

Religion & Sports Teaching Resources

[YouTube link](#) – released March 2024

Overview

Both sport and religion are multi-billion-dollar endeavors in American life. In this episode of Religion &, our panelists explore the multitude of ways that sport and religion converge and diverge in American life. Featuring expertise in the history of sport and religion, sports fandom and religion, and sport and religious experiences, panelists highlight how race, politics, and religion manifest through play. Join us as we consider fields, courts, pitches, and turf and their role in the creation and exporting of American culture.

Host

Jennifer Guiliano is Professor of History at Indiana University Indianapolis. Dr. Guiliano has served as a Post-Doctoral Research Assistant and Program Manager at the Institute for Computing in Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences at the National Center for Supercomputing Applications (2008-2010) and as Associate Director of the Center for Digital Humanities (2010-2011) and Research Assistant Professor in the Department of History at the University of South Carolina. She most recently held a position as Assistant Director at the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities at the University of Maryland where she also served as an adjunct instructor in the Department of History in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the Digital Cultures program in the Honor's College.

Panelists

Annie Blazer is an Associate Professor of Religious Studies at the College of William and Mary. Her courses cover religion in America from the colonial to contemporary period. In particular, Professor Blazer's courses investigate the relationships between religions and American culture, paying attention to race, class, gender, and sexuality. Professor Blazer's first book, *Playing for God: Evangelical Women and the Unintended Consequences of Sports Ministry* (NYU Press), was released in July 2015. The book is an ethnographic exploration of the religious experiences of Christian athletes in the U.S. Professor Blazer's current research project investigates the effects of gentrification and re-urbanization on religious communities and focuses on the East End of Richmond, Virginia.

Jeffrey Scholes is a Professor of Religious Studies in the Department of Philosophy and the Director of the Center for Religious Diversity and Public Life at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs. His research interests center on the relationship between religion and sports and American political theology. He is the author of *Vocation and the Politics of Work: Popular Theology in a Consumer Culture* (Lexington 2013), *Religion and Sports in American Culture* (Routledge 2014), *Christianity, Race, and Sport* (Routledge, 2021), and co-editor with Randall Balmer of *Religion and Sport in North America: Critical Essays for the Twenty-First Century* (Routledge, 2022). He is currently working on a book on Religion and Sports Fandom.

Onaje Woodbine is Associate Professor of Philosophy and Religion at American University. Dr. Woodbine's research explores the varieties of black religious experience, especially as they are lived on the margins of power and outside the bounds of established institutional authority. His most recent book, *Black Gods of the Asphalt: Religion, Hip-Hop, and Street Basketball*, garnered national praise as “a profound narrative of survival [and] self-determination ... in this season where black male bodies are under attack.” Covered by *The New York Times* (“street basketball functions as an outlet of mourning and healing of urban youths”), NPR’s *All Things Considered* (“invites readers to look at basketball differently ... as a sacred space where young black boys go to ‘reclaim their humanity’”), ESPN (“full of colorful tales and haunting heartbreaks”), *Boston Magazine* (“painful, beautiful, nonfiction debut”), and the *National Catholic Reporter* (“A powerful and deeply moving work ... reveals a world of redemption and hope rarely glimpsed from the outside”), *Black Gods* was longlisted for the 2017 PEN/ESPN Award for Literary Sports Writing and named one of *The Boston Globe*’s best books of 2016.

Resources from Panelists

Sources Mentioned in Webinar

People

Bruce perry

- American psychiatrist, currently the senior fellow of the Child Trauma Academy in Houston, Texas and an adjunct professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at the Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago.

Gail Bederman

- *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917 (Women in Culture and Society)*
 - In turn-of-the-century America, cultural ideals of manhood changed profoundly, as Victorian notions of self-restrained, moral manliness were challenged by ideals of aggressive, overtly sexualized masculinity. Bederman traces this shift in values and shows how it brought together two seemingly contradictory ideals: the unfettered virility of racially "primitive" men and the refined superiority of "civilized" white men. Focusing on the lives and works of four very different Americans—Theodore Roosevelt, educator G. Stanley Hall, Ida B. Wells, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman—she illuminates the ideological, cultural, and social interests these ideals came to serve.

Assignment Ideas (Whole Video)

1. Compare and contrast Colin Kaepernick and Tim Tebow's movements and the resulting reaction of the public. What is the difference between the two? ... How does a comparison like this shed light on the intersection of religion, race, and sports?

2. In what ways can sports ministry programs educate people about gender? Why do some people feel encouraged and free while others feel constrained?
3. According to the panelists, how has race been involved with religion and sports? In what ways have sports been infused with race and religion? Does a religion that is tied so closely to race, like the Black church, create a sacred space for sport?
4. In what ways do we see the Black church playing a role in sports ministry?

Discussion Ideas (Whole Video)

1. Watch an episode of Welcome to Wrexham, what ideas that the panelist mentioned can be found in the show? Look at the fans, players and more. How can we see religion functioning in these different characters?
2. What are some of the conflicting ideas between religion and sport? For example, gambling, morals, etc.