>On the one hand, football creates passion and even fanaticism. On the other hand, it has become – more than ever – the subject of analysis. We will explore those different approaches by examining famous tactical websites (Spielverlagerung.de, zonalmarking.com) and, vice versa, by watching the movie “Wir die Wand” about the enthusiastic crowd at the stadium of Borussia Dortmund.</p>

*Please note that on the day of a field trip the schedule can be adjusted.