

# CHAPTER TWENTY ONE

## TEACHING OLYMPISM IN THE USA

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Olympism is defined under the seven fundamental principles, within the Olympic Charter's subheading "Fundamental Principles of Olympism". The first two are of primary importance for the purposes of this chapter:

1. Olympism is a philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and mind. Blending sport with culture and education, Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy of effort, the educational value of good example, social responsibility and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles.
2. The goal of Olympism is to place sport at the service of the harmonious development of humankind, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity.

(IOC, Olympic Charter 2011, p. 10)

In the Modern era, Olympism as a concept and educational philosophy was conceived by Baron Pierre de Coubertin, who had the initiative to hold an International Athletic Congress in Paris in June 1894. Olympism is an educational philosophy that is being taught in various forms and under a plethora of methodologies in different levels of education throughout the world.

The objective of this chapter is to identify those individuals who are or have contributed to - (the) teaching (of) - Olympism in academia. Included in 'teaching Olympism in academia' the author considers any programme, be it a study abroad programme, an elective course, a workshop / presentation or a course as part of a major field of study in any institution of Higher Education in the United States of America (USA). A study of this type has never been conducted in the USA -or at least to our knowledge in the past decade- and hence we were not able to find previous literature on that specifically. The first time ever that Olympism was potentially discussed in the USA would have been during Pierre de Coubertin's first visit to the USA, in our very own academic metropolis of Boston, when in 1889 a Conference on Physical Training was held at MIT, which was described as a more scientifically rigorous and far-reaching gathering of minds. It is known however that the emphasis at the time was more on hygiene and less on education (Lucas, 1989; Wassong, 2005). But even so a hypothesis that this occasion might have been the first time ever that Baron de Coubertin discussed his ideas on Olympism can be sound albeit not grounded in research. What can be asserted with confidence though is something that Psimopoulos (in press) has documented and pointed out first in a separate publication, namely that the first reference to the term "Olympic Education" within the United States of America was documented in 1948, as part of the official report by the Vice-President of the (then USOA; currently USOC) United States Olympic Association Mr. Kenneth Wilson. In his report on the American team during the London 1948 Olympic Games, Mr. Wilson had stated that:

In trying to analyse carefully our work, I think the most appalling failure is our lack of Olympic education to the youth of America."

USOC, 1948, p. 42

He went on to say that:

...a most valuable work of Olympic education could be promulgated {...} and if we could only by close cooperation and working through an executive officer disseminate Olympic material and information, it would become a great national interest to everyone...

USOC, 1948, p. 42

How current this national interest sounds(!); it can only make us wonder what do those who, according to an official US Congressional Act (1950), have exclusive jurisdiction over the use of the Olympic symbols (Barney et al, 2002) do regarding the educational value of Olympism?

Currently the only institution in which Olympic education is part of the training / professional preparation of sport coaches is at the United States Sports Academy (USSA), in which Olympism is being taught at all three levels (B.S in Sport Studies, M.S. in Sport Studies and Ed.D with a concentration on Olympism). The last time the United States Olympic Academy (USOA) invited participants for a national conference was in 2005; its mission somehow defined Olympic education and -among others- included the following statement:

The United States Olympic Academy (USOA) is principally a forum for Olympic education, but it also presents an opportunity for interaction with like-minded people from throughout the United States, and access to a network of influential people in the Olympic Movement. (USOA, 2005, p. 2)

Upon reviewing the scarce literature on the teaching of Olympism in the US, the author had originally made three assumptions. The first one is that since there is no active National Olympic Academy (NOA) in the US (Given that the last meeting held at Ithaca College in 2005), any work on the education of educators or professors in academia since would have to be conducted at the International Olympic Academy (IOA) or another NOA (i.e. the BOA in the UK). To further inform this first assumption, the complete list of participants and lecturers at the IOA since its foundation in 1961 was reviewed, to see how many professors or individuals from the USA had been invited (especially in the last three decades) and thus get an idea of who would have been qualified to teach Olympism or contribute to the teaching of Olympism at American institutions of higher education. The emphasis was on identifying specifically which of them would still be active today, in some -or collaborating with an- institution. For this purpose, a survey was created and sent out to all the individuals who had been invited as presenters (lecturers) at the IOA and whose contact (email) information was available.

Of the 59 lectures on Olympism, and the 110 on Olympic Education during the last three decades (80s, 90s and 2000-2005) that there was data for, ten lecturers from the USA have presented nineteen of them (Koulouri & Georgiadis, 2007). Of those lecturers, nine were contacted initially with an additional sixteen individuals who had been identified upon a different review of academic programs throughout the US (Table 1) and two more that were added upon the conclusion of the survey. Of those twenty-five total individuals representing sixteen States, eighteen responded to the questionnaire. Among those was an Olympic Champion, one Paralympian, two members of Pre-Olympic teams and an IOC Commission member.

<b>Table 1.</b>		<b>Professors /Faculty members / Directors teaching -and or involved with- Olympism in the USA</b>		
First Name	Last Name	Institution	State	Notes
Brownell	Susan	University of Missouri-St. Louis	MO	IOA lecturer

Gaudreau	Brian	U of Northern Michigan	MI	USOEC
Hamakawa	Kurt	Western New England U	MA	Director of the Center for International Sports
Hanley	Elizabeth “Betz”	Penn State	PA	Professor Emerita, IOA, IOAPA
Herzfeld	Michael	Harvard	MA	IOA lecturer
Hunt	Thomas	U Texas Austin	Texas	OSC Center
Kaplanidou	Kyriaki “Kiki”	U Florida	FL	IOC Grant Recipient
Kyle	Donald	U Texas - Arlington	TX	IOA lecturer
Lucas †	John	Penn State	PA	IOA lecturer – Has since passed away
Lynch	James "Mick"	Florida Southern College	FL	USOC Volunteer and IOA & IOAPA participant
Lyras	Alexis	Georgetown	DC (Formerly at Louisville, KY)	IOA Lecturer & liaison for American Universities Relations, O4H Founder
MacAloon	John	U Chicago	IL	IOA lecturer
Mechikoff	Robert	San Diego State U	CA	IOA Lecturer, Life Member of the International Society of Olympic Historians
Miller	Steven	Berkeley	CA	IOA lecturer
Mosher	Stephen	Ithaca College	NY	
Psimopoulos	Constantine	MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)	MA	IOA participant, presenter & liaison for American Universities Relations
Reid	Heather	Morningside College	Iowa	IOA lecturer
Rosandich	Thomas, P.	USSA	AL	IOA lecturer & Member of IOC Commission on Culture and Olympic Education
Rosandich	Thomas, T.J.	USSA	AL	IOA Participant & Vice President and Chief Academic Officer, United States Sports Academy
Ryan	Patrick	Syracuse University	NY	Added upon the survey was completed
Segrave	Jeffrey	Skidmore College	NY	
Sheasgreen	Bill	Ithaca College	NY	London UK
Todd	Terry & Jan	U Texas Austin	Texas	OSC Co-Directors

Young	David	U Florida	FL	Olympic Book of the Year Award Recipient, IOA lecturer
Velley	Michael	Syracuse University	NY	Added upon the survey was completed
Wallechinsky	David	Not affiliated - Independent scholar	CA	IOA lecturer, commentator for NBC Olympic coverage
Wolff	Eli	Brown University	MA	OSC Director & Paralympian

The second assumption that the author made was that since there is no national curriculum for Olympic Education in the school system of the USA, nor an Olympic Education curriculum being taught in school districts with the exception of Daryl Siedentop’s ‘Sport Education Model’, with its special reference to ‘The Olympic Curriculum’ under the title ‘Quality PE through positive sport experiences’ (1994) as Naul has also pointed out (2010), there are no programmes who prepare physical education or classroom teachers to be qualified to teach Olympism in K-12 schools. It is interesting to note at this point what one of the respondents stated "...About 20 years ago Dr. Herb Weinberg put together an entire curriculum on Olympism and Olympic Studies to be housed in a college or university and named University / College of Coubertin". The latter piece of information was not independently confirmed or verified as there were no records or archived material that could be traced. What is known again is from Psimopoulos’ (in press) review on Olympic Education in the USA, in which he purports that in the 90s and the past decade, Olympic Education curricula were created with the opportunity of the 1996 Atlanta Games entitled 'Olympic Day in the Schools' and more recently, the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Games which introduced 'REACH: A Teacher's Guide to the Olympic Winter Games and the Paralympic Winter Games of 2002.' Psimopoulos (in press) goes on to say that nothing further has taken place in terms of an official national publication, conference, or formal effort by any authority on Olympic education, other than one final session of the United States Olympic Academy in June of 2005 at Ithaca, New York (USOA, 2005, pp 1-5).

The third assumption is that since the USOC does not provide educational sessions on Olympism for educators, the only opportunity for individuals who would like to be involved with and/or study the Olympic Movement would be through random programmes that are offered at American institutions. Of the responses received, there were some very interested suggestions that were further analysed, in an attempt to compare and contrast pertinent information ultimately seeking to make meaning of the common themes and report those findings.

Some of the respondents expressed their rather harsh criticism towards the stance the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) has had regarding the existence or continuation of a United States National Olympic Academy (USNOA), something that can be depicted in the two quotes below:

There should be a place where scholars, media professionals, athletes and other interested entities can meet to advance the goals and ideals of Olympism. However, the USOC has been focused on athletic success and the promotion of nationalism; educational enrichment and the goals of Baron de Coubertin...are not of interest to the USOC.

(Quote from Professor X and IOA Lecturer)

Without such an effort, the USOC offers indisputable evidence that it cares not at all about Olympism and only for money and medals.

(Quote from Professor Y)

Another participant was reminiscent of the days that the USNOA –called USOA back then- was active and indicated the following:

We once had a thriving NOA which served the Olympic Games in America very well. The NOA held annual meetings across the country and like the IOA served as an important conduit through which to consider significant issues in sport and the Olympic Games. As one of the preeminent nations within the Olympic community it seems strange that we do not currently have a thriving NOA, as many countries, especially some of the European countries, do. A healthy NOA offers countless opportunities for delegates to consider the myriad issues and problems that confront sport in culture and serves as a powerful organ for the dissemination and discussion about the Olympic Movement

(Quote from Professor Z and IOAPA member)

It is also critical to note that all of the respondents indicated that the USNOA should be revived, and should assume a very essential role and functions that could include the following:

Organisationally, it would be nice if it could be based to some extent on the IOA model. It would be nice to think that, like the IOA and many European NOAs, it could get federal/state support but it could and should certainly get USOC support. After all, the USOC is the wealthiest NOC within the Olympic Movement. I would imagine a typical structure to include Pres, VP, Treasurer, etc, plus perhaps a combination of duly elected and appointed board members (representatives of affiliate organisations, including, for example, the USOC, NCAA, NAASH, etc.) to oversee operations and programming. As an organisation, it should sponsor annual meetings (held as they once were peripatetically) that should consider significant issues in sport and the Olympic Movement, sponsor scholarship and creative work, sponsor delegates to attend IOA meetings, disseminate information about the Olympic Movement, and publish newsletters and the like. It should have affiliation with the IOA and the USOC and perhaps even representation on the USOC but it should not be an organ of the USOC and hence subject to USOC and sponsor politics and agendas. The greatest strength of the IOA is that it is free to subject the issues of sport, including Olympic Games' issues, to serious interrogation and debate. It would seem appropriate to locate the USOA at one the 4 national Olympic Centres such as Lake Placid.

(Quote from Professor W)

A synopsis –in bullets- of the recommendations from the question ‘*what should a revived United States National Olympic Academy (USNOA) look like? - You may discuss organisational structure, content, activities, objectives, location and affiliations*’ can be found in the points below:

- ✓ {...} the most difficult part of teaching Olympism is what we include into the discussed topics, themes, etc. Very often the content is in line with our interests and politics becoming involved immediately. Keeping the integrity of a USNOA will be the greatest challenge to be faced. I would recommend keeping a very honest, value based, and open minded attitude towards topics and content.
- ✓ It should be a university-level teaching mechanism, offering a condensed and properly pitched version to all sorts of persons presently engaged or seeking to be engaged in any way in making Olympic sport in this country.
- ✓ It should be run by an independent board of academics, Olympics researchers, and educationists commissioned by the USOC but given real autonomy.
- ✓ Attendance of USOC personnel as students should be a mandatory condition of work and professional development.
- ✓ It should invite speakers, host symposia and conferences, rotating around different universities, Olympic studies centres or regions, send newsletters, and collaborate with the IOA; but above all, promote Olympism in K-12 schools and colleges and universities, organise study abroad trips to Olympia and encourage American students to volunteer in the Olympic Games.

The participants of the preliminary survey were informed that one of the International Olympic Academy's (IOA) goals is to promote the possibility for study abroad trips or educational programs at the IOA in Olympia Greece for American university students, tailored around their specific interests regarding Olympism, or make them specific to academic programmes. In the question whether they would recommend their students to go to such a trip in the near future, every single one of the respondents indicated that they would.

As a result of this unanimous need and support for such an endeavour, Dr. Alexis Lyras from Georgetown University has initiated a new programme entitled “Olympism 4 Humanity - Olympic Education, Scholarship & Praxis”. O4H (abbreviated) is co-hosted by the International Olympic Academy and the Conflict Resolution Program of the Department of Government at Georgetown University, and aspires to become a global venture with an aim to advance Olympism, Peacebuilding and International Development Scholarship and Practice. The first initiative of O4H was the Olympia Praxis Summer Programme, a professional development training opportunity held in Ancient Olympia, Greece from June 23-July 3, 2013.

As an outcome of this exhaustive review, a list with all the courses that are or have been taught at the university level was compiled. This list can be found in table 2 below.

<b>Table 2.</b>	<b>Does your institution currently offer a course, workshop or seminar on Olympism?</b>	
1	Olympism and Society	Brown University
2	SPMM 39700 The Olympic Games	Ithaca College
3	Online course, Anthropology 1051, The Olympic Games: Ideals and Reality; Anthropology 1021, The Anthropology of Sport	University of Missouri-St. Louis
4	7 courses on Olympic Education as a vehicle of Peace and Development, undergraduate, Masters, PhD Seminar, and study abroad.	Georgetown University
5	21A.278 - Cultures of Sport and the Olympics	MIT (New course)
6	311 Philosophical Foundations of the Olympic Games	Morningside College
7	LS2 133 The Olympic Games	Skidmore College
8	PED 399 Olympic Education	The Sage Colleges (Offered in 2011)
9	SAB 622 - Structure and Function of the Olympic Games	United States Sports Academy
10	SAB 651 - Current Issues in the Olympic Movement	United States Sports Academy
11	SAB 667 – Olympism	United States Sports Academy
12	SPMN 250: Managing Sport Organizations	Western New England University
13	Conference on Law, Policy and the Olympic Movement	Ithaca College (London Centre, UK)

14	HIST 3380-001 - Ancient Sport History	U Texas - Arlington
15	Olympic Odyssey	Syracuse University

### *Epilogue*

If the question is ‘Are educators in the United States purposefully preparing students in colleges and universities, and/or are sport coaches and physical educators doing the same so their student-athletes will appreciate, live by the Olympic values and understand how to be heroes who will leave a legacy not only for the content of their Olympic medal karat but also for the content of their character as Olympians’ then unfortunately the answer might either be ‘Not Really’ or ‘Not at all’.

As the London Olympic Games has found a place in the annals of history and as great American sports heroes or onetime superathletes are demythologised, dethroned and even demoralised (i.e. most recently the case of 2000 Sydney Games –formerly- Bronze Olympian and -formerly- 7 time Tour De France winner Lance Armstrong), then what can the American and the global community possibly expect to see in the years to come? As an optimist and a visionary, the author shall conclude with what he envisions to be a positive note. What we might hopefully (with the aid of structured, creative, and quality Olympic education programmes in the USA) expect to see could be a rejuvenated and reinstated United States National Olympic Academy (Da Matta & Psimopoulos, 2012), an active United States National Pierre de Coubertin Committee, Youth Olympians becoming role models for all future Olympians, and American sports culture as a whole reflecting less on scoreboards, sponsorships and winning at all costs mentalities and more on values, personal and social responsibility and ‘hysteroemia’ {posthumous legacy of character}.

Finally, a quote from the Secretary of the then USOA Mr. Thomas Lennon could not have been more timely:

{...} The time to institute such a plan is at hand, and I earnestly beseech all of you who have devoted so much of your time and energy to this great cause to give some thought to the Olympic education of the youth of America, because in the acceptance of the principles of the Games, we are helping mold strength and ideals of sportsmanship and character in our future citizens.

USOC, 1948, p. 43

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*I WOULD LIKE TO DEDICATE THIS CHAPTER TO MY NEWBORN SON SPIRO*

*A preliminary version of the study that lead to the collection of data for the publication of this chapter was conducted by the author and assisted by Eli Wolff in May-July 2012, and parts of it were presented by the first author at the International Pierre De Coubertin Committee at Canterbury Christ Church University, Kent, UK. on August 3<sup>rd</sup> under the title “Teaching Olympism in American Universities”. The author would like to acknowledge and thank Eli Wolff for his contribution to the earlier project.*

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