



National Association for
Sport and Physical Education

an association of the American Alliance for Health,
Physical Education, Recreation and Dance

NASPE Sets the Standard

GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

Minimum Competencies for Teaching Undergraduate Sport Philosophy Courses

Purpose

Although sport philosophy is considered to be a sub-discipline with its own unique body of knowledge, sport philosophy is more commonly offered as a single course rather than a degree program. Therefore, these guidelines are offered specifically for the teaching of a single course at the undergraduate level. In order to be effective, the course must consider the specific programs offered (e.g., pedagogy, wellness, sport science, sport management, and athletic training). Further, the proposed guidelines are primarily intended for those individuals who are charged with teaching a sport philosophy course without having an extensive background in sport philosophy.

The following areas of knowledge are suggested areas of study and knowledge obtainment. The instructor/professor may not be able to cover all of the suggested areas in a semester or quarter period and therefore, the following can be viewed as a pool of knowledge domains that can be gleaned for teaching purposes.

Areas of Knowledge

Identifying the Nature of Philosophy and Sport Philosophy

- Students should understand philosophy as a formal field of study and should understand the discipline of sport philosophy.
- Students should understand how sport philosophy contributes to the practice of sport and physical education.
- Students should understand the difference between philosophy and empiricism. They should know that philosophy involves asking questions, posing challenges, and searching for deeper meanings of various issues, while empiricism involves the search for factual evidence that can be seen, heard, felt, measured, etc.
- Students should understand that being a philosopher involves contemplating the differences between the “real world,” where knowledge and truth rest in concrete material existence and the “ideal world,” where knowledge and truth rest in what the mind and spirit perceive as real.

Branches of Philosophy and Asking Philosophical Questions

- Students should understand the relationship between sport and physical education and the branches of philosophy, including metaphysics (focusing on questions about the nature of reality), epistemology (focusing on questions about what people know), and axiology (focusing on questions related to the value of things).
- Students should understand the difference between a philosophical question and an empirical question and should understand that philosophical questions can be answered from a variety of disciplines/perspectives. For example, an empirical question is asked in the form of: How does physical activity improve one's health? Or, a philosophical question is asked in the form of: What does it mean to be healthy?
- Students should be able to ask a variety of philosophical questions that span the branches of philosophy (i.e., metaphysical, axial, and epistemological). For example, a question from a metaphysical standpoint could be in the form of: How should winning be defined in an athletic contest? Or from an epistemological standpoint: How do people come to know themselves as movers? Or from an axiological standpoint: Is competition in school physical education classes a good and healthy thing for elementary age students?

Familiarity with a Variety of Philosophers of Science, Education, and Physical Education (past and present)

- Students should be familiar with philosophers of science (Galileo Galilei, Francis Bacon, Isaac Newton, Thomas Hobbes), education (Jean Jacques Rousseau, Johan Bernhard Basedow, John Dewey), and physical education (J. B. Nash, Jessie Feiring-Williams, Charles McCloy, Rosalind Cassidy, and Eleanor Methany). Students should also understand how the works of these philosophers are significant to issues in sport and physical education (e.g., conceptualizations of exercise science and/or the purposes, outcomes, and educational strategies used in physical education and sport).

Identifying the Importance of Sport and Physical Education to the Educational Process

- Students should gain an understanding of why physical education should be valued equally with other academic disciplines.
- Students should be familiar with arguments for and against physical education as a valuable discipline and should understand why sport and physical education can be viewed as playing an integral role in the educational process.
- Students should be familiar with the history of sport and physical education as it relates to the changing values and philosophies in sport and physical education

(e.g., from the late 1800s to the present time a variety of philosophies for physical education were seen in the United States including gymnastics philosophies, the new physical education, the fair-play philosophy, human movement philosophies, fitness philosophies, and lifetime/wellness philosophies).

The Discipline of Physical Education: Understanding the Difference Between the Professional Discipline and the Academic Discipline

- Students should be familiar with the historical debate between the academic and professional disciplines of physical education (i.e., Is the purpose of the discipline of physical education to generate new “scientific” knowledge to advance the academic discipline or to generate “applied knowledge” to serve the public’s need for school physical education and/or sport opportunities?).
- Students should have an understanding of why physical education has been renamed with new identifiers such as *exercise science*, *human movement*, *sport science*, and *kinesiology*.

Mind versus Body Argument

- Students should understand the “mind versus body” argument and how this argument is: (1) historically tied to the philosophies of sport and physical education endorsed by the Greeks and Ancient Romans (with a key focus on the philosophical thinking of Plato and Aristotle) and (2) significant to sport and physical education in that modern day practices often extend from dualistic and holistic thinking about the mind and body.
- Students should understand the various ways in which our society thinks from a dualistic perspective (e.g., viewing sports competition as part mental and part physical; measuring physical fitness solely in terms of the components of fitness represent dualistic ways of thinking about the mind and body).
- Students should develop a familiarity with various types of dualistic and holistic arguments, such as whether the body can be trained and/or educated without impacting the mind and vice-versa. Another example is how a holistic argument of education can be used to establish a place for school physical education.

Identifying Games and Play and its Significance to Society

- Students should understand the philosophical difference between games and play.
- Students should understand the cultural significance of games and play and understand how games and play fit within the framework of physical education, sport, and lifespan physical activity.

Minimum Competencies for Teaching Sport Philosophy (cont.)

- Students should understand games and play as they relate to designing physical education and sport opportunities for individuals at different developmental times and places (e.g., elementary school physical education vs. youth sport, vs. collegiate sport, vs. adult recreational sport).

The Role of Society in Sport

- Students should understand the importance of considering societal values in relationship to their philosophical thinking. For example, how does one have their personal philosophy accepted by an institution or society?
- Students should understand how societal values can affect the practice of sport and physical education (e.g., the win-at-all cost model that is frequently used in sport or the strong emphasis that is placed on science in physical education).

Identifying the Difference Between Intrinsic and Extrinsic Values

- Students should understand that people value participation in physical education and sport for different reasons. These reasons may be intrinsically driven (e.g., “I participate in sport because it makes me feel good” or “I participate because I enjoy being outside”) or externally driven (e.g., “I participate because I like to win” or “I participate to burn calories or lose weight”).
- Students should understand the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic values in sport and physical education and know how physical education and sport contribute to the “good life” of its participants in multiple, yet highly personal ways.
- Students should understand how helping students and athletes recognize the intrinsic and/or extrinsic value of participation is important to the promotion and enjoyment of physical education and sport.

Ethical Aspects of Sport

- Students should understand ethics and ethical theories such as *universality*, *paternalism*, *teleological ethics*, and *deontological ethics*.
- Students should be familiar with a variety of ethical issues in sport (e.g., *intimidation*, *illicit performance enhancing drugs*, *commercialization in college athletics*, *burnout and dropout*, *sportsmanship*, and *gender equity*).

General Skills As a Result of Knowledge

- The ability to read and comprehend philosophical writings.
- The ability to critically and philosophically examine significant issues in sport and physical education.

Minimum Competencies for Teaching Sport Philosophy (cont.)

- The ability to cogently argue (verbal and written) for or against a variety of issues in sport and physical education.
- The ability to offer new viewpoints on competitive and/or educational practices in sport and physical education in order to ultimately improve practices in sport and physical education.
- The ability to rationalize and defend physical education as having equal value with other academic disciplines and as being integral to the general educational process.
- The ability to make sound ethical decisions relative to educational and sport processes and practices.

Examples of Class Activities

- Lecture—branches of philosophy and their relationship to sport.
- Role-play—role-playing a famous philosopher of science, education and/or physical education.
- Small group discussions—discuss various philosophical issues in sport (e.g., running up the score, steroid use in professional baseball, cutting in high school athletics, taunting as a form of gamesmanship, strategies for promoting physical activity).
- Debates—topics such as running up the score in competition, the use of ergogenic aids to gain a performance advantage, the meaning of the word “win” in athletic contests, the value of high school athletics, the purposes of physical education, intrinsic versus extrinsic values in sport and physical education, personal philosophies for teaching physical education and/or coaching sport, and games versus play approach in promoting physical activity across the lifespan.
- Research papers—topics such as ergogenic aids, Title IX issues, character development in sport, racism in sport, unethical behavior from parents in youth sports, physical inactivity and obesity, historical developments in the philosophy of physical education and sport.
- Position papers—controversial topics (see topics on class debates).
- Videos—interviews with coaches such as Bobby Knight, documentaries (Real Sports with Bryant Gumbel), and movies (Everybody’s All- American, Rollerball, Any Given Sunday, Junction Boys).
- Field Trips—go to a sporting event or visit with a coach or athletic department.

Minimum Competencies for Teaching Sport Philosophy (cont.)

- Guest speaker-topics of interest (e.g., steroid use).
- Student Involvement-encourage students to submit papers to scholarly journals.

Suggested Textbooks

Charles, J. M. (2002). Introduction to humans moving: A guide to philosophy in action. Champaign, IL: Stipes Publishing L.L.C.

Drewe, S. (2001). Socrates, sport, and students: A philosophical inquiry into physical education and sport. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

Holowchak, M. A. (Ed.). (2002). Philosophy of sport: Critical readings, crucial issues. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Kretchmar, R. S. (1994) Practical philosophy of sport. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Loland, S. (2002). Fair play in sport: A moral norm system. London: Routledge.

Mechikoff, R., & Estes, S. (2002). A history and philosophy of sport and physical education: From ancient civilization to the modern world (3rd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Metheny, E. (1968). Movement and meaning. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Morgan, W., Meier, K., & Schneider, A. (2001). Ethics in sport. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Simon, R. L. (1991). Fair play: Sport values & society. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Vanderwerken, D. L. (1990). Sport in the classroom: Teaching sport-related courses in the humanities. London; Cranbury, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.

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