



Politics & Football (Soccer)

Information

Class:	Politics and Football (Soccer) (ENS-2402)
Term:	Summer Semester 2024 (SoSe24)
Seminar:	Wednesdays 11:15–13:45 Room: CP18
Office Hours:	Virtual (Zoom), by appointment, email to arrange.
Me:	Dr. Mike Cowburn (he/him)
Email:	cowburn@europa-uni.de
TA:	Felix Trojan (trojan@europa-uni.de)
You:	Who you are isn't defined by records or bureaucracies, so if you prefer a name or a pronoun other than the one listed, please let me know.

Course Description

Welcome to “Politics and Football (Soccer)”, where we explore the evolving intersection between the world’s most popular sport and the political landscape within which it both sits and reflects. Football is the only truly global sport and one of the most universal cultural practices on the planet. More than five billion people watched at least one game of the most recent men’s World Cup in Qatar, itself a deeply political and contested event. During this semester, Germany will host the men’s European Championships, the biggest event in Europe. In countries such as Brazil and Argentina, football has become *the* cultural signifier of national identity. Elsewhere, the sport has shaped the African continent, at times helping to unite otherwise disparate or divided nations and communities. In short, football matters. In this course, we will explore how football serves as a powerful lens to understand important features of political life including identity, activism, nationality, gender, class, and even war.

Football is more than just a game. In this course, we will understand the sport as both a reflection of and contributing to the societies and cultures from which it emerges. Analyzing historical and contemporary examples, we will investigate how football mirrors and shapes political ideologies, social movements, and power structures around the globe. From the



grassroots level to the international stage, we will examine the ways in which football serves as a site of both resistance and reinforcement of dominant political narratives.

Throughout the semester, we will critically examine the dimensions of the politics inherent in football. We will explore how the game is governed at multiple levels, from local clubs to international federations, and analyze the role of governance structures in shaping the sport's trajectory. Additionally, we will examine the politics of specific clubs and fan groups, and consider issues of identity, loyalty, and territoriality. In doing so we will discuss a variety of topics including the commodification of football, the influence of money and media, and corruption within the sport. We will also examine the ways in which football intersects with broader geopolitics, from the use of the sport as a tool of diplomacy to its role in exacerbating tensions between nations.

Through a combination of readings, discussions and case studies, students will gain a comprehensive understanding of the complex relationship between politics and football. By the end of the semester, students will not only be equipped with the analytical tools to critically engage with these issues but will also develop a deeper appreciation for the beautiful game by understanding how this global phenomenon reflects, shapes, and contests the political realities of our world.

Communication

For short questions, email is the best way to contact me. I endeavor to respond to all emails within twenty-four hours Monday to Friday, I will respond to most emails considerably quicker than this. If I haven't responded within twenty-four hours, please feel free to email again.

If you wish to go over material covered in class, talk about connections between class material and other ideas, and so on, I will be happy to schedule time in my virtual office hours at a time that suits us both. Please email me to arrange. These discussions are generally student-led but I can help you formulate questions and point you in the direction of additional material based on my sense of your strengths and interests. I encourage you to take advantage of this time and I will be flexible enough to accommodate most appointments.

I also encourage students to take advantage of my office hours to ask questions or discuss issues related to the course, the social sciences, or academia more generally. If you have any comments about or problems with the course itself, I encourage you to share them in my office hours.



Course Requirements

This class is worth either 3 (partial credit) or 9 (full credit) ECTS points.

Partial Credit

Attendance, participation, and preparedness are important to your success in this course (and, I find, in life generally). It is expected that you come to each class prepared, having read, and thought about the course material, and ready to engage. **Class attendance is mandatory.** Moreover, when in the classroom you are expected to contribute to our discussion, be active in answering questions and be able to talk about the themes and topics at hand. You should come to class having completed the readings for that week and having something to say about each of them.

Club report: You will write a short paper (roughly 1000 words) about the politics of a football club of your choice. The deadline for this submission is *Tuesday 4th June 2024*. The report should include a political background, demonstrate an understanding of the political dynamics within the club, consider the role of the media and fan activism for the club, and consider how the politics of the club relate to success on the pitch and community relations.

Qatar 2022 paper: You will write a short paper (roughly 1000 words) about the politicization of the 2022 Qatar World Cup in one country. The deadline for this submission is *Tuesday 9th July 2024*. The paper should consider how political actors, including government officials, opposition parties, advocacy groups, and media outlets, framed the event in terms of domestic politics. The paper should relate controversies and debates surrounding Qatar's hosting of the World Cup—such as concerns over human rights abuses, migrant worker conditions, or allegations of corruption in the bidding process—back to the chosen country's domestic politics, for example by examining how these dynamics shaped public opinion, policy decisions, and social discourse within the country. You might also think about how these events have influenced bilateral foreign relations between Qatar and the country, as well as broader regional dynamics.



Full Credit

All requirements for active participation plus a final term paper (5,000 words or more). Final papers are due on **Friday 27th September**, and late papers will not be accepted without agreement prior to this date. **Term papers should be sent to me via email.**

Term papers can be written on any topic that we engage with during our course. You are unlimited in regional scope, meaning you may write about any country or geography of your choosing. Your term paper must be connected to the concept of politics and football, but beyond this you are free to choose your own research question and to follow your own research design. Term papers may use quantitative or qualitative methods and may be empirical or theoretical in nature. In short, you are free to conduct your study using whichever tools and methods with which you are familiar, with no restrictions other than it must relate to the topics or themes discussed during our class.

Term papers should be submitted using a consistent and recognized citation style of your choosing, citation management software will make this easier (see below). You must cite all sources of information, quotations or ideas which are not your own. Do not copy and paste text from the internet into your papers and attempt to pass it off as your own writing. You may not turn in a paper that someone else has written or that you have bought or downloaded. Any use of automated text language models such as ChatGPT must be declared.

Civility Policy

In accordance with the philosophy of an institution for higher learning, the classroom should be a place where diverse ideas can be explored with respect to promote learning and growth. We each come from a variety of backgrounds and bring with us different experiences to the classroom. Regardless of whether we share similar opinions and beliefs, I expect us to remain respectful of each other as we explore ideas. I encourage and expect you to express yourself with reason, clarity, courtesy, and compassion. This ensures that we may be comfortable learning and growing without fear of judgment, ridicule, or intimidation. I welcome each of you as worthy contributors in the classroom. **Student conduct that disrupts the learning process will not be tolerated.** Similarly, if any student feels unsafe or discriminated against during in the class, please contact me immediately. While academic discourse should be



intellectually challenging, it should never be discriminatory, and **it is my responsibility to ensure everyone feels safe and able to participate in our classroom.**

In the same spirit, we should adopt inclusive language both in our discussions and written work. In line with recent style guide changes from the Associated Press, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and others, students should capitalize “Black” when describing this racial group in their written work. “White” should also have a capital letter, in line with recommendations of the National Association of Black Journalists, except when it is an adjective (white nationalism etc.). Similarly, we should use terms that acknowledge the humanity of people we are discussing, recognizing that individuals are not defined by their conditions or circumstances; for example, “enslaved people,” not “slaves.” Gender neutral terms should be used both in discussions and written work, so “member of Congress” not “congressman.” **Racist, sexist, homophobic, or any other offensive terms will not be tolerated in the classroom, regardless of the context in which they are used.** More generally, we should reflect upon our positionality as researchers in our contributions. If students have specific feedback on any of these points that they wish to discuss I welcome these conversations either directly or as part of our wider class discussions.

Prior Knowledge & Resources

Though there are no formal prerequisites for this course, this is an MA level course meaning some familiarity with the study of politics and political science as a discipline is expected. In addition, this is not a methods class, meaning we will not engage in the process of *how* to produce academic work in political science. I appreciate some students may have backgrounds in other disciplines and so have the following recommendations for students with concerns in any of these areas. **These resources are all free of charge to access:**

- If you have questions about the research process and writing academic papers, I recommend Leanne C. Powner’s *Empirical Research and Writing: A Political Science Student’s Practical Guide*. The book provides a detailed walkthrough of each step in the research process and serves as an excellent guide for writing a research paper.
- Some texts we will read in this class use regression analysis, a basic familiarity with regression and statistical reasoning will help you read these papers. For an introduction to the subject, I recommend the YouTube video series by [zedstatistics](#) on regression. For a more in-depth understanding of statistical analysis and econometrics, I recommend Nick Huntington-Klein’s *The Effect: An Introduction to Research Design and Causality*, available for [free online](#).

- If you are unsure about language and style for your term paper please refer to the most recent [APSA Style Manual for Political Science](#) from page 10 onwards.
- Citation management: I **strongly** recommend downloading and installing citation management software at the start of the course to manage the readings and your notes as this will make citations for your term paper much easier. Multiple free resources are available, I recommend [Zotero](#), but [citavi](#) and [Mendeley](#) are popular alternatives. You should also install the browser plug-in with your chosen citation management tool for ease of adding resources to your library. **I promise this will make your life easier!**

In addition, I have outlined some useful books to provide background information on different aspects of football and politics below. We will discuss institutional access options for these titles in the first week of class. If you think your knowledge could benefit from further reading in any of these areas, I recommend these books as a starting point, we will read sections of some of these texts during our course:

Capitalism:

Brooks, Oliver. 2020. *Football, Fandom and Consumption*. Routledge.

Kennedy, Peter, and David Kennedy. 2017. *Football in Neo-Liberal Times: A Marxist Perspective on the European Football Industry*. Routledge.

History:

Elsey, Brenda, and Stanislaw G. Pugliese. 2017. *Football and the Boundaries of History: Critical Studies in Soccer*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Goldblatt, David. 2008. *The Ball Is Round: A Global History of Soccer*. New York: Riverhead.

Globalization:

Foer, Franklin. 2010. *How Soccer Explains the World: An Unlikely Theory of Globalization*.

Goldblatt, David. 2019. *The Age of Football: The Global Game in the Twenty-First Century*. London: Macmillan.

Politics of Football:

Kassimeris, Christos. 2023. *The Politics of Football*. London: Routledge.

Radical Politics:

Kuhn, Gabriel, and Boff Whalley. 2019. *Soccer vs. the State: Tackling Football and Radical Politics*. Oakland: PM Press

Nationalism:

Kuper, Simon. 2003. *Football Against the Enemy*. London: Orion.

Economics:

Kuper, Simon and Stefan Szymanski. 2009-2022. *Soccernomics*. Nation Books (multiple editions).



LGBT Inclusivity:

Millward, Peter. 2023. *Football Fandom, Sexualities and Activism: A Cultural Relational Sociology*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Gender:

Pielichaty, Hanya. 2023. *Football, Family, Gender and Identity: The Football Self*. Abingdon: Routledge

Tactics:

Wilson, Jonathan. 2008. *Inverting the Pyramid: The History of Football Tactics*. Seven Dials

Course Structure

Below is our schedule for the semester, depending on our progress through the course we may choose to expand or reduce certain sections. In such a scenario I will inform you of any changes sufficiently in advance. Each week we have one ninety-minute session. Most weeks we will begin with a short lecture by me on the topic that we have read for the week's class followed by some practical work. All readings are required.

Wednesday 10th April – Introduction

- Expectations
- Discussion of syllabus
- No readings

Wednesday 17th April – Football & Society

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

Eley, Brenda, and Stanislao G. Pugliese. 2017. *Football and the Boundaries of History: Critical Studies in Soccer*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. [Introduction](#)

Goldblatt, David. 2019. *The Age of Football: The Global Game in the Twenty-First Century*. London: Macmillan. [Introduction](#)

Wednesday 24th April – Consumerism & Commercialization

Kennedy, Peter, and David Kennedy. 2017. *Football in Neo-Liberal Times: A Marxist Perspective on the European Football Industry*. Routledge. [Introduction & Chapter 1](#)

Llopi-Goig, Ramón. 2012. "From 'Socios' to 'Hyper-Consumers': An Empirical Examination of the Impact of Commodification on Spanish Football Fans." *Soccer & Society* 13(3): 392–408.

Merkel, Udo. 2012. "Football Fans and Clubs in Germany: Conflicts, Crises and Compromises." *Soccer & Society* 13(3): 359–76.

Price, John, Neil Farrington, and Lee Hall. 2013. "Changing the Game? The Impact of Twitter on Relationships between Football Clubs, Supporters and the Sports Media." *Soccer & Society* 14(4): 446–61.



Wednesday 1st May – Public Holiday, No Class

No Additional Readings

Wednesday 8th May – National Identity

- Krasnoff, Lindsay Sarah. 2017. “Devolution of Les Bleus as a Symbol of a Multicultural French Future.” *Soccer & Society* 18(2–3): 311–19.
- Njororai Simiyu, Wycliffe W. 2021. “Players of African Descent Representing European National Football Teams: A Double-Edged Sword.” *Soccer & Society* 22(4): 411–28.
- O’Brien, Jim. 2013. “‘El Clasico’ and the Demise of Tradition in Spanish Club Football: Perspectives on Shifting Patterns of Cultural Identity.” *Soccer & Society* 14(3): 315–30.
- Robinson, Jessica S.R. 2008. “Tackling the Anxieties of the English: Searching for the Nation through Football.” *Soccer & Society* 9(2): 215–30.

Wednesday 15th May – Globalization

- Alvito, Marcos. 2007. “Our Piece of the Pie: Brazilian Football and Globalization.” *Soccer & Society* 8(4): 524–44.
- Croci, Osvaldo, and Julian Ammirante. 1999. “Soccer in the Age of Globalization.” *Peace Review* 11(4): 499–504.
- Manzenreiter, Wolfram, and John Horne. 2007. “Playing the Post-Fordist Game in/to the Far East: The Footballisation of China, Japan and South Korea.” *Soccer & Society* 8(4): 561–77.
- Waalkes, Scott. 2017. “Does Soccer Explain the World or Does the World Explain Soccer? Soccer and Globalization.” *Soccer & Society* 18(2–3): 166–80.

Wednesday 22nd May – Race & Racism

- Bradbury, Steven. 2013. “Institutional Racism, Whiteness and the Under-Representation of Minorities in Leadership Positions in Football in Europe.” *Soccer & Society* 14(3): 296–314.
- Kassimeris, Christos. 2009. “Deutschland Über Alles: Discrimination in German Football.” *Soccer & Society* 10(6): 754–65.
- Kassimeris, Christos, Stefan Lawrence, and Magdalini Pipini. 2022. “Racism in Football.” *Soccer & Society* 23(8): 824–33.
- Moran, Richie. 2000. “Racism in Football: A Victim’s Perspective.” *Soccer & Society* 1(1): 190–200.

Wednesday 29th May – Gender & Sexism

- Caudwell, Jayne. 2011. “Gender, Feminism and Football Studies.” *Soccer & Society* 12(3): 330–44.
- Culvin, A., A. Bowes, S. Carrick, and S. Pope. 2022. “The Price of Success: Equal Pay and the US Women’s National Soccer Team.” *Soccer & Society* 23(8): 920–31.
- Pope, Stacey. 2013. “‘The Love of My Life’: The Meaning and Importance of Sport for Female Fans.” *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 37(2): 176–95.

Tuesday 4th June – Club Report Due

Wednesday 5th June – Women’s Football

- Markovits, Andrei S., and Steven L. Hellerman. 2003. “Women’s Soccer in the United States: Yet Another American ‘Exceptionalism.’” *Soccer & Society* 4(2-3): 14–29.
- Pfister, Gertrud. 2003. “The Challenges of Women’s Football in East and West Germany: A Comparative Study.” *Soccer & Society* 4(2-3): 128–48.
- Williams, Jean. 2003. “The Fastest Growing Sport? Women’s Football in England.” *Soccer & Society* 4(2-3): 112–27.

Wednesday 12th June – Masculinity & LGBT Politics

- Cashmore, Ellis, and Kevin Dixon. 2024. “Why Football Violence Made a Comeback in Continental Europe but Spared England.” *Soccer & Society* 0(0): 1–7.
- Dixon, Kevin, Jamie Cleland, and Ellis Cashmore. 2023. “Banter and the Rise of LGBTQ+ Awareness in Football Cultures: A Bourdieusian Approach.” *Soccer & Society* 0(0): 1–13.
- Millward, Peter. 2023. *Football Fandom, Sexualities and Activism: A Cultural Relational Sociology*. Abingdon: Routledge. [Chapter 2](#)
- Spaaij, Ramón. 2008. “Men Like Us, Boys Like Them: Violence, Masculinity, and Collective Identity in Football Hooliganism.” *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 32(4): 369–92.

Wednesday 19th June – Democracy & Civic Identity

- Butterworth, Michael L. 2007. “The Politics of the Pitch: Claiming and Contesting Democracy Through the Iraqi National Soccer Team.” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 4(2): 184–203.
- Duerr, Glen M.E. 2017. “Civic Integration or Ethnic Segregation? Models of Ethnic and Civic Nationalism in Club Football/Soccer.” *Soccer & Society* 18(2-3): 204–17.
- Eskandari, Zahra Termeh. 2022. “‘We Support Football in Our Heart’: Female Football Fandom in Iran.” *Soccer & Society* 23(3): 258–70.

Wednesday 26th June – Soft Power & Sportswashing

- Brannagan, Paul Michael, and Richard Giulianotti. 2015. “Soft Power and Soft Disempowerment: Qatar, Global Sport and Football’s 2022 World Cup Finals.” *Leisure Studies* 34(6): 703–19.
- Krzyzaniak, John S. 2018. “The Soft Power Strategy of Soccer Sponsorships.” *Soccer & Society* 19(4): 498–515.
- Ndlovu, Sifiso Mxolisi. 2010. “Sports as Cultural Diplomacy: The 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa’s Foreign Policy.” *Soccer & Society* 11(1-2): 144–53.

Wednesday 3rd July – Reading Week, No Class

No Additional Readings, work on your Qatar 2022 Country Report

Tuesday 9th July – Qatar 2022 Country Report



Wednesday 10th July – Administration & Governance

- Ames, Nick. 2024. “‘It Was like I Became Kim Jong-Un’: Aleksander Ceferin on Uefa, Super Leagues and Saudi Cash.” *The Guardian*.
www.theguardian.com/football/2024/jan/27/aleksander-ceferin-interview-uefa-europe-football.
- Day, Pat. 2000. “The Administration of Football in the Twenty-first Century.” *Soccer & Society* 1(1): 72–78.
- Tomlinson, Alan. 2000. “FIFA and the Men Who Made It.” *Soccer & Society* 1(1): 55–71.

Wednesday 17th July – The Future of Football

- Lopez Frias, Francisco Javier, Sergio González García, and Brett Anthony Diaz. 2023. “Whose Interests? Which Solidarity? Challenges of Developing a European Super League.” *Soccer & Society* 24(4): 463–78.
- Ramchandani, Girish et al. 2023. “‘You Can Look, but Don’t Touch’: Competitive Balance and Dominance in the UEFA Champions League.” *Soccer & Society* 24(4): 479–91.
- Welsh, John. 2023. “The European Super League Debacle: Why Regulation of Corporate Football Is Essential.” *Soccer & Society* 24(2): 172–89.

Friday 27th September – Final Term Papers Due