Course Description

Seville has not one but two top-flight professional soccer – or 
futbol – teams: Real Betis and Sevilla FC. They are irreconcilable antagonists, and their bi-annual meetings in 
La Liga, the Spanish football league, are terrifying occasions that always require a 
massive police presence. Football in Spain is not just a sport but a virtual religion, and the 
teams that play it have deep roots in the communities they represent. This is not unusual. 
In fact, football teams the world over excite a similar passion and fanatical loyalty, 
supporters of football are truly “fans.” This course will trace the development of 
Association Football – soccer as we call it – to its present position as the world’s most 
popular sport. Soccer now reigns supreme as a global sport, played and watched in all 
areas of the world, including in the one country that long resisted its charms: the United 
States. The game first took root in in the industrial towns and cities of Britain, where 
professional teams like Blackburn Rovers (1875) and Manchester United (1878) were 
founded but it spread quickly to other countries in South America and Europe. The 
F.I.F.A. (Federation Internationale de Football Association) was founded in 1904, and 
by the time of the first World Cup in 1930, won by Uruguay, the game was well-
established in much of the world. After World War Two it expanded rapidly, and it’s 
estimated that 3.62 billion people, or about 46% of the world’s population, tuned in to 
watch the 2010 World Cup final in South Africa.

In that year, the World Cup was won by Spain, and Spanish football ruled the 
globe, dominating and reshaping not only international football, but through the growing 
influence of the Spanish super clubs Real Madrid and FC Barcelona, revolutionizing the 
club game all over the world as well with Tika Taka, the technically brilliant strategy of 
total possession that the Dutch star Johan Cruyff had instilled at Barcelona during his 
time as a coach there in the 1990’s. For almost two decades now, Spanish football has set 
a world-beating standard. But the story of Real Betis and Sevilla emphasizes another 
aspect of the global game, its local history and roots. Spanish 
futbol dates back to the 
British work gangs and companies of the late C19th, in industrial cities like Barcelona 
but also in rural Andalusia, where the British mining company Rio Tinto Zinc operated in 
the 1890’s, and where workers formed the first Spanish club in 1889, the Recreativo de 
Huelva. The first game of Spanish football was played between Recreativo and a team 
from the Seville Water Works (later Sevilla FC) in Seville in 1890. In this course we will 
survey the history of football from a global perspective, tracing the way it emerged 
around the world and why its influence spread, and exploring the way this intersected 
with the history of Spain, Andalusia and Seville to provide the foundation for the 
immensely popular game that now dominates Spanish culture.
Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students will develop an understanding of soccer as a sport, and of the origins and history of soccer as a sport with its own unique history and patterns of development and change.
2. Students will explore the spread of soccer as an international sport, and how the history of the sport intersects with the broader history of industrialization, nationalism, imperialism, and global capitalism.
3. Students will understand the development of Spanish football as part of this broader transnational history and be able to link the growing popularity of the game to historical developments in Spain, Andalusia and Seville.
4. Students will use their understanding and knowledge of these historical developments and the issues they raise to develop their own powers of critical thinking and writing.

Selected Readings


Additional course readings, and there will be some, will be posted on the Laulima class website.

Attendance & Participation

Regular attendance and active participation in class discussion is essential. Your participation in class discussions is crucial as this course will be taught in seminar rather than lecture form. Your attendance and participation will account for 15% of your final grade.

Writing

Good writing is central to the humanities and to the practice of history in particular, and I’ll be placing a strong emphasis on your written work. Writing assignments will be used throughout the course to encourage you to learn, analyze, integrate, and conceptualize the material we’re reading and viewing. Your writing should be used not to passively record but actively explore texts and other historical materials, and to think about the ideas they
express and contain. It should also be used to explore your own responses, ideas and thoughts. I’ll give you feedback on your writing throughout the semester, and by sharing your work with me and with other students, I hope you’ll develop your skill as a writer and as a cultural observer and critic.

**Assignments & Grading**

I will post discussion questions each week on the course readings that should be answered before the end of the week (1-2 pages). Cumulatively, these will be worth 35% of your overall grade. I will also ask you to do two oral presentations on some aspect of the global and local history of football (15%). The remainder of your grade will be based on a Final Paper of 5-7 pages (35%) and on class attendance and participation (15%). The final will be on a theme of your own choosing that synthesizes the readings we’ve done over the course of the semester, and requires some additional research of your own on the history or contemporary setting of Spanish soccer from a political, economic, cultural, or social point of view. All of the writing assignments for class must be completed to receive a passing grade.

**Class Schedule**

The class is scheduled for 12 weeks. During this time we will make a number of expeditions out of the classroom to observe street futbol at the Alameda de Hercules or another park or plaza in Seville, to watch more organized futsal and youth soccer, and to attend a professional game at Real Betis or Seville FC.