NASSS 2026 Calgary

Thematic Sessions

Calgary

Global Black Identity and Cultural Expression Through Sport
In and Out: Gender and Sexuality in Fitness and Leisure
Queer and Trans Futurity in Sport, Recreation, and Movement Cultures
Locating Indigenous Games in the Global South: Narratives and Methodologies
Sport, Physical Culture, and Forced Migration During Devastating Times
Empathy and Cultural Differences in Elite Sport
Sport Policy and Politics
Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Indigeneity in Sport
Teaching the Sociology of Sport
Through their eyes: Using photovoice in Sport Management curriculum
Re-Thinking the Outdoors
Critical Approaches to Athlete Health
Critical Perspectives on Contemporary Running Culture
Sport Mega-Events and the Trump Assemblage
Peripheral Labour? Social Reproduction in Capitalist Sport
Mental Health Communications in Sport
En Comunidad: Latinx Scholars and Scholarship
Finding Common Ground: Research in Kinesiology and Physical Education
Sport as sites for social connection? Processes, practices, and possibilities
Understanding Sport in Global South: Governance, Competition, and Migration
Economic, Socio-Cultural, Mental Health, and Ethical Issues Impacting College Athletics
Decoloniality and Physical Cultures

Virtual

Vulnerability and Mess in Movement Cultures Research
Sport, Conflict, and the Middle East
Post-Humanist Inquiry: The Matter and Mattering of Movement Culture
Sport and the Accelerating Death of Western (e.g., Epstein) Imperialism

Calgary

Global Black Identity and Cultural Expression Through Sport
Organizer: Letisha Brown

This session invites submissions that explore global Black identity and cultural expression through the lens of sport. As such, we welcome works that offer transnational, intersectional, and/or interdisciplinary approaches to the examination of global Black identity and cultural expression where sport operates as a social, cultural, political and economic force. Blackness is a vast and multifaceted identity, one that must be situated with respect to space, place and time as anti-Blackness shows up in specific ways in specific contexts. Placing Blackness at the center of work within the study of sport is a growing area of study, and this session aims to pull together works that complement each other by challenging notions of anti-Blackness, gendered racism, heterosexism, and more.

Example topics may include:
- Diasporic Blackness in sport
- Black feminist critiques of global Blackness
- Gendered Blackness
- Black athlete activism in global sport
- Colonial and postcolonial legacies

In and Out: Gender and Sexuality in Fitness and Leisure
Organizer: Julie Brice, Shaun Edmonds

Everyday millions of people globally are engaging in various forms of fitness and other physical leisure practices which are inextricably articulated with dynamic sociocultural norms, institutions, and capitalization. Scholars have continuously emphasized the varied ways in which fitness and leisure practices serve to reinforce particular ideas of gender and sexuality, whilst also operating as a site where inequalities can be both intensified and challenged. In this session, we invite scholars to bring this discussion into the 21st century, exploring how modern fitness culture and spaces shape, and are shaped by, gendered and sexualized identities, regulate bodies and concepts of health and fitness, and create possibilities for resistance and community. We encourage papers which interrogate the ways commercial fitness spaces and leisure practices serve to reinforce normative ideals of femininity, masculinity, and heteronormativity, while also illuminating how LGBTQ+ individuals negotiate belonging, visibility, and safety.

Queer and Trans Futurity in Sport, Recreation, and Movement Cultures
Organizer: Daniel Uy

Tapping into Muñoz's ideals in Cruising Utopia, where hope and imagination are used to create collective, alternative ways of living, we invite papers, proposals, unfinished works, ideas you wrote on a napkin in secret, on how you envision possible futures for queer and trans people in sport, recreation, and movement cultures (so that it can include queer movement cultures like drag).

Locating Indigenous Games in the Global South: Narratives and Methodologies
Organizer: Padma Prakash, Umer Hussain

The Global South countries are revisiting, reformatting, standardising local/Indigenous games and attempting to revive/repopulate/re-establish them in different ways. Games such as Morabaraba from Southern Africa, Sepak Takraw from Southeast Asia, Kabaddi from South Asia,, along with other Asian games, are examples of the resurgence. Some of these are attempts to address Indigenous silencing and invisibility, manifestations of the decolonial impetus in the Global South, and, for some, an entry point to the global economy. Within the

Global South, attempts to promote local sport have prompted resistance from local people against forcible ‘nationalisation’.

We invite papers that explore newly reemerging approaches and frameworks addressing native/Indigenous sports and their social, political, economic, and ideological grounding. Submissions may include case studies or ethnographic studies of local/traditional sports and may be presented as films, documentaries, or images that convey a narrative. They may view these developments from global or local perspectives.

Sport, Physical Culture, and Forced Migration During Devastating Times
Organizer: Jay Scherer, Ashraf Amiri, Ramón Spaaij

Contemporary geopolitical crises—the joint U.S.–Israeli attack on Iran, Israel’s bombardment of Lebanon and its ongoing genocide against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the Taliban’s return to power in Afghanistan—have forcibly displaced millions of people. Many have sought refugee status in Western nations. Yet the promise of safety in “the West” has been undermined by emboldened brutality, entrenched racism, securitized border regimes, and expansive carceral networks, especially in the United States. This session interrogates the entanglements of sport, physical culture, and forced migration within this global landscape of crisis. Papers examine how embodied practices—in sport or informal physical cultural spaces—mediate experiences of displacement, belonging, surveillance, and resistance. What forms of solidarity, care, and political possibility emerge in these spaces? How might these embodied practices allow us to imagine alternative registers of accounting beyond “the ledger of atrocity” (El Akkad, 2025, p. 186).

Empathy and Cultural Differences in Elite Sport
Organizer: Aish Ravi, John Nauright

Elite sport environments are often characterised by high performance demands, cultural diversity, and intense public visibility. This paper presents a case study of Australian footballer Kyra Cooney-Cross during an international tournament with the Australia women's national soccer team competing in an event organised by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC). The case focuses on the period in which Cooney-Cross navigated elite competition while her mother faced a serious health situation, creating a moment where personal hardship intersected with professional sporting responsibility. Using qualitative analysis of media narratives, team responses, and public discourse, this paper explores how empathy and cultural awareness were expressed within a high-performance, multicultural sporting environment. The responses of teammates, staff, supporters, and the broader football community illustrate how collective understanding can emerge despite differences in cultural background, language, and professional role.

Sport Policy and Politics
Organizer: Kyle Rich, Larena Hoeber, Jonathon Edwards, Audrey Giles, Ann Pegoraro

Policy at the local, regional, and national level have important and wide-ranging implications for sport participation. These policies range from municipal facility policies to investments in physical education and school sport, and the development of ethics and governance frameworks that guide how sport is structured and institutionalized. However, approaches to policy vary widely across these levels, and often interact to produce experiences of complexity as practitioners and participants navigate logics related to excellence, participation, community development, safety and health. In this session, we invite papers that focus on analysis of sport policy and politics broadly defined. We welcome presentations focused on a range of policy topics, contexts, and theoretical orientations.

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Indigeneity in Sport
Organizer: Audrey Giles

Efforts to create and maintain sporting and related scholarly environments that promote equity, diversity, inclusion, and Indigeneity are under increasing threat. In this session, presenters will discuss their research and other scholarly efforts as they pertain to this area.

Teaching the Sociology of Sport
Organizer: Linda Henderson

This session is for sharing teaching tips and tricks for the Sociology of Sport. Proposals can include favourite pedagogical strategies including effective assignments and class activities.

Through their eyes: Using photovoice in Sport Management curriculum
Organizer: Katja Sonkeng, Gus Hallmon

The purpose of this session is to explore the sociocultural benefits of using photovoice within sport management education. Photovoice is a participatory method that empowers individuals to capture their experiences and perspectives through photography (Nykiforuk et al., 2011). Developed by Wang et al. (1998) to highlight social injustices faced by women in China, the benefits of photovoice are flexibility and inclusivity of participants in the research process. Photovoice has also been adopted in education as a pedagogical tool, for instance, to explore student experiences in distance learning (Tanhan et al., 2023), while Reed et al. (2024) used it in a recreation, park, and tourism course. Although the method has been widely applied in education, it is still limited in sport management curriculum. Hence, the significance of the session is to highlight the critical role that photos can play in fostering critical thinking, sociocultural awareness, and industry readiness among students.

Re-Thinking the Outdoors
Organizer: Courtney Szto; Jennifer Wigglesworth

Outdoor culture is often assumed to be inclusive because it is "free", all around us, and generally non-competitive. However, outdoor recreation is steeped in many of the same systemic issues faced by organized sports such as misogyny, racism, colonialism, ableism, fat shaming, and heterosexism. This session invites papers that encourage us to think critically about our approaches to outdoor recreation and/or provide anti-oppressive practices for emulation.

Critical Approaches to Athlete Health
Organizer: Caitlin Clarke

This panel seeks papers concerned with athlete health broadly. Emphasis on the intersection of sport sociology and medical sociology, medical anthropology, and/or critical public health is preferred. Of particular concern are the ways such participation impacts marginalized groups including BIPOC and LGBTQ+ athletes, as well as immunocompromised athletes and those with other health conditions that may be exacerbated by or created by sport participation. Specific attention to these groups is needed given the disproportionate rate of health inequities. Such concerns warrant critical and holistic approaches to athlete health. Therefore, this session invites such papers to further the conversation regarding health and sport participation, especially in relation to longterm health outcomes and/or approaching health holistically from a biosocial perspective.

Critical Perspectives on Contemporary Running Culture
Organizer: Jesse Couture

Running occupies a prominent place in contemporary physical culture, spanning recreational participation, hobbyist communities, and competitive contexts such as collegiate and professional sport. This session invites

papers that take critical perspectives on running across these settings and consider its broader social, cultural, political, and environmental implications. We welcome contributions on topics such as wearable technologies and data-driven self-tracking, social media and community formation, race tourism and sustainability, and questions of access, inclusion, labor, and belonging.

The session aims to foster dialogue about how running can cultivate connection, identity, performance, and wellbeing while also reflecting and reproducing social inequalities linked to class, gender, race, geography, and the political economy of sport. We seek interdisciplinary work that critically engages running as a complex contemporary social practice.

Sport Mega-Events and the Trump Assemblage
Organizer: Adam Beissel, Sean Seiler

Over the next decade, the United States will host several of the world's most prominent international sporting mega-events (SMEs), most notably the 2026 FIFA World Cup and the 2028 Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games. Both events unfold under Donald Trump's second administration, a political context defined by aggressive unilateralism, the systematic dismantling of long-standing trade agreements, and the fracturing of geopolitical relations and diplomatic alliances that have lasted for nearly a century. More critically, these events are set to occur as the Trump administration pursues a domestic and foreign policy agenda that generates state-sanctioned violence, strips civil liberties, and flagrantly violates human rights norms. These policies cast serious doubt on the United States' capacity to serve as a credibleand welcoming host on the world stage. Hosting the world's most-watched sporting events amid this political climate demands scholarly scrutiny. This session provides a forum for researchers examining the intersections of international SMEs, geopolitics, and human rights during the Trump milieu. Scholars are encouraged to submit both theoretical and empirical research on the governance,Over the next decade, the United States will host several of the world's most prominent international sporting mega-events (SMEs), most notably the 2026 FIFA World Cup and the 2028 Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games. Both events unfold under Donald Trump's second administration, a political context defined by aggressive unilateralism, the systematic dismantling of long-standing trade agreements, and the fracturing of geopolitical relations and diplomatic alliances that have lasted for nearly a century. More critically, these events are set to occur as the Trump administration pursues a domestic and foreign policy agenda that generates state-sanctioned violence, strips civil liberties, and flagrantly violates human rights norms. These policies cast serious doubt on the United States' capacity to serve as a welcoming host on the world stage. Hosting the world's most-watched sporting events amid this political climate demands scholarly scrutiny. This session provides a forum for researchers examining the intersections of international SMEs, geopolitics, and human rights during the Trump milieu. Scholars are encouraged to submit both theoretical and empirical research on the governance, impacts, and issues of these SME's.

Peripheral Labour? Social Reproduction in Capitalist Sport
Organizer: Jesse Porter, Priyansh

While athletic labour is often examined by sports scholars, various types and modes of essential labour embedded in capitalist sport remain underacknowledged and undertheorized. Whose labour contributes to the care, sustenance, and maintenance of participants and spaces required to train, play, and host sporting spectacles? How is sport socially reproduced in a capitalist world, and how are its processes differently experienced across racial and gendered categories? This session invites presentations that reflect on the social processes and human relations that produce sport within and beyond the playing field. Presenters are particularly encouraged to offer critical perspectives that scrutinize the hidden abodes of production and reproduction which sustain sport. Theoretical and empirical perspectives that highlight specific forms of labour unique to the world of sport are welcome, especially as an opportunity for imagining practices that can reshape the dominant forms of capitalist social relations.

Mental Health Communications in Sport
Organizer: Lauren Beasley, Natalie Bunch

Sport culture has historically stigmatized mental health (MH) due to the entrenched norms of the sport ethic, which prioritizes winning at all costs (Hughes & Coakley, 1991). Increasingly, however, athletes have used their platform to disclose MH diagnoses. Similarly, sport organizations across playing levels are partaking in MH advocacy awareness campaigns and sport media professionals are more frequently covering the intersection of sport and MH. Overall, MH communication can aid in destigmatization, increase help-seeking behaviors, and encourage dialogue (O'Reilly et al., 2019). However, such conversations must be had cautiously as there remains a risk of both glamorization of mental illness (Issaka et al., 2024) and perpetuating discourse that values athletic performance over well-being (Bunch et al., 2024). This session is accepting projects that critically explore MH communication in sport across platforms (e.g., social media, news), settings (e.g., professional, college), and actors (e.g., sport organizations, journalists, athletes) using varying theoretical/methodological perspectives.

En Comunidad: Latinx Scholars and Scholarship
Organizer: Stacey Alvarez Flores, Jorge Moraga, Jaime Morales, DCCC

What does a scholarly community look like—and how do we continue to build it? This question guides NASSS as it advances the ongoing work of (Re)Creating its culture.

Since a panel in 2022, this initiative has created a space highlighting both Latinx scholars and scholarship on Latinidad and sport. What began as a conversation has grown into a sustained effort to confront the invisibility of Latinx perspectives in critical sport studies and the underrepresentation of Latinx scholars within NASSS.

This work is ongoing—a commitment to increasing representation, fostering connection, and building en comunidad with scholars who share this vision. By amplifying the presence and impact of Latinx scholars and Latinidad-focused research, we aim to expand their presence and impact in the field.

Graduate students, junior scholars, and faculty are invited to submit work centered on Latinx sporting experiences. Presentations in English and Spanish are encouraged. This session is supported by the DCCC.

Finding Common Ground: Research in Kinesiology and Physical Education
Organizer: LeAnne Petherick, Moss Norman, Shawn Forde

Physical and Health Education (PHE) was once the cornerstone of the inter-disciplinary study of Kinesiology (KIN). Since then, PHE and KIN have had a sometimes chilly and precarious relationship, with the two fields moving in seemingly opposite directions. Nevertheless, both KIN and PHE share common ground in the promotion of physical activity, sport and active recreation across the lifespan and in diverse educational contexts (i.e., childcare centres, university, and community).
Within the current socio-political context, the role of physical and health education, policy and pedagogy can be pertinent spaces for engaging with the everyday lived realities of young people, educators, community members, and/or policy-makers. This session invites papers that share research topics related to teaching physical and health education broadly defined, including: sport, health and movement pedagogies; policy and politics in sport and education; student and teacher embodied experiences in teaching and learning; and more.

Sport as sites for social connection? Processes, practices, and possibilities
Organizer: Simon Barrick, Kristi Allain, Laura Leitch, Heather Mair

Social isolation, loneliness, and polarization remain on the rise in North America. Relatedly, scholars are paying greater attention to the role of sport and leisure in (re)building social connection amid these troubling times. In this session, we invite presenters to consider (and trouble) the integral role(s) sport and leisure can

play in building social connections across society. Social fitness and social infrastructure represent two relevant concepts receiving recent scholarly attention. Social fitness involves intentionally building relationships through sustained interactions (Glover & Kuzuoglu, 2026). Social infrastructure focuses on the various networks (e.g., spaces, facilities, institutions, and groups) that help facilitate socially connected public life (Latham & Layton, 2019; Olive & Schnioffsky, 2026). Empirical and conceptual presentations spanning varied topical, methodological, and theoretical orientations are welcome. In sum, we intend to create space for critical conversations about the processes, practices, and possibilities for sport and leisure to help foster social connection.

Understanding Sport in Global South: Governance, Competition, and Migration
Organizer: Rose Chepyator-Thomson

The purpose of the session is to provide conceptual and practical information that informs about sport in the global South in the context of sport governance structures, competition systems, and labor migration shaping policies and challenges in national sport federations and sport governing bodies. In doing so, the session moves beyond descriptive accounts to interrogate how these processes are influenced by both global governance expectations and local realities that often do not align neatly with dominant Western frameworks. The session emphasizes a more critical and comparative perspective, highlighting how sport governance, policy implementation, and athlete mobility in global South contexts are shaped by institutional pressures, resource constraints, historical legacies, and evolving stakeholder relationships. The session aims to contribute to broader conversations on power, inequality, and the global circulation of sport governance ideas while centering global South experiences as a critical site for knowledge production and theoretical advancement.

Economic, Socio-Cultural, Mental Health, and Ethical Issues Impacting College Athletics
Organizer: Robert Case

College athletics is a multi-billion dollar industry that plays a major role in society. It has been plagued by a number of issues related to the commercialization of sport, the athletic arms race, exploitation of minority athletes, NIL problems, academic integrity concerns, recruiting scandals, Title IX and gender equity dilemmas, player violence and drug use, escalation of coaching salaries, academic clustering and athlete graduation rates, sexual assault by athletes, realignment of conferences, influence of television and the media on college athletics, unionization of athletes, and the mental health of college athletes. The list goes on and on. The purpose of this session is to explore issues that impact the future of college athletics from economic, socio-cultural, economic, mental health, and/or ethical perspectives with the hope of shedding additional light on these issues and providing suggestions for their possible resolution.

Decoloniality and Physical Cultures
Organizer: Md Saidur Rahman, Janelle Joseph

Decolonial thinking has emerged as a disruptive perspective in sport sociology, bringing together previously erased, excluded, and marginalized voices, stories and knowledge. With the resurgence of critical/disruptive scholarship, there is also increasing and persistent surveillance and persecution over the bodies and minds of scholars who employ anti-colonial and anti-oppression frameworks. As decolonial scholars, we must challenge the ongoing repression, both visible and invisible, within and outside academia by producing more praxis-based knowledge that captures not only the stories of oppression but also the stories of resistance and emancipation. This session invites abstracts for oral presentations from graduate students and early-career researchers who employ decolonial theories, methods and knowledge and focus on the physical culture(s) of the racialized and marginalized communities.

Virtual

Vulnerability and Mess in Movement Cultures Research

Organizer: Daniel Uy, Tricia McGuire-Adams, Janelle Joseph

In this session we challenge the axiological underpinning of our polished/neat work by exposing our mess, missteps, omissions in our qualitative research as a way to show our vulnerabilities, humanness, and our desire to be and do better as researchers. We are interested in papers and presentations that critically examine our own identities, how they show up in research and how our learning and growth is driven also by an unlearning. Rather than hiding these parts of research work, this session encourages researchers to share their own struggles and how they shifted their research and/or future research work in order to address this. We look forward to discussing our individual and collective messes with each other.

Sport, Conflict, and the Middle East
Organizer: Umer Hussain

This thematic session invites papers that examine the role of sport in the context of contemporary crises affecting the Middle East. Far from being separate from politics and conflict, sport can reflect, reproduce, and sometimes challenge the social, cultural, and geopolitical tensions shaping the region. The session explores how sport operates amid war, displacement, occupation, authoritarianism, humanitarian emergencies, and social fragmentation, while also serving as a space for resilience, solidarity, representation, and resistance.

The session welcomes theoretical and empirical papers on the intersections of sport and the current crises in the Middle East. Contributions may address how sporting practices, institutions, mega-events, athletes, fans, and media are implicated in conflict, displacement, nationalism, diplomacy, memory, and everyday survival. We are particularly interested in work that centers local voices, critical perspectives, and underrepresented experiences across the region and its diasporas.

Post-Humanist Inquiry: The Matter and Mattering of Movement Culture
Organizer: Pirkko Markula

Following a growing interest in thinking through material practices, also research into physical culture now focuses on the connections between the human body, technology, and the environment. Drawing on multiple theoretical perspectives, this scholarship is often animated by how organic and inorganic components act in tandem in a world. According to some new materialists, however, the humanist foundation of representationalism that places the human subject at the center of investigation, is not on its own capable of engaging “the world as it really is” (Rekret, 2018, p. 50). In this session, we contribute to research on material practices in physical culture by employing post-humanist theoretical concepts grounded in the relationality of elements within specific contexts of power. We welcome papers that, using post-humanist theoretical concepts, explore the “matter and mattering” of physically active bodies and physical activity practices to map socio-materiality within culture.

Sport and the Accelerating Death of Western (e.g., Epstein) Imperialism
Organizer: Chen Chen, Anthony Weems

In the last 2.5 years, Western Imperialism (spearheaded by the U.S., its European allies, and the Zionist entity) has faced accelerating crises in both legitimacy and material domination.

The crises manifest in various ways in the sports industry. For example, international sport governing bodies (e.g., FIFA/UEFA) encountered robust challenges to their complicity in war crimes. The 2026 World Cup takes place as the U.S. wages criminal wars abroad while unleashing domestic terror. Several sport franchise owners/executives are exposed in the Epstein files, and elite, 'entrepreneurial' U.S. athletes (e.g., Stephen Curry) are found to have invested in tech companies with IOF ties.

In this moment of high stakes, this session seeks interventions that center imperialism/anti-imperialism as the analytical framework to consider, broadly, how stronger anti-imperialist movements and forces can be built in the various 'terrains' of sport (including researching, teaching, and organizing/mobilizing sport) under the belly of the beast.