American Studies Professors: The Athletes Behind the Podium

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American Studies has the reputation of being the “jock” major on campus. To simplify matters for any athlete or sports fan trying to choose an American Studies class, I’ve taken the liberty of comparing some well-known American Studies professors with some well-known athletes.

Jeffrey Abramson- Allen Iverson. Simply amazing…when you can find him. Between Harvard, Brandeis, and writing books this guy logs fewer minutes on campus than a Brandeis athlete. The only difference between Prof. Abramson and Iverson is that when Abramson disappears you know he is doing something productive and not getting arrested; heck, even if he is getting arrested, he can argue his way out. Regardless of where he is, get him in the classroom and students literally weep after listening to him lecture; that’s the Brandeis equivalent of “street cred.”

Jerry Cohen- Charles Barkley. Sir Charles is missing the championship ring, Jerry Cohen is missing the hair; both things are impossible to achieve at this point. And talk about physical resemblance, if you look close enough, you may mistake one for the other. But size and stature aside, he might talk about himself and go off on long tangents, but don’t ever say Prof. Cohen doesn’t know his stuff. His Lone Assassin argument makes Oliver Stone look about as credible as Oliver Miller’s last dietician. Like the Chuckster, you might love him or hate him, but you will always be curious to hear what he has to say. I’m just waiting for him to throw a student through his office window.

Michael Socolow- Charles Oakley. He’s a little quirky in class, his technological knowledge is limited, and he’s probably the last guy you want to run into on a bad day. While the Cohens and Abramsons might get more attention, Prof. Socolow is the one who steadies the department. This work horse literally runs the journalism program by himself and judging by the increasing number of students enrolled in his classes, people are starting to take notice. Oh, and don’t discount his deceptiveness. Oakley could barely jump off the ground but he would somehow manage to grab ten boards a game; Socolow can barely turn on a computer in class, but he responds to my emails within five seconds. He might average a call to ITS each week but he knows his role and does it better than anyone else.

Tom Doherty- Ron Artest. Most teachers either assign a lot of work or grade tough; Prof. Doherty does both. Doing extra work in the library then double checking if your essay is MLA-acceptable is like being pressured on both ends of the floor. On the other hand, he has a plethora of extracurriculars. Doherty might not be promoting “Allure,” but he’s written numerous books and appeared on networks such as PBS. But talk about intensity: my class didn’t know the answer to a question and I could have sworn that he was about to jump into the seats and start throwing haymakers. After November we all know that being hit with a beverage is enough to set Ron off, and for those wondering what drives Doherty nuts, don’t ever open a bag of Kettle Chips in his class… seriously.

Stephen Whitfield- Reggie Miller. First, just look at their body types: pure skin and bones. Then there’s the form. I have never seen anyone over the age of 14 hold a lecture stance like Prof. Whitfield: arms flying all over the place, tripping over his own feet… I think I even heard his voice crack once. But the man has perfected his unorthodox technique. Just when you think that your attention is spent with 2 minutes left in class, it’s Whitfield time. Reggie hit 8 points in 10 seconds, I’ve seen Whitfield name AND spell out the names of every person who was at Watergate before class ends. Any student who packs up early before writing down Jeb Magruder definitely will be kicking himself the next day.

Your American Studies Faculty All-Star Team

“My crossover into the American Studies Department has been known to break the ankles and hearts of the Politics Department.”

“My resemblance to the Round Mound of Rebound is uncanny. I might not be able to rebound, but the round mound part fits the bill.”

“How do you log onto this computer? I am going to need a volunteer to run down to ITS for me.”

“Kettle Chips are my nemesis. If you thought the Detroit Brawl was bad, I dare you to open a bag in my class.”

“I always come through in crunch time. In the waning moments of class, it’s Whitfield Time.”