

PHIL 1360-301 202510 Philosophy Of Sport

Philosophy 1360: Philosophy of Sport (Spring 2025)

Tu/Th 1:45-3:14

Dr. Milton Wachsberg Meyer

mwmeyer@phil.upenn.edu

Office hours: 5-6 M/W/F

You are not allowed to use ChatGPT (or tools like it) for your work for this class. Using such tools will be considered a violation of Penn's [Code of Academic Integrity](#)[Links to an external site.](#) and suspected use will be reported to the Center for Community Standards & Accountability. Please contact me if you have any questions about this policy.

This is an introductory Philosophy course that uses philosophical tools to understand and answer questions that arise in and about sport.

There are no Philosophy prerequisites, but participation in a high school and/or college sport would be helpful.

Each student will be responsible for providing sport specific examples supporting/undermining philosophical points being made in class. You will choose a sport you are familiar with as a participant.

The central question to be answered is: What are the parameters for acceptable performance enhancement in sport?

Developing a framework to answer this question will take us through:

- 1) questions about rules: what is their point in sport and what are appropriate reasons to change them?
- 2) questions about the point of participation in a sport;
- 3) questions about the kinds of virtues and vices sports participants can demonstrate; and
- 4) questions about integrity of participants and a sport itself.

A subsidiary question to be discussed is one about the significance of competition in sport: Is it essential to sport or a means to an end?

A related set of questions concerns the appropriate competitors in sporting events:

- 1) (Why) should competition be restricted to single sex categories (and if so, what constitutes being a particular sex);
- 2) (Why) should competition be divided into able and para categories?

Answering all these questions will help us develop a theory of sport and so provide a principled basis for the kinds of performance enhancements (PEDs, technology and medical/psychological intervention) that are appropriate and inappropriate for athletes to use.

Requirements

Two short papers after comments on an outline (5-6 pages, 25% each), and a comprehensive take-home final examination (30%) and regular attendance and conscientious participation in discussion and questions of the week via e-mail (20%).

If you are absent from a class, you must e-mail me answers to bolded Discussion Questions for that class.

Required Readings

Articles and Videos on CANVAS

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

January 16: Introduction: Philosophical Method and Four Questions About Enhancing Athletic Performance

No Readings

January 21: What is Sport?

Bernard Suits, "The Elements of Sport" pp. 9-19

Bernard Suits, "Tricky Triad: Games, Play, and Sports" pp. 2-10

January 23: (How) Can Sport Have Intrinsic Value?

Colin McGinn, Sport; Chapter 1: “From Pinball to Pole Vault” pp. 1-16

Alasdair MacIntyre, Ch. 14, "The Nature of the Virtues", in After Virtue, pp. 187-198

January 28: Is a Sport Only Constituted by Its Rules?

J. S. Russell, “Are Rules All an Umpire Has to Work With?”

January 30: Internalism vs. Externalism

Robert L. Simon, “Internalism and Internal Values in Sport”

February 4: What Should Winning Show?

Nicholas Dixon, “On Winning and Athletic Superiority”

February 6: Winning and the Point of Sport

Kretchmar and Elcombe, “In Defense of Competition and Winning”

Colin McGinn, Sport; Chapter 2: “Running Up Escalators”

PAPER 1 ASSIGNED

February 11: Athletic Virtue 1

Butcher and Schneider, “Fair Play as Respect for the Game”

Warren P. Fraleigh, “Intentional Rules Violations—One More Time”

Robert L. Simon, “The Ethics of Strategic Fouling: A Reply to Fraleigh”

February 13: Athletic Virtue 2

Leslie A. Howe, “Gamesmanship”

February 18: Athletic Vices 1

Harvey, “Match-Fixing: Working Towards an Ethical Framework”

Oliver Leaman, “Cheating and Fair Play in Sport”

February 20: Athletic Vices 2

Claudio Tamburrini, “The ‘Hand of God?’”

February 25: Sex-Segregation in Sport I (Social Justice Arguments)

Jane English, “Sex Equality in Sports”

Catherine MacKinnon, “Women, Self-Possession and Sport”

Inclusion and Diversity (cf. FILES)

February 27: Sex-Segregation in Sport II (Broad Internalist Arguments)

David Epstein, The Sports Gene, “Why Men Have Nipples”

Stephanie Kovalchik, “Men’s Records and Women’s ...” pp. 18-21 (C)

March 4: Against Sex- Segregation in Sport

Torbjorn Tannsjo, “Against Sex Discrimination in Sports”

March 6: Sex-Classing and Athletic Achievement

Stephanie Kovalchik, “Men’s Records and Women’s ...” pp. 18-23 (C)

March 11/13: SPRING BREAK

March 18: What is a Female in Sex-Segregated Sport? I

Karkazis, et. al., “Out of Bounds? A Critique of the New ...”

Bermon, et. al., Are the New Policies on Hyperandrogenism ...?”

Karkazis and Jordan Young, “The Harrison Bergeron Olympics”

March 20: What is a Female in Sex-Segregated Sport? II

Joanna Harper interview: “Hyperandrogenism and women vs women vs men in sport” (Canvas)

Media Release (Canvas)

PAPER 2 ASSIGNED

March 25: What is a Female in Sex-Segregated Sport? III

NCAA Transgender Policy 2010 (Files)

NCAA Transgender Policy Update 2022 (Files)

IOC Framework (Files)

Comparing Athletic Performances (Files)

Testimony Against H.R. 5 (Files)

Non Binary Running Guide (Files)

March 27: Should Able and Para Athletes Compete Together?

Burkett, "Shifting Boundaries in Sports Technology" (Files)

S.D. Edwards, "Should Oscar Pistorius Be Excluded from the 2008 ...?"

April 1: Bionic Athletes

Michael Sandel, "The Ethics of Enhancement"; "Bionic Athletes"

April 3: The Scientific Bases of a Variety of Performance Enhancing

Technologies and the Current Rules About Them (Readings on Canvas)

How performance can be enhanced from changes in equipment used in a sport. Case studies: oversized composite tennis rackets / copoly strings and "super" shoes

How performance can be enhanced from equipment used to train for a sport. Case study: altitude tents and cooling gloves for distance runners

How performance can be enhanced from equipment used to regenerate the body. Case study: hyperbaric oxygen therapy

How performance can be enhanced from psychological interventions

Case studies: sports psychology, hypnosis and virtual reality

Performance enhancement from medicinal interventions 1

Case study: HGH and steroids

Performance enhancements from medical interventions 2

Case study: blood doping and gene therapy

April 8/10: Frameworks for Judging Performance Enhancing Technologies I

Robert L. Simon, “Good Competition and Drug-Enhanced Performance”

John Hoberman, “Listening to Steroids”

April 15: Frameworks for Judging Performance Enhancing Technologies II

Andy Miah, “Why Not Dope? It’s Still About the Health”

April 17: Frameworks for Judging Performance Enhancing Technologies III

Emily Ryall, “Conceptual Problems with Performance Enhancing ... ”

Morgan, “Athletic Perfection, Performance-Enhancing Drugs, ... ”

April 22: Frameworks for Judging Performance Enhancing Technologies III

Gordon Reddiford, “Cheating and Self-Deception in Sport”

FINAL EXAM Assigned

April 24: Answering Three Questions about Performance Enhancement

The Lance Armstrong Question

The Maria Sharapova Question

A General Principle on Illegitimate Performance Enhancement

April 29 Conclusion