A. GE component for which course is being proposed: Understanding Society

B. Submitted by Tom Knecht

C. Ideally, submissions should be discussed by the entire department prior to submittal.
   Chair has reviewed and approved the course.

D. Course being proposed (please attach syllabus): The Politics of Sports

E. This course
   - Has not been modified, but is being submitted to check its suitability
   - Has had its syllabus rewritten to communicate the course’s contribution to GE
   - Has had its contents modified to address the relevant GE issues
   X Is a new course designed to fulfill the GE requirement

F. This course is being submitted as
   - A Template. Applicable to courses with multiple sections which require only general training in the discipline. The submission should come from the department chair and should clearly identify what course content and what elements of the syllabus the department has agreed will common to all sections. Upon approval by the GE Committee, any course whose syllabus is determined by the department to meet the specifications of the template is approved to satisfy this area requirement. A copy of each syllabus should be forwarded to the G.E. committee for record keeping purposes.
   X An Individual Course. Applicable to courses requiring specialized training in the discipline or are typically offered by a particular instructor. The course should be resubmitted and reassessed in the event of a change in staffing or syllabus.

Statement of rationale:
(Please attach a copy of the syllabus which has been annotated (a) to identify the activities fulfilling each of the expectations for courses in this area and (b) to explain how the activity addresses the expectation. Electronic annotations are preferred. Please use the comment feature in Word to annotate electronic copies.)

A growing trend in the liberal arts has been to explore issues of intersectionality within an interdisciplinary framework. The Politics of Sport is part of this trend, drawing on literature from political science, kinesiology, sociology, economics and history. There are a number of reasons why this course would be a constructive addition to the understanding society general education requirement. First, it is clear that athletics are highly politicized. In this past month, Barack Obama has flown to Copenhagen to unsuccessfully lobby for Chicago’s bid for the 2016 Olympic Games; the Supreme Court has been asked to rule on whether the Washington Redskins nickname is offensive to Native Americans; and the Dallas Cowboys played their first home game in a stadium that
cost the taxpayers of Arlington, Texas almost $1 billion. In short, we are hard-pressed to find any segment of the sporting world that operates independently of political oversight.

Second, athletics are often seen as a “first-mover” for many of the large social and political changes in the United States. For instance, racial attitudes in the U.S. began changing around the time of Jackie Robinson’s breaking of the color barrier in professional baseball; it is often said that the South was integrated only after Alabama football coach Bear Bryant began recruiting African-American players; and the passage of Title IX helped move American society toward greater gender equality, at least in the realms of high school and college athletics.

Finally, we live in a society that often privileges sports over politics. For instance, a recent Pew survey showed that while 62 percent of the American public knew of Indianapolis Colts quarterback Peyton Manning, only 15 percent could identify Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid. For some students, this class may be one of the few times they will engage with politics. Therefore, it is a great responsibility to try to get students as excited about politics as they are about sports. Learning about anti-trust legislation, the commerce clause of the Constitution, congressional committees, and the Supreme Court’s mandate of original jurisdiction is as fun as watching paint dry; however, learning about these exact same issues within the context of baseball free agency and A-Rod’s $275 million dollar contract is pretty interesting. In sum, we believe students will come to this GE course for the sports, but will stay for the politics.