“The Corporeal Economy of Sport”

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NEOLIBERALISM is a STATE-BASED POLITICAL IDEOLOGY with very definite assumptions related to the FUNCTION and ROLE of the ECONOMY.

CORPOREAL Economy?

The SELLING and BUYING of BODIES.

Theme 1:

The Corporatization and Commercialization of Neoliberal Sport
Contemporary American society is dominated and defined by the production and accumulation of: **CAPITAL** (hence it is a CAPITALIST society)

**Capitalist Hegemony**

Despite a degree of resistance against it, MOST people do not question whether or not CAPITALISM is the right economic system for the U.S.: They view it as the NORMAL and NATURAL way of being.

Hence it is possible to refer to a CAPITALIST HEGEMONY operating in American society.

**Commercial Corporation**

Profit-driven institutions generating CAPITAL for private individuals (shareholders).

**Corporatization** is the process whereby social (of various kinds) institutions adopt the:

- institutional structure
- managerial hierarchies
- profit-driven focus

Of commercial corporations.

**Commercialization** the process whereby institutions or phenomenon are structured primarily for the purposes of generating PROFIT (capital).

**Industrial Capitalism** (1850-1950)

Capital generated from mass production and consumption of MATERIAL products

**Cultural (Late) Capitalism** (1950-present)

Capital increasingly generated from production and consumption of CULTURAL products

Rigid Regime of Accumulation

Flexible Regime of Accumulation
**Cultural [Late] Capitalism (1950s onwards)**

Expanded/Flexible Regime of Accumulation: CORPORATIZATION and COMMERCIALIZATION of virtually all sectors of society/life.

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**Sport has been INCORPORATED into, and MOBILIZED BY, the CORPORATE CAPITALIST economy.**

Sport has become an important target of CAPITAL INVESTMENT and source of anticipated CAPITAL ACCUMULATION (profit).

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**Elite sport has been effectively and efficiently re-organized in accordance with capitalist logics of economic rationality and profit maximization.**

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A particular version of highly commercialized, entertainment oriented, and media-driven sport has become the hegemonic structure of sport organizations around the world.

This has been referred to as:

- Elite/High Performance Sport
- “Achievement sport” (Maguire et al, 2002)
- “Prolympic sport” (Donnelly, 1996)
- “Corporate sport” (Donnelly, 1996)
Corporate Sport

A highly regulated, controlled, and predictable mass entertainment product, designed to generate maximum profit across numerous revenue streams.

Theme 2:

A Corporeal Economy?

Corporeality of Industrial Economy
Worker’s body a secondary instrument in the manufacturing process

Corporeality of Sporting/Cultural Economy
Athlete’s body produced by sport as a manufacturing process (1), and simultaneously a central component manufacturing the sport product (2)

CORPOREAL: Relating to the BODY

The body is the primary INSTRUMENT and OBJECT of physical/sport culture.
The body is both MADE by, and MAKES, physical/sport culture.

When we consume CORPORATE SPORT (either through spectating or remote viewing), we are effectively consuming (or we expect to consume) HIGH-PERFORMANCE ATHLETIC BODIES.

They are the efficient MACHINES which individually and/or collectively MANUFACTURE and CONSTITUTE the PRIMARY PRODUCTS (sporting events or spectacles) of the SPORT INDUSTRY.
Sport Science

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Sporting Taylorism

F.W. Taylor’s Time and Motion studies (1880s-1910s) were motivated by the desire to create ever more efficient and economically productive workers (scientific management of the workplace).

Harvard Fatigue Laboratory (1927-1947)

Advances in exercise physiology in many ways an extension of TAYLORISM.

Sport science is motivated by the desire to create ever more efficient/successful, thereby and economically productive, athletes (scientific management of sport performance).

Sport Science treats the human body as a MACHINE—a “mortal engine”—whose performance can be analysed and improved according to scientific principles.


Analysing the Ronaldo “Machine”
Elite/High-Performance/Corporate demands athletes continually strive for improved performances, for fear of losing the consuming audience.

Hence, considerable resources are poured into RESEARCHING and DEVELOPING new performance-related strategies, technologies, and behaviors.

These are designed to allow athletic bodies to train and perform more efficiently and effectively.
"When you walk through those doors, you can’t be human any more. A human effort is not good enough, you have to become a beast, you must turn into a beast, a MACHINE...I am reborn, I am a MACHINE, I am no longer human, I am a MACHINE. I am a relentless, unstoppable, and the gym is my battlefield.

Motivational Technology

Supplement/Dietary Technology

Sporting Taylorism

Kinesio Tape Technology

The New Cole Field House

“Where Tradition Meets Innovation”

Manufacturing Ever More Efficient Athletic Bodies

The boundaries between the NATURAL athlete and TECHNOLOGY has been blurred. Today’s elite athletes are often extensions of, and/or manufactured by TECHNOLOGY.

According to Miah (2003), they are “CYBORG ATHLETES.”

CYBORG ATHLETES

The BLURRING of the BOUNDARIES between "NATURAL" BODIES and "ARTIFICIAL" TECHNOLOGIES in order to create ever more PHYSICAL EFFICIENT and ECONOMICALLY PRODUCTIVE BODIES.

Shark-Skin

EPO, or erythropoietin Doping

Reconstructive Surgery

Oxygen Tent

Cyborg Athletes: Technological Fusion

Cyborg Athletes: Technological Fusion

Cyborg Athletes: Technological Fusion

Industrial Manufacturing

Sporting Manufacturing

Theme 3:

The McDonaldization of Elite Sporting Bodies

Worker’s body harnesses technology to manufacture product

(1) Producing the High-Performance Body

(2) Producing the High-Performance Sport Product

Athlete’s body harnesses technology to manufacture itself (1) and the end sport product (2)
The manufacturing of successful high-performance/corporal sport organizations and events, depends on the scientific manufacturing of high-performance and highly specialized athletic BODIES/MACHINES.

The Production of Activity/Sport Specific BODIES

The manufactured specialization of HIGH-PERFORMANCE athletic machines/bodies exists WITHIN as well as BETWEEN sports.

Max Weber’s “Iron Cage”

The German sociologist, Max Weber developed the concept of the “iron cage” to capture the notion of the increased bureaucratization and rationalization of human existence in MODERN CAPITALIST SOCIETIES.

According to Weber, the “iron cage” of capitalism traps individuals in highly organized structured and rule-based (bureaucratized) and productivity and goal oriented (rationalized) forms of existence.
The Weberian Understanding of McDonaldization

Influenced by Weber’s theories of rationalized and bureaucratized productivity, the renowned University of Maryland sociologist, George Ritzer, developed the concept of “McDonaldization”.

According to Ritzer:

“McDonaldization...is the process by which the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as of the rest of the world”.


The Core Components of McDonaldization

1. Efficiency
2. Calculability
3. Predictability
4. Control


The McDonaldization of Society

Home Cooking
Tourism
Shopping
Higher Education
Entertainment
Health Care
Religion

McDonaldization I: Efficiency

“Efficiency means choosing the optimum means to a given end” (p. 43)

The streamlining of production processes, and the simplification of products and services.


The End of the Lateral Pass

Playing the “percentage game” and football EFFICIENCY.


McDonaldization II: Calculability

“Calculability...an emphasis on the quantitative aspects of products sold (portion, size, cost) and services offered (time it takes to get to the product offered).” (p. 13)

Products and services are evaluated according to objective (quantifiable) as opposed to subjective (personal preference/taste) measures.

Calculability and Football Sabermetrics

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McDonaldization III: Predictability

“Predictability...the assurance that the products and services will be the same over time and in all locales” (p. 14)

Creation of institutionally uniform and standardized products and services.


McDonaldization IV: Control

“Control...[by rules, regulations, procedures, and technology in an]...effort to reduce people’s behavior to a series of machinelike actions.” (p. 106)

The increased influence of rules, regulations, and non-human technologies over the experience of workers and consumers.


Playbook Football

Controlling football PRODUCTIVITY: Producing “machine-like” actions.
Theme 4:
The Corporeal Perils of Sporting McDonaldization

According to the McDonaldization theory, McDonaldized sport (sport as a rationally organized and efficient machine) can negatively effect the feelings of:

- PLEASURE
- FREEDOM
- CREATIVITY
- INDEPENDENCE

Which attracted many people to sport in the first place.

Within wider society, individuals lose much of their freedom and autonomy—the control over their lives—as their individuality becomes bureaucratized and rationalized out of existence. Their once ENCHANTED (relatively autonomous, free, and expressive) lives become a source of DISENCHANTMENT due to their lack of control over them.

People become DISENCHANTED with their lives, because their existence is now externally controlled by the rational predictability and productivity demanded by the “iron cage” of capitalism.

The rational productivity focus of capitalism, leads to the control of individuals by rationally productivist rules and regulations, and non-human technology

This leads to the:
DEHUMANIZATION of the MODERN INDIVIDUAL

Modern “Dehumanizing” Times

DEHUMANIZED (externally controlled) and DISENCHANTED (lacking freedom) ATHLETES in the SPORTING MACHINE

Replaceable COGS in the MACHINERY of the SPORT INDUSTRY?
There are numerous other perils of SPORTING MCDONALDIZATION:

1. Overtraining/Abusing the Body

“On average, I run 100 to 120 miles a week. Naturally, that will have an impact; we’re pushing our bodies to the absolute limit. The back and knees are most likely to have problems, and most athletes will find they become stiffer after years of ‘running abuse’.”


2. Playing/Training While Injured
   (Violence Against One’s Own Body)

Wally Pip
Lou Gherig

Robert Griffin III 2013 Injuries
V Baltimore Ravens/Seattle Seahawks

3. Playing to Injure
   (Violence Against Other’s Bodies)

New Orleans Saints Bountygate (2009-2011)
Bonuses paid for injuring players forcing them to leave games.
Violence Against Self and Other's Bodies


A Presidential Problem

Question: Sticking with the culture of violence, but on a much less dramatic scale: I'm wondering if you, as a fan, take less pleasure in watching football, knowing the impact that the game takes on its players.

Answer: I'm a big football fan, but I have to tell you if I had a son, I'd have to think long and hard before I let him play football. And I think that those of us who love the sport are going to have to wrestle with the fact that it will probably change gradually to try to reduce some of the violence. In some cases, that may make it a little bit less exciting, but it will be a whole lot better for the players, and those of us who are fans maybe won't have to examine our consciences quite as much.

Source: http://www.newrepublic.com/article/112190/obama-interview-2013-sit-down-president#

Friday Night Tykes: It's Not Just Elite Sport!

4. Extreme Body Modification/Control I: Enlarging the Athletic Body

5. Extreme Body Modification/Control II: Constricting the Athletic Body
6. Supplement/Pharmaceutical Abuse

“The Rationalization and Normalization of CORPOREAL ABUSE/SPORTING DEVIANCE


“barbaric sport...the inhuman intensity of preparatory training...How ‘healthy’ really is a swimmer who has spent her entire youth doing lengths in a fifty-metre pool? What is the effect on health of lifting cast iron weights for years on end?”


How Healthy is High-Performance Sport?

It is difficult to ascertain, as there is definitely conflicting evidence (for example, some have argued that NFL players life expectancy is considerably lower than the general population, others have argued the complete opposite).

Source: Korth, J. (2006, January 29). A huge problem: Strength isn’t enough: NFL linemen have to be so big, their health may be at risk. The Tampa Bay Times.

How Healthy is High-Performance Sport?

However, the most scientifically-grounded study suggests the following:

- Regular moderate physical activity led to increased life expectancy (between 0.4 to 6.9 years)
- Aerobic endurance athletes had greater life expectancies
- The results were inconclusive for “power sports” and “team sports”


“How healthy is high-performance sport?

“Great sport begins at a point where it has ceased to be healthy”

Bertolt Brecht (German playwright, 1898-1956)
The **BENEFITS** of Elite [McDonaldized] Sport and Bodies

- Brings employment and financial reward to athletes
- Generates capital for sport franchise owners/event organizers
- Represents an important focus and source of identity for athletes
- Provides enjoyment/enchantment for athletes and spectators

The **COSTS** of Elite [McDonaldized] Sport and Bodies

- Can lead to significant short and long term health problems
- Focus on sport can lead to neglect of other aspects, important for post-sport life
- Can involve lack of control and independence
- Can lead to the dehumanization and disenchantment of athletes

The McDonaldized Corporeal Sport Economy:

**Positive or Negative?**

In need of **reform** or not?

**A hegemonic institution unlikely to be altered?**

See course website for related required readings, video clips, key concepts, thematic review questions, and essay question.