Course Change Request

New Course Proposal

Date Submitted: 01/29/26 4:17 pm

Viewing: GGS 352 : Sports and Place

Last edit: 01/29/26 4:17 pm

Changes proposed by: nburtch

Programs referencing this course

SC-BA-GEOG: Geography, BA

SC-BS-GEOG: Geography, BS

In Workflow

1. **GGS Chair**
2. **SC Curriculum Committee**
3. SC Assistant Dean
4. Assoc Provost-Undergraduate
5. Registrar-Courses
6. Banner

Approval Path

1. 02/05/26 10:49 am Nathan Burtch (nburtch): Approved for GGS Chair

Are you completing this form on someone else's behalf?

No

Effective Term: Fall 2026

Subject Code: GGS - Geography & Geoinformation Science

Course Number: 352

Bundled Courses:

Is this course replacing another course? No

Equivalent Courses:

Catalog Title: Sports and Place

Banner Title: Sports and Place

Will section titles vary by semester? No

Credits: 3

Schedule Type: Lecture

Hours of Lecture or Seminar per week: 3

Repeatable: May be only taken once for credit, limited to 3 attempts (N3)

Max Allowable Credits:

9

Default Grade Mode: Undergraduate Regular

Recommended Prerequisite(s):

30 credits

Recommended Corequisite(s):

Required Prerequisite(s) / Corequisite(s) (Updates only):

Registrar's Office Use Only - Required Prerequisite(s)/Corequisite(s):

And/Or	(	Course/Test Code	Min Grade/Score	Academic Level	)	Concurrency?

Registration Restrictions (Updates only):

Registrar's Office Use Only - Registration Restrictions:

Field(s) of Study:

Class(es):

Level(s):

Degree(s):

School(s):

Catalog Description:

Investigation of spatial aspects of sports. Studies sports from cultural and physical geography perspectives. Includes spatial aspects of specific sports, such as spatial diffusion of a sport and understanding the fixed spatiality of a sport's field of play and positions. Geospatial techniques and mapping are used to understand sports impact on landscape.

Justification:

What: Creation of a new course on geography of sports.

Why: This course was offered as a special topics course in Spring 2025, and is seen as a good topic to expand systematic offerings in geography.

Does this course cover material which crosses into another department? No

Learning Outcomes:

Will this course be scheduled as a cross-level cross listed section?

Attach Syllabus

GGS352_SYLLABUS.pdf

Additional Attachments

Staffing:

Dr. Nathan Burtch is the primary professor that will teach the course.

Relationship to Existing Programs:

We plan on adding this as an elective course in the BA/BS GEOG programs, as a Systematic Geography course.

Relationship to Existing Courses:

There are no other courses that investigate the spatial aspects of sports. SPMT 304, called Sport, Culture, and Society, does investigate sports "from educational, political, economic, and cultural perspectives" but GGS sees GGS 352 as being quite different, by focusing on geography, landscape, spatial diffusion, and using spatial methods like GIS to analyze sports.

Have you reached out to the Libraries to determine whether there are adequate resources to support your course? If not, please email Meg Meiman, Associate University Librarian for Learning, Research, and Engagement at mmeiman2@gmu.edu.

No

Additional Comments:

Reviewer Comments

Key: 19197

George Mason University

GGS 352: Sports and Place

Spring Semester 2027 (January 21 – May 14)

Class meeting: TR 12:00 PM – 1:15 PM
Class location: EXPL 2103
Sect/Credits: 002 / 3 credit hours
Instructor office: EXPL 2413

Instructor: Nathan Burtch
Email: nburtch@gmu.edu
Office hours: W 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM (via Zoom)

General Information

Classmate contact information:

Name	Email	Phone

Catalog description: Investigation of spatial aspects of sports. Studies sports from cultural and physical geography perspectives. Includes spatial aspects of specific sports, such as spatial diffusion of a sport and understanding the fixed spatiality of a sport's field of play and positions. Geospatial techniques and mapping are used to understand sports impact on landscape.

Course overview: At first blush, the topic of sports and athletics may not seem apt for serious academic study within geography. In ancient Rome, the term "bread and circuses" refers to the pacification and distraction of the masses by means of food and games (proto sports of the time). Even the term "sport" etymologically comes from the Old French *desporter*, meaning to carry away the mind from serious matters; to amuse and divert. And, what is geographical about sports?

What we will discuss in this class is that sports are quite apt and indeed an important way to understand spatial components of our society. Clearly, humanity finds sports an important part of culture due to the amount of time and money spent on sports. And, even beyond the interesting, fixed geographies of fields/courts sports are played on, important concepts of geography are strongly established within sport. Political, social, and economic geographies are intrinsic to sports; one only needs to think about both choosing the hosts and the impacts of the actual competition of events like the Olympics or World Cup to see the interplay of these geographic spheres. Physical geography itself impacts sports, as conditions of climate and elevation can have drastic impacts to on-the-field results of sports.

This course is mostly lecture-based, but with components of discussion and lab-like activities. The general pattern for the course is that our Tuesday meeting will cover broader topics on the geography of sports and specific lab-like activities, where data is explored using geospatial technologies like GIS. Thursday meetings will cover specific sports, outlining geographic and spatial concepts of each sport.

Target audience: This course is intended for students interested in the spatialization of sports culture and the spatial analysis of sports. GGS 352 is a systematic elective for GEOG majors and minors.

Applicable learning outcomes: Successful completion of this course will enable students to:

1. Understand how place impacted the development of several major sports
2. Use geographic methods, such as GIS, to investigate spatial questions about sports
3. Apply concepts of geography (diffusion, regional differentiation, human-environment interaction, etc.) to different sports
4. Articulate how sports impact and shape the cultural landscape.

Prerequisites: It is recommended that undergraduates have a minimum of 30 completed credits prior to enrollment in GGS 352.

Enrollment and repeat policy: GGS 352 follows the general Mason policy that an undergraduate course can be repeated for grade up to three times. Students enrolling in this course again must submit all newly completed work.

Course Materials

Required text:
None.

While there are no required texts for the class, most weeks will have assigned readings, which will be posted to Canvas. Students are expected to read before class and be prepared to discuss topics from the readings.

GGS computer lab: The lab in EXPL 2102 is open 24 hours for you to use. Registration in a GGS class should automatically grant you access. Please contact ggsit@gmu.edu to report issues.

Software, hardware, and data: There are several assignments in this class that will use geographic software. For the most part, ArcGIS Pro will be used, however other software may also be useful. Students have access to ArcGIS Pro both in the student computer lab and also to install on their own Windows-based machine through their Mason NetID. You are encouraged to have viable storage for data used on those assignments and your project. This may be your local machine hard drive, a USB flash drive/portable hard drive, or cloud storage (like Microsoft One Drive). Think about backing up data periodically through the semester!

It is recommended that students have the technological bandwidth to stream data; students should have regular, reliable access to a computer with an updated operating system and a stable broadband Internet connection (consistent 1.5 Mbps or higher download and upload speed; you can use https://www.speedtest.net/ to check the speed of your connection).

Online materials and email: This course will make extensive use of Canvas at Mason. Course materials such as assignments will be available only in electronic version on Canvas. Also, students will be expected to submit assignments online through Canvas. **Only Word document (.docx or .doc) or Adobe PDF (.pdf) file formats will be accepted,** with some exceptions. Grades will be posted on Canvas as well. Make sure you are familiar and comfortable with the Canvas interface.

Students are required to have a Mason NetID and associated @gmu.edu email account, which will allow you access to Canvas and lab computers. Please use this university email account when contacting the professor regarding this class; as explained in the Administrative section below, the course professor will not respond to messages sent from a non-Mason email address. Students may also use Microsoft Teams to communicate with the professor, although students should not expect instant responses from these direct chats; in other words, Teams is not a 24/7 direct support line for the class.

Grading

Assignments (35%): There are six different lab-like activities in this course. In each, examples of how to use geospatial techniques to analyze sports will be outlined. Each of these activities will have an associated assignment, which will task you with taking the concepts covered and applying to a new sport/situation. More information will be posted to Canvas and discussed in class.

Final exam (20%): The final is a cumulative examination of topics covered in this course. The exam will (most probably) be a mix of multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, short answer, and long answer questions. The focus of questions will be on lectures, but a few questions may come from readings or other portions of course. Details about question types and length of the exam will be given as the exam date approaches.

Student lecture (10%): There are three sessions listed as 'student-led sport' in the schedule. For each of these, students will be giving a lecture/presentation on a sport of their choice that is otherwise not covered in the course. A list of options for signup are provided, but students are also welcome to choose other sports. The focus should be geographical. Details will be provided on Canvas.

Reading a sports landscape (10%): Each student will select a different sports facility that is either local to the region or otherwise a place in which the student will be able to visit. Students can consider "sports facility" broadly. Students will visit the site and write a cultural landscape analysis of the sports facility.

Participation (10%): Students are expected to come to class prepared to participate. A variety of activities are expected to be included as part of the lectures, such as short writing, group/class discussions, data analysis, and online discussions.

Term project (15%): The term project will enable students to ask a pertinent geographical question regarding sports and then conduct original research. Students can use one of the various assignments from the class as a jumping-off point to build a deeper case study or can choose methodologies not presented otherwise in class. Students will produce both a written paper and a visual Story Map for assessment.

Undergraduate grading scale:

Grade	*Percent Required*				*Assignment*	*Percentage of Total Grade*
A+	96 to 100	**C+**	76 to 79.9		Assignments (6)	**35%**
A	93 to 95.9	**C**	73 to 75.9		Final Exam	**20%**
A-	90 to 92.9	**C-**	70 to 72.9		Lecture	**10%**
B+	86 to 89.9	**D**	60 to 69.9		Landscape	**10%**
B	83 to 85.9	**F**	<60		Participation	**10%**
B-	80 to 82.9				Term project	**15%**

Note on attendance: Regular attendance is an expectation. Those that make a habit of missing class tend to do worse in this course than those that do attend. It is in your best interest to come to class and participate as attendance will lead to a better understanding of course concepts. Students are responsible for any announcement given by the instructor during class regardless of their personal attendance.

Students that must miss classes because of religious observances or participation in University activities should provide documentation to the professor within the first two weeks of the course. Reasonable accommodations will be provided for work missed on those days. It is expected that if a student has one of these excused absences on a day in which an assignment is due that the student submits the assignment early.

Make-up and late assignment policies: Due dates are explicitly stated. All assessed/graded items in this course will be accepted past the ascribed due date until **May 11th**. Late penalties are assigned in a two-tiered system. Items turned in **within seven (7) days** will result in a **10% deduction**. Items **later than seven (7) days** will result in a **25% deduction**. This penalty begins 1 minute after the due date. Technical excuses ("computer system error", "didn't submit correctly on Canvas", etc.) will not be accepted as reasons for late work. You are expected to start work early. **Never underestimate the time you will spend on the assignments.** It is in your best interest to turn in everything on time to avoid falling irrecoverably behind. Please contact the instructor if you are struggling and you will receive aid as best as the instructor can provide.

Incomplete policy: Students may request an incomplete for this course if they (a) currently have a 75% grade based on submitted coursework and relative weighting; (b) have completed at least 50% of coursework materials; (c) cannot complete scheduled coursework for a cause beyond reasonable control; and (d) submit an Incomplete Grade Contract with the professor. In general, students have until the 9th week of the following full semester to complete their work (unless it is the student's final semester). All incomplete work will be assigned **late penalties as outlined** in this syllabus.

Administrative

Academic standards: *The following statement is part of the "Common Policies Addendum" required by the University by AP.2.5; the wording is provided by the Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning as of 5-19-2025 at https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/home/gmu-common-course-policies/.*

Academic Standards exist to promote authentic scholarship, support the institution's goal of maintaining high standards of academic excellence, and encourage continued ethical behavior of

faculty and students to cultivate an educational community which values integrity and produces graduates who carry this commitment forward into professional practice.

As members of the George Mason University community, we are committed to fostering an environment of trust, respect, and scholarly excellence. Our academic standards are the foundation of this commitment, guiding our behavior and interactions within this academic community. The practices for implementing these standards adapt to modern practices, disciplinary contexts, and technological advancements. Our standards are embodied in our courses, policies, and scholarship, and are upheld in the following principles:

- **Honesty:** Providing accurate information in all academic endeavors, including communications, assignments, and examinations.
- **Acknowledgement:** Giving proper credit for all contributions to one's work. This involves the use of accurate citations and references for any ideas, words, or materials created by others in the style appropriate to the discipline. It also includes acknowledging shared authorship in group projects, co-authored pieces, and project reports.
- **Uniqueness of Work:** Ensuring that all submitted work is the result of one's own effort and is original, including free from self-plagiarism. This principle extends to written assignments, code, presentations, exams, and all other forms of academic work.

Violations of these standards — including but not limited to plagiarism, fabrication, and cheating — are taken seriously and will be addressed in accordance with university policies. The process for reporting, investigating, and adjudicating violations is outlined in the university's procedures. Consequences of violations may include academic sanctions, disciplinary actions, and other measures necessary to uphold the integrity of our academic community.

The principles outlined in these academic standards reflect our collective commitment to upholding the highest standards of honesty, acknowledgement, and uniqueness of work. By adhering to these principles, we ensure the continued excellence and integrity of George Mason University's academic community.

> *Student responsibility*: Students are responsible for understanding how these general expectations regarding academic standards apply to each course, assignment, or exam they participate in; students should ask their instructor for clarification on any aspect that is not clear to them.

Accommodations for students with disabilities: *The following statement is part of the "Common Policies Addendum" required by the University by AP.2.5; the wording is provided by the Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning as of 5-19-2025 at https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/home/gmu-common-course-policies/.*

Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to upholding the letter and spirit of the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. Under the administration of University Life, Disability Services implements and coordinates reasonable accommodations and disability-related services that afford equal access to university programs and activities. Students can begin the registration process with Disability Services at any time during their enrollment at George Mason University. If you are seeking accommodations, please visit https://ds.gmu.edu/ for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: ods@gmu.edu. Phone: (703) 993-2474.

> *Student responsibility*: Students are responsible for registering with Disability Services and communicating about their approved accommodations with their instructor *in advance* of any relevant class meeting, assignment, or exam.

FERPA and use of GMU email addresses for course communication: *The following statement is part of the "Common Policies Addendum" required by the University by AP.2.5; the wording is provided by the Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning as of 5-19-2025 at https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/home/gmu-common-course-policies/.*

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) governs the disclosure of education records for eligible students and is an essential aspect of any course. **Students must use their GMU email account** to receive important University information, including communications related to this class. Instructors will not respond to messages sent from or send messages regarding course content to a non-GMU email address.

> *Student responsibility*: Students are responsible for checking their GMU email regularly for course-related information, and/or ensuring that GMU email messages are forwarded to an account they do check.

Title IX resources and required reporting: *The following statement is part of the "Common Policies Addendum" required by the University by AP.2.5; the wording is provided by the Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning as of 5-19-2025 at https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/home/gmu-common-course-policies/.*

As a part of George Mason University's commitment to providing a safe and non-discriminatory learning, living, and working environment for all members of the University community, the University does not discriminate on the basis of sex or gender in any of its education or employment programs and activities. Accordingly, **all non-confidential employees, including your faculty member, have a legal requirement to report to the Title IX Coordinator, all relevant details obtained directly or indirectly about any incident of Prohibited Conduct** (such as sexual harassment, sexual assault, gender-based stalking, dating/domestic violence). Upon notifying the Title IX Coordinator of possible Prohibited Conduct, the Title IX Coordinator will assess the report and determine if outreach is required. If outreach is required, the individual the report is about (the "Complainant") will receive a communication, likely in the form of an email, offering that person the option to meet with a representative of the Title IX office.

For more information about non-confidential employees, resources, and Prohibited Conduct, please see University Policy 1202: Sexual and Gender-Based Misconduct and Other Forms of Interpersonal Violence. Questions regarding Title IX can be directed to the Title IX Coordinator via email to TitleIX@gmu.edu, by phone at 703-993-8730, or in person on the Fairfax campus in Aquia 373.

> *Student opportunity*: If you prefer to speak to someone **confidentially**, please contact one of Mason's confidential employees in Student Support and Advocacy (SSAC), Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), Student Health Services (SHS), and/or the Office of the University Ombudsperson.

Academic and religious calendars: The Registrar establishes academic calendars in advance of every academic semester or term. You can view the Spring 2026 academic calendar for details. Some

important dates include:

- First day of class January 20
- Last day to drop course with 100% refund February 3
- Last day of unrestricted withdrawal February 24
- Spring Recess (No classes) March 9 - 15
- Last day of selective withdrawal March 30
- Last day of class May 4
- Last day of examination period May 13

Mason also maintains a calendar of religious holidays. Students will receive reasonable accommodations so that they can observe religious holidays. Students must contact the professor prior to any planned observance in order to create reasonable accommodations. In general, work that is due on a date of a religious holiday is expected to be completed prior to the deadline.

Course materials and student privacy: All course materials posted to Canvas or other course sites are private; by federal law, any materials that identify specific students (via their name, voice, or image) **must not be shared** with anyone not enrolled in this class. Video recordings of class meetings that include audio or visual information from other students are private and must not be shared. Live video conference meetings (e.g. Collaborate or Zoom) that include audio or visual information from other students must be viewed privately and not shared with others in your household. Some of our synchronous meetings in this class may be recorded to provide necessary information for students in this class. Recordings will be stored on Canvas and will only be accessible to students taking this course during this semester. **Sharing of instructor-created materials** (lectures, notes, videos, assignments, exams, etc.) to others not currently enrolled in this specific section of this class, **including to public or private online "study" sites, is considered a violation of Mason's Academic Standards.**

Gender identity, pronoun use, and proper address: Students are welcome to share their chosen name and gender pronouns with the instructor and discuss how the instructor can best address you in class and via email. As well, students should be aware that they can use Mason-provided tools to update their chosen name and pronouns; these changes will appear in Canvas class sites among other places. Your instructor uses *he/him/his* pronouns. When addressing your instructor in writing or verbally, please use "Dr. Burtch" or "Prof. Burtch." The surname 'Burtch' is pronounced the same as the genus of trees called 'birch.'

Individual work, collaboration, and generative-AI: This is additional guidance to the Academic Standards portion above. At times, you may want to work with other students in this course towards completing homework or otherwise studying. This is good; there are likely times where student learning is enhanced through collaboration. There is even a spot in the top of this syllabus where you can jot down contact information for some classmates! While collaboration and group learning is encouraged in this course, each student **absolutely must** turn in their own work, from their own computer, and any written discussion must be theirs alone, and not attributable to another person or group, *except where noted* (for example, quoting authors as a small portion of your scholarly work). This also applies to online sources; you cannot copy the words of anyone else for any graded part of this course. It is not enough to exchange a few synonyms within a sentence! You must write, summarize, and analyze with your own words and ideas.

A new technology, generative-AI models, requires an additional statement. **Student use of**

generative-AI models or tools must conform to Mason Academic Standards. This means that students are expected, as outlined above, to turn in their own work, in their own words. Using generative-AI models to submit written documents, answers to assignment/test questions, or otherwise passing AI-generated text as your own work **does not conform to academic standards**. The **only exception** is that students are permitted to generate AI-produced imagery included in submitted materials if it enhances the submitted product; for example, a custom icon or logo on a map. Students are permitted to use generative-AI for this class in non-assessed activities; summarizing content and brainstorming are examples of those cases.

In short, your professor will not use generative-AI to grade/assess your work, and you will not use generative-AI to produce your work.

Instructor availability: Please do not hesitate to contact your instructor if you have questions about course topics or assignments. Your instructor will do his best to answer all weekday emails within 24 hours, and weekend emails within 48 hours. Should you not receive a response within that time frame, you may send a gentle reminder via email. Do try to avoid last-minute emails, as your instructor may not have email accessible immediately before deadlines. It is generally a good practice to avoid sending an email at the first sign of trouble with an assignment; often you will find the proper solution by giving yourself an hour or two to problem solve! Please make use of the **office hours** listed at the top of this document. Generally, issues can be clarified quickly in person or in a live online chat.

Non-discrimination and inclusive classrooms: George Mason University, in addition to adhering to state and federal regulations against discrimination, has created our own non-discrimination policy. This policy is to allow all students, faculty, and staff to work or learn in an "environment free from any discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, ethnic national origin (including shared ancestry and/or ethnic characteristics), sex, disability, military status (including veteran status), sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, pregnancy status, genetic information, or any other characteristic protected by law." If you face discrimination, or know that discrimination has occurred in our Mason community, you can submit details of the incident to the Office of Access, Compliance, and Community. Within our classroom, we are committed to the value of inclusive excellence at Mason, which values each of our individualities and provides opportunities to consider and learn about different perspectives than our own. Our classroom extends to any digital spaces we use; students are expected to respect others in online discussion boards, synchronous online meetings, and any other virtual spaces of class contact. You are expected to use **netiquette** in those spaces and practice the core principles of being a **digital citizen**; respect, educate, and protect.

University-wide closures and class cancellations/delays: There may be times during the semester in which George Mason University announces university-wide closures or delays. Should inclement weather or another emergency force Mason to close, causing our class to cancel meeting times, we will not meet. Courses without meeting (asynchronous) may also be affected. Check the Mason website and our own Canvas site for updates. Other cancellations or delays to class will be **announced via Canvas** by your professor. In the event that this course has missed meeting times, the course schedule, assignment deadlines, and other course alterations will be decided upon and announced via Canvas and email by the professor. You are expected to stay abreast of any changes.

Use of electronic devices: Your professor **encourages the use of devices** that both aid your

learning ability and do not distract from the learning of others. Except for mobile phones and audio/video recorders, you are free to use any electronic device that fulfills both of those conditions. All electronic devices should be muted or silenced. Please be respectful of the class and avoid use of social media during class which can distract both you and your classmates. You are expected to adhere to Mason's student code of conduct; disruptive behavior will result in classroom removal. Audio/video recording requires the consent of the professor. This policy pertains to any in-person aspect of the course.

GGS 352 Course Schedule

Week	Date	Class Topics	Coursework Due
Unit 1: Place and diffusion of sports (Team sports)			
Week 1	Jan 21 Jan 23	Introduction: Why sports geography? Football (American)	**Weekly reading**
Week 2	Jan 28 Jan 30	Place, attachment, and pride Football (Soccer)	**Weekly reading**
Week 3	Feb 4 Feb 6	Geographic divisions Basketball	**Weekly reading**
Week 4	Feb 11 Feb 13	Colonialism/globalization (and landscape) Cricket	**Assignment 1** **Weekly reading**
Week 5	Feb 18 Feb 20	Athlete regional origins Ice hockey	**Weekly reading**
Unit 2: Power and difference (Team sports)			
Week 6	Feb 25 Feb 27	Race and sport Baseball	**Assignment 2** **Weekly reading**
Week 7	Mar 4 Mar 6	Expansion of sports leagues Student-led sport #1	**Weekly reading**
Recess		*Spring Recess: No class*	
Unit 3: Power and difference (Individual sports)			
Week 8	Mar 18 Mar 20	Gender and sexuality in sport Tennis	**Assignment 3** **Weekly reading**
Week 9	Mar 25 Mar 27	Scheduling a tour (online) Student-led sport #2 (online)	**Sports landscape** **Weekly reading**
Week 10	Apr 1 Apr 3	Sports washing and nationalism Fighting sports	**Assignment 4** **Weekly reading**
Unit 4: Environmental and economic landscapes (Individual sports)			
Week 11	Apr 8 Apr 10	Physical geography effects on sports Golf	**Weekly reading**
Week 12	Apr 15 Apr 17	Climate, environment, and sports Auto racing	**Assignment 5** **Weekly reading**
Week 13	Apr 22 Apr 24	Stadium economic geography Olympic Games	**Weekly reading**
Week 14	Apr 29 May 1	Urban dynamics and spaces for sports Student-led sport #3	**Assignment 6** **Weekly reading**
Finals	May 8	**Final exam** Thursday, May 8 10:30 AM – 1:15 PM	**Term Project**

Note: The GGS 352 course schedule is tentative and is subject to revision by the instructor