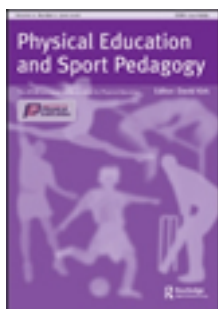


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## Aligning Olympic education with the liberal arts: a curriculum blueprint from Taiwan

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*Background:* For some time the Olympics have enjoyed a relatively cosy, and quite unsurprising, relationship with Physical Education and its practitioners. Yet, as academics continue their critiques of all matters Olympic, this seemingly symbiotic partnership is being placed under much closer scrutiny. The debates are typically orientated around several key concerns, namely, the vagaries of Olympic discourse, the implicit assumptions that align Olympic idealism with 'good' moral education, the relevance of Olympic values in young peoples' lives, the Olympic industry's politicizing/colonizing of educational domains, and the utility of Olympic ideals for affecting social, cultural, and (physical) educational change. One other discussion thread, which we add to in this paper, has been the (in)congruencies between Olympic idealism and non-Western cultural contexts and educational frameworks. Combined, the scholarly voices essentially encourage theorists and practitioners to approach the relationship between education and the Olympics with care.

*Context and curriculum overview:* Cognizant of these contentions, this paper exhibits an Olympic education curriculum for first-year undergraduate students enrolled within a provincial Taiwanese University's Liberal Arts programme. We detail three tentative themes around which an Olympic education curriculum might be constructed: Peace, Multiculturalism, and Global sensibilities. These particular themes are concomitant with Olympic idealism, but also align with contemporary East Asian Liberal Arts frameworks. In our curriculum design, the emphasis is on developing an Olympic education that not only introduces students to broader global ideas (e.g. universality and cosmopolitan citizenry), but that respects and reflects national/localized specificities (e.g. Asian philosophical traditions and their legacies in educational institutions).

*Considerations:* The paper stresses the need to further Olympic debates outside the traditional domains of sport and Physical Education, and continue the challenge to Western-orientated sport pedagogies. Our intention is to create a strong cross-cultural study Olympic-inspired Liberal Arts programme that may better link tertiary students in Taiwan with key sport institutions in East Asia, and also throughout the wider communities around the world. We envision aspects of our course material may hopefully serve as a useful reference for other teachers and provide a blueprint for future curricula that might challenge Western-Olympic education orientations.

**Keywords:** Olympic education; Liberal Arts education; Olympism; East Asia; Taiwan

### Introduction

At the Olympic Congress in Prague in 1925 Frenchman Pierre de Coubertin, protagonist of the modern Olympic Movement, pronounced that the future of civilization would not rest

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on political or economic foundations.<sup>1</sup> Rather, Coubertin proclaimed, it would depend primarily on the educational orientations that countries would institute (1925, 1935). From Coubertin's view, the missions of the Olympic Movement were not just to organize the Olympic Games, but also to educate youth about the positive values of sports and to promote Olympism around the world (Binder 2001; Chatziefstathiou 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2012; Culpan and Wigmore 2010; DaCosta 2010; Wigmore 1999, 2007). More recently, the current Olympic Charter (2011) issued by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) states the following prime principles:

- (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.

Within the Olympic Charter education is afforded a significant space. The educative principles of the Charter, for instance, form a significant part of Olympic Games organizers' missions. For example, according to the official report on Beijing's Olympic Education Programs, during the Beijing Olympiad (2004–2008), China's 400 million youth (including 230 million students and the 2 million primary, secondary, and college students in Beijing) studied Olympic knowledge in a planned, organized, and systematic way. Beijing's Olympic education programme – which was premised on simultaneously showcasing Chinese heritage and values, and promoting cultural diversity, inclusion, and international exchange – was (unsurprisingly) heralded by the national government as a remarkable success (Beijing Olympic Education Standing Office 2010). Notwithstanding the veracity of such claims, the proliferation of resources throughout the country demonstrates the continued efforts being made to promote Olympic education and its causes. Other Asian countries (e.g. Japan, Korea, and Taiwan, for instance) have, too, also emulated China's approach to capitalize on the Olympic Games and use the event as a catalyst for educational initiatives (Bahng 2004; Hsu and Ferstl 2010; Ren 2004; Sanada 2004).<sup>2</sup>

The Beijing Olympic Games also inspired similar initiatives abroad. In New Zealand, Kohe (2010) points out, the Beijing Olympics prompted educationalists to develop new curriculum material. Although Olympic host cities and nations have been quite prolific in espousing the merits of Olympic education as part of their Olympic Games promotion, rigorous, and needed, critique has been slower to emerge (Kohe 2010; Naul 2008). Further developments in Olympic education, and in particular promotion of its cross-cultural/international dimensions, however, have occurred more recently in relation to the London 2012 Olympic Games. The London 2012 Olympic Games (concomitant with the insatiable desires of the academic publishing industry) provided a considerable impetus and focal point for a concentration of educational activity and scholarship examining Olympic learning legacies, their genesis, evolutions, and pedagogical consequences. In one of the most recent editions of *Educational Review*, for example, researchers across the broad church of socio-cultural and education studies investigated the often un-critical acceptance of Olympic education and its idealistic glorification across the globe (though predominantly in the UK, USA, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia). In many of these countries, Lenskyj contends, curricula have been constructed 'with a focus on the generally

unquestioned value of Olympism as a key tool in character-building and moral education' (2012, 265). Moreover, in some cases (such as in New Zealand and the UK), Olympic education has been (m)aligned with the objectives, aims, and agendas of neo-liberal national curriculum frameworks. Lenskyj has called for progressive educators to challenge the ever-tightening grip of the Olympic industry hegemony which currently is afforded a privileged, right-of-way on moral/ideological pedagogical programmes in schools, colleges, and higher education institutions.

The call to adopt a rigorous approach to the conception, development, implementation, and critique of Olympic education has also been furthered by a few others. Teetzel (2012), for instance, stresses that educators

are advised to avoid perpetuating the belief that all aspects of the Olympic Games are going to be equitable, fair, and ethical; instead they are cautioned to introduce and engage in discussions with students about Olympism and the Olympic values in more critical and nuanced ways. (317)

Yet, Olympic education often transcends the formal classroom setting. In other sport settings, practitioners are employing the ideas and concepts of Olympism and the Olympic Movement to educate, inspire, motivate, and encourage individuals, groups, and communities. Barker et al. (2012), for example, are particularly sceptical of the incorporation of 'Olympic' ideals (at the most basic level proselytizing a narrow interpretation of moral and ethically 'pure' sports practices) in elite athlete training regimes. Yet, the challenge is difficult. As various scholars have argued, Olympism contains a variety of moral values worth of critique (see Binder 2001, 2012; Chatziefstathiou 2012; Culpan and Wigmore 2010; Hsu 2008; Jones 2008; Lenskyj 2004; Parry 1999; Teetzel 2012; Wigmore 1999, 2007). Those working with elite athletes, for example, Barker et al. (2012) contend, 'should make discursive discontinuities in sport explicit, reflect on traditional views of sport education while acknowledging implicit learning, and approach questions of ethics from a specific and practice-oriented standpoint rather than a universal and principle-based one' (369). At the very least, what Lenskyj, Teetzel, and Barker seem to be suggesting is the need to accept, foremost, that practitioners have a responsibility to hold the Olympic Movement's advances in education in check. And, moreover, to encourage those in educational spheres who utilize its ideas and values (which, we acknowledge, have merit) to tread carefully.

One area where care should be exhibited, scholars such as Chatziefstathiou (2012) stress, is in adhering too closely, or too literally, to the spatially and temporally specific idealism of the Olympic Movement's late nineteenth-century instigator, Pierre de Coubertin. Continuing her thesis on reinvigorating/reappropriating Olympic idealism for modern times, Chatziefstathiou suggests that we should consider the philosophical underpinnings of the movement as a blueprint; essentially, a guide that needs to be interpreted according to, and in dialectical relationship with, the specificities of current context(s). In response to the challenges of the contemporary era, and the differences between and within cultural and social locales, Chatziefstathiou reminds practitioners to constantly review and improve the use and application of Olympic ideals and values in their work. This concern for contextually specific responses is also echoed by Binder (2001, 2012), Ren (2009), Brownell (2008, 2009), and others.

Binder's research, for example, has continued to question the alleged 'universality' of Olympism and the relevancy of Olympic values and ideology in contexts other than those based on Euro-American (sporting) traditions. Binder, rightly in our opinion, calls practitioners to seek out pedagogical approaches and teaching methodologies that better

reflect and meet the idiosyncrasies of the local environment. In terms of the context in East Asia, and Taiwan specifically, for example, concerns have been raised about the relationship between the Western values of the Olympic Games and Asian, or non-Western ideologies, but rarely are the educational underpinnings given substantial attention. For example, Professor Ren (2009) stressed the important role played by issues of cross-cultural communication in Olympic education. In tandem with these broader debates and recognizing the inherent tensions of Olympic education or Olympism as a Western product (Hsu 2000, 2008, 2009a, 2009b; McNamee 2006; Parry 1999, 2006), this paper examines the concept of modern Olympism, as a fundamental philosophy of Olympic education, and its relevance to broader Liberal Arts education (LAE) in Taiwan. In what follows, we first discuss LAE and general education within the Taiwanese context. We then overview a particular course developed by one of the authors; reflect on its implementation and reception; and offer some further considerations for Olympic education course development within Liberal Arts programmes. Our intention is to provoke thought on the shapes tertiary Olympic education might take, specifically in non-Western contexts. Before detailing our particular curricula, it is necessary to understand the basis of Liberal Arts and its manifestation in Taiwan.

### **Liberal Arts/general education in Taiwan**

Notwithstanding differences between institutions and across borders, conventionally, Liberal Arts Educational programmes are constructed from the humanities disciplines, including, but not limited to, the examination of philosophy, rhetoric, and logic, history, foreign languages, and literature (Thelin 2011). The concept of formalized curricula, Liberal Arts curricula, originated in classical European tertiary institutions, but can now be found in many of universities around the world. Liberal Arts programmes are usually founded on a notion that by fostering a broad base of education institutions might encourage in students an appreciation for knowledge acquisition, an ability to think and solve problems, and a desire to improve society (Shieh et al. 2008). The primary goal of LAE is to provide a broad, yet focused, survey of courses that will promote critical thinking, increase students' awareness of the world around them, add enrichment to the academic progression, and facilitate a desire for lifelong learning (Thelin 2011).

The European model of classical education has also influenced the curricula of many American higher education institutions, which in turn have provided the model for universities and other institutions abroad (including those in Taiwan). During the mid-twentieth century, there were moves, primarily in the USA, for the revitalization of liberal education (for a good overview, see Altbach, Gumport, and Berdahl 2011; Brint et al. 2009; Cohen 1998; Thelin 2011). The general objectives of LAE programmes have been adopted within the current Taiwanese tertiary context, which itself closely mirrors the USA education system. The mirroring is not coincidental; indeed, many Taiwanese education decision-makers studied in the USA and graduated from US universities. Hence, it is not surprising to see that Taiwanese education is heavily influenced by the American model.

Within LAE in Taiwan students are essentially encouraged to make connections across disciplines and between formal course instruction and informal learning experiences outside the classroom. The intention is for students to develop an appreciation of knowledge acquisition, an ability to think and solve problems, and a desire to improve society (Brint et al. 2009). Under the policies of the Taiwanese Ministry of Education, for example, many colleges and universities' approach to liberal/general education now

emphasizes holistic approaches towards students' overall knowledge acquisition (Law 2004). Concomitant with the imperatives of foster global awareness and collective responsibility, currently many Taiwanese universities and colleges have been encouraging students to undertake domestic and international social work in collaboration with charities and non-profit organizations (such as with the Red Cross or Buddhist organizations) (see Liu and Lee 2011). These approaches have gone beyond traditional and narrower education objectives which focused more on each individual's cognitive, skill, and affective aspects.

The fundamental aim of an LAE, according to Professor Chun-chieh Huang (2011) (former president [now Honorary President] of the Chinese Association for General Education in Taiwan), is to foster in individuals a sensitivity, subjectivity, and reflexivity that enables them to better understand the forces contouring their lives and experiences, and moreover, to enable students to consider their own emancipation (and potential liberation) and create a dialogue between the humanities and natural environment. To this end, over the past decade or so, universities and colleges in Taiwan have made discernible progress towards this ambition with their general education and Liberal Arts programmes providing students with greater opportunities for social reflection, engagement, and action. In our conception of Liberal Arts, we concur with Huang (2008, 2011), in that tertiary education should entail not just future career preparation, but should allow opportunities for identity creation, social reflection, holistic development, political motivation, and personal inspiration. These ideas have been carried forward into the Olympic curricula proposed below. The aim of the programme was to transfer general Olympic knowledge into wisdom for students to utilize, hopefully with positive effect, in later life. Ultimately, in addition to academic expertise and analytical rigour, the intention is to provide a curriculum that involves opportunities for students to enhance their lives by enabling them to make meaning out of their often chaotic and confounding worlds and appreciate their unique role in the complex human matrix.

Olympic education, at least as far the respected Chinese Professor Ren (2004, 2009) believes, has the capacity to fulfil at least some of these ambitious aims. There are, Ren (2009) asserts, two primary rationales for championing a (Liberal/General Arts framed) Olympic education. The first, and concurring with Law's (2004) thoughts on promoting globalization and citizenship in Asian contexts, is what he sees as the need for the harmonious development of a 'global village'; essentially, an ideological space where people appreciate their diversity and differences, yet embrace the interconnectivity and potentials of shared human endeavours. The second are the opportunities for individual self-development. With regard to harmonious development, Olympic education aims to produce qualified citizens of the 'global village', to help them break through the various limitations of their respective societies, and to impress the seal of a world citizen on top of the existing identity of a national citizen. Olympic education does not replace the existing national education in each region, but rather it augments and compliments national education as needed in order to facilitate the harmony of our shared global village and uphold the common interests of humankind. Moreover, 'Olympic education transcends', Ren continues, 'the restrictions placed on individual development by national education and allows individual development to enter a higher-level harmonious environment' (2009, 47–48).

Ren's ideas have been instrumental in informing the lead author's curriculum structure. The curriculum, detailed below, aligns with some of Pierre de Coubertin's educational ideals which stresses on peace, multiculturalism, internationalism (globalism), moral education, and arts/aesthetics education, but also challenges students to adopt a critical approach towards Olympism, Olympic knowledge, and the (re)construction of Olympic discourse. The curriculum, in adopting the principles of Olympism (i.e. 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), also aligns closely with the government's and Taiwanese university's current constructions and beliefs about general education and its agendas.

### **The course: 'the Olympic spirit explained – philosophical foundations'**

In addition to the invariably lofty goals of Olympic education identified above, the design of the course aimed to address what one of the authors of this paper felt were deficiencies of the Taiwanese education curriculum, namely, concerning students' international knowledge and awareness of global citizenry. The course, entitled 'The Olympic spirit explained – A philosophical approach', was taught for two semesters (2010 February–June and from 2010 September–2011 January) at a provincial Taiwanese university within a General Education Department. With an enrolment fluctuating between approximately 50–85 students, this particular course was specifically designed for first-year undergraduate university students who have been enrolled on a Liberal Arts programme. Students come into this course from a rigorous Taiwanese secondary/high school system which primarily privileges high academic standards within traditional scientific and humanities fields, intensive and extensive standardized exam-based testing, and extra-curricular excellence (Chou and Ching 2012; Wu and Albanese 2013). Though students may come into the programme with the prerequisite scholarly faculties and the capability for academic excellence, few (if any) have had previous exposure to courses critiquing global (sport) cultures. Nor, for that matter, do students appear to have had substantial opportunities as young adults to develop creative license in their academic work (Tsai and Kuo 2008; Wu and Albanese 2013). In addition, although students might have knowledge to an extent about the basic elements of the Olympic Games, understandably, they enter the course with little understanding of the underlying historical trajectories of the Olympic Movement, the philosophical values upon which the organization is based, or (most importantly) the socio-cultural, political, and economic complexities that come to bear on modern sport practices. Although socio-cultural sport courses exist within some sport departments in Taiwan, this is certainly the first course of its kind to reside within a General Education Department and be articulated within a Liberal Arts context. The course has been formally acknowledged by the Taiwanese Ministry of Education and subsequently been awarded a prestigious teaching award. While such accolades are always appreciated, what matters more is that it provides (invariably small) recognition that within the country's inherently conservative tertiary sector there is a developing space, and progressive allowance made, for courses that challenge and disrupt conventional episteme and pedagogical practice.

When and where necessary, students are assessed using a range of conventional and non-conventional techniques that include written items (mid- and end-of-term reports), debates, collective and individual projects, aesthetic and visual culture tasks, film critiques, and policy analysis. The criteria for the formal assessment are primarily focused on student's ability to locate the Olympic games/movement in a broader context and to analyse points of congruence/incongruity between Olympic rhetoric and reality. In keeping with the Liberal Arts emphasis, students are also strongly encouraged to draw links between (and inter-link content from) this course and other university modules they might be taking. Students are also provided with informal assessment and feedback (either one-to-one, in pairs, small groups, or during tutorials) throughout the course to ensure that they understand course content, can effectively articulate conceptual ideas, and synthesis course material with their own lived (sporting) experiences, identities, and opportunities.

Reflecting educational change and the lead author’s pedagogical desires, the course was structured around the five general ideas: peace; multiculturalism; global sensibilities; morality; and aesthetics (although we detail just three in this paper).

Table 1 demonstrates the general module outline and the respective focus given to each of the general Olympic ideas. The notion of peace, for example, is a core element of the rhetoric of the Olympic Movement. As such, and amidst on-going international conflicts, it provides a useful starting theme to stimulate class discussion. Secondly, following the principles of the Olympic Charter, students are encouraged to discuss the possibilities of promoting multiculturalism interaction and racial harmony among different races/nations. Thirdly, students are encouraged to debate ethical issues, for instance fair play, doping, and enhanced performance technology. All of which are historical and enduring concerns of the Olympic Movement. Fourthly, students are prompted to consider the range of values and ideals associated with sport, and also the aesthetic possibilities that lie within physical performances. By cultivating students’ aesthetic appreciation, the hope is that they may begin to look beyond conventional ways of conceiving sport (as regimented performance bound by the parameters of competition) and acknowledge sport, and sporting bodies, as conduits of social, cultural, political, and artistic meaning. Below we briefly explain the teaching approach and provide exemplars of how these themes are entwined with aspects of the Olympic Movement.

Table 1. Course content.

Week	Course content	
1	1. Course description and evaluation. 2. Group organization.	<b>Welcome</b>
2	Olympic ideas and Olympic Spirit ( <b>How well do you know the Games? 15 questions.</b> )	<b>Peace Education</b>
3	The concept of Olympic Truce & Ekecheria (overview)	
4	<b>Learning by doing I:</b> Adopt/draft Olympic Truce statement and send it to current UN secretary and leaders on both sides of the Taiwan Straits	
5	Sport and Racism (discussion on harmony and integration of different ethnicities in Taiwan)	<b>Multicultural Education</b>
6	Olympic and Multicultural education	
7	<b>Film watching and discussion I:</b> comparison between 2004 Athens and 2008 Beijing	
8	Mid-term exam – learning report	
9	Missions of the IOC	<b>Global (Internationalism) Education</b>
10	Olympics and East Asia	
11	<b>Learning by doing II:</b> Design and organize mini Olympic Games	
12	Sportsmanship and Fair Play ( <b>Invited Speaker I</b> )	<b>Moral Education</b>
13	Doping issues (Debate contest: Is doping wrong?)	
14	Olympic Education in Taiwan ( <b>Invited Speaker II:</b> <b>NOC official</b> )	
15	Olympics and Sports Aesthetics Education	<b>Aesthetics Education</b>
16	<b>Film watching and discussion II:</b> “Million Dollar Mermaid”	
17	Summary: Olympic and Sports Culture Education	
18	Term paper – learning report	



### The teaching approach

Closely reflecting traditional Confucian ideas on education (Hsu 2011; Huang 2011), Taiwanese students on the course are often used to one-way interaction that privileges the teacher as the knowledgeable authority. Students are commonly perceived of as complacent learners, and concomitantly, teachers are afforded considerable respect and adoration (Chen 2008). However, not unlike students elsewhere, students are usually intimidated to ask questions during the class because they feel embarrassed or lack confidence. Most of the students prefer to ask questions during breaks or after classes. In an attempt to respond to some of these challenges, many of the activities within the Olympic curricula outlined above follow the Socratic tradition (more often found in Western institutions). The approach is used to provide opportunities for students to begin to question their own knowledge about the Olympic Movement and (by examining causal relationship) start to deconstruct points of disjuncture and incongruence in Olympic phenomena and issues that highlight contradictions between the philosophical, policy, propaganda rhetoric, and lived realities. Research conducted by students in preparation for their debates and the debates in situ (and in addition to the other components of the course) so appear to help stimulate criticality about the Olympics, but also provide a means for the course leaders to evaluate knowledge acquisition, pedagogical engagement, and learning acquisition.

This form of inquiry affords primacy to critical debate in which learners have the opportunity to analyse various perspectives on particular phenomena. One important element of this approach is also for the teacher to be able to provide constructive criticism that enables the learner to reflect on, and shape, their understanding.

Creating an open dialogue between the student and the teacher in the Taiwanese tertiary context is, however, difficult. Taiwanese cultural mores bear heavily on students, and generally people often tend to avoid conflict, especially confronting or arguing with people in public (including in a classroom situation). Consequently, and in an effort to enhance students' learning interests, the lead author has tried to abandon traditional authoritative teaching methods and foster a positive classroom atmosphere in which knowledge is shared openly. Within this sort of environment, students are carefully guided to investigate, critique, analyse, and debate. We respect that this is not a particularly innovative or novel approach. Indeed, many other educators are probably utilizing similar methods effectively elsewhere. However, in the current Taiwanese tertiary environment, which still rewards conventional teaching approaches, such student-orientated curricula are relatively untested. Consequently, teaching activities have been created to counter the conventional educational experiences students may have had, challenge the ways in which they approach academic inquiry and analysis, and foster a level of creativity and enterprise that may lead to productive social action and collaboration.

In one particular activity, 'The Olympic Truce', students have to draft an Olympic Truce statement which they send to the current United Nations Secretariat, Olympic administrators on both sides of the Taiwan Straits, Members of Parliament, and the local media. In this assignment, they also have to learn how to write an official letter both in English and in Chinese. Many students shape their truce statements around the current for negotiations to end current conflicts between Taiwan and mainland China. Additional elements of the course involve speeches from experts. Previously, two to three scholarly or sporting/Olympic 'experts' (such as 2008 Beijing Olympics Taekwondo bronze medallist Mr Y.-C. Song and general secretary of Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee Mr K.-I. Chen) are invited to share their views and experience on the Olympic Movement. Students have the opportunity to question these individuals about their Olympic and international experiences and develop a broader

picture about the global sport structure. In what follows we briefly detail the key themes of the course, their significance, and some of the pedagogical strategies adopted therein.

### *Olympism and peace education*

With its emphasis on global harmony and accord, Olympism is essentially framed as a peaceful philosophy. Peace education, for instance, was the key element of Coubertin's initial Olympic proposals. For Coubertin, *peace among nations*, and more generally the internationalization of his educational visions was of primary concern (Müller 2009; Reid 2006). Coubertin, in theory at least, was attempting to emulate the ancient Greek association between peace and sporting competition. As part of the ancient Olympic Games, the belief was that hostilities would cease for a period before, during, and after the competition, thus creating a window of opportunity for the peaceful settlement of disputes (Lambrinidis 2011). In more recent times, with renewed and vibrant debates about security, terrorism, and international tension, the association between peace and the Olympic Games remains pertinent. In the first section of the course, students are given a historic overview of the origin of the ancient Olympic Games. A particular focus is the concept of Truce or Ekecheria and its development towards an international peaceful movement (Georgiadis and Syrigos 2009; Masumoto 2011). Students also examine how the idea of Asian philosophers, such as Confucius (see Wong 2011), might help us rethink approaches to peace in contemporary times. While the emphasis in this section is on the universality of peace, and a critical look at sport-based peace initiatives, students also explore the role of fundamental human rights and its influence on their daily (sporting) lives.

An important aspect for those committed to an examination of Olympism is the exploration of how peace movements were developed in and around the Olympic Games themselves. These movements are evidenced, especially, in relation to the torch relay, the opening ceremony, and the Olympic Truce Resolution. Following the work of Reid (2006) and Masumoto (2011), and others, students critique the relationship between peace discourse and recent Olympic Games. For contemporary Taiwanese students, the issue of peace and Olympism warrant attention given the country's historically and politically contentious Olympic participation (see Liu 2003). The current situation, in which Taiwan remains at loggerheads with China over geography, politics, identity, and national independence, is also incorporated into this theme. Students are challenged to consider the future of Taiwan's participation in the Olympic Games, and the role of the Olympic Movement in affecting the East Asian region's political ether. The design of the curriculum does not hinge on the assumption that sport cannot bring about peace, but rather to get students to question the oft-taken-for-granted assumptions that it can. Moreover, students are prompted to look to ways in which the Olympic Movement – in the face of criticism and adversity – might still provide opportunities to inspire peaceful actions and relations. In the implementation of this objective, the author has attempted to bring to the fore Nussbaum's assertion that academic institutions should try

to cultivate in students the ability to see themselves as members of a heterogeneous nation (for all modern nations are heterogeneous), and a still more heterogeneous world, and to understand something of the history and character of the diverse groups that inhabit it. (2010, 80)

The aim of this theme is essentially to encourage young people to understand both shared human needs and interests that might make peace possible and to consider how sport and the Olympic Movement might have any capacity to affect stability and/or change.

***Olympism and multicultural education***

The aim of this theme is to help students to understand the possibility of cultural understanding, mutual respect, and harmony through sports education. The course also touches upon the issues of integration with Taiwan's different ethnic groups. The theme also compares and contrasts the differences between 'East' and 'West' ideas, values, and philosophies. The theme reflects Kidd's pronouncement that

Coubertin developed his proposals for modern Games in response to troubling social conditions in a divided, uncertain world; and if the modern world is to learn to live with difference, an urgent necessity today, we cannot afford to ignore the tasks of *cross-cultural communication*. (1996, 84–85)

During this theme students consider how effective the Olympic Movement, and specifically the Olympic Games, has been for fostering multicultural dialogue and appreciation. Students examine the difficulties of trying to engage athletes with multicultural exchange during the period of the Olympic Games. Many athletes, for instance, are assumedly focused on their performance outcomes and may rarely participate in cultural exchange activities. In the previous Games, many Taiwanese Olympians even refused to stay in the Olympic Villages so that they missed many intercultural exchange possibilities.

Students also consult National Olympic Academy and International Olympic Academy's programmes which demonstrate the various ways in which multiculturalism/multicultural ideals are incorporated into Olympic Movement policies, projects, and agendas (Georgiadis 2011). Historical narratives that highlight multicultural synergies and tensions in the Olympic Games are also employed to stimulate discussion about rhetoric and realities of race and ethnic relations in sport (e.g. Barnier and Molnar 2010; Girginov 2010; Hill 1992; Hoberman 1986, 1995). Examples include the role of Jesse Owens at the 1936 Berlin Games (Kruger and Murray, 2003) and the controversial deployment of Cathy Freeman as a racialized/politicized symbol during the 2000 Sydney Games (Knight et al. 2007). The lesser known example of Rafer Johnson and C.K. Yang's long-term friendship story following the 1960 Rome Olympic Games is also used (Hsu 2006). From experiences thus far, these stories are useful in enabling students to engage with some of the contradictions, disjuncture, changes, and continuities in the Olympic Movement's approach to race and ethnic issues.

***Olympism and global (international) education***

This theme focuses on Euro-centrism and internationalism. At the most basic level, 'Euro-centrism' refers to the notion of 'considering Europe and Europeans as focal to world culture, history, economics' (Webster 1996, 669) and to this we might add sporting systems. 'Internationalism', however, has to do with the 'principle of cooperation among nations, for the promotion of their common good, sometimes as contrasted with nationalism or devotion to the interests of a particular nation' (Webster 1996, 997; for a considered conceptual evaluation, see Hoberman 1995). Because the Olympic Games were developed in the cradle of Western civilization in Ancient Greece, they have been easily labelled as a mechanism of Western imperialism or Euro-centrism (Eichberg 1998; Hsu 2011; McNamee 2006). With their overtly political/politicizing emphasis, these ideologies do not, however, sit easily with the invariably universal values that Olympism supposedly entails. Recognizing this disjuncture, students use the two ideas to stimulate debate about the wider meaning of the Olympic Movement.

In addition to Euro-centrism and imperialism, students are also encouraged to formulate a positive ‘international’ or ‘trans-national’ philosophy which can fit the era of globalization and globalism. ‘Globalization’ refers to a process of increasing interdependency among societies and individual humans at the economic, political, cultural, and social levels (Parry 2006, 189; cf. Maguire 1999). ‘Globalization’ is different from ‘globalism’, however, in that the former stresses the emergence and global diffusion processes, products, ideas, and values, whereas the latter focuses on trying to place the interests of the entire world above those of individual nations. The diffusion and proliferation of the media–sport complex is invariably part of globalization processes. Contentious though the notions may be, they do provide a starting point for students to start to consider the wider implications of the Olympic Movement, the Olympic Games, and the sports thereof.

With its essentially outward focus, this particular theme also attempts to engage Taiwanese students with their own international awareness and subsequent identity formation. Technological developments (e.g. television, the internet, new forms of digital media), for example, have brought people in Taiwan closer to international communities. Many Taiwanese firms (such as worldwide known bikes company ‘Giant’ or famous computer company ‘Acer’ (which is also one of the Olympic Games sponsors) have expanded their market globally. Moreover, Taiwanese students, like those elsewhere, are exposed to an array of international products, discourses, values, and exchanges on a daily basis. The attempts to promote an international outlook are, however, difficult. In the experience of the lead author of this paper, Taiwanese students are confronted with particular challenges, foremost of which is a bureaucratically and financially constrained domestic educational system that often prohibits international mobility. In addition, Taiwanese students appear to be limited by traditionally conservative cultural codes and social mores that make it harder for them to express their own identity, to bring forward ideas, and to demonstrate creativity, independence, and open-mindedness. Consequently, during this theme students are encouraged to actively pursue opportunities for international/global interaction and exchange in and beyond sport and physical pursuits. The intention of such experiences, and concomitant with Olympic ideals, is to inculcate knowledge of, and appreciation and respect for, different cultures and societies.

### **Conclusion: thoughts on Olympic educating for/in the future**

The goal of Olympic education is to protect and promote the (allegedly) common interests and values of human society, such as peace, friendship, and progress, striving for excellence, fairness, justice, and respect. Its basic pedagogical tool is sports, a cultural form that supposedly transcends many human societies (Ren 2009). Yet, the Olympic Movement and its associated philosophy of Olympism has been the subject of major criticisms (Barnier and Molnar 2010; Hill 1992; Hoberman 1986; Lenskyj 2002, 2004, 2008; Simson and Jennings 1991; Teetzel 2012). Most recently, Chatziefstathiou (2011a, 2011c, 2012) has also provided extensive evidence that Olympism has in fact been plagued by inherent paradoxes throughout the history of the modern Olympic Movement. However, Chatziefstathiou argued that to conclude that ‘Olympism has now become a merely apologetic myth to counterbalance the materialistic and excessive nature of the Olympic Games would be a simplistic and unidirectional assumption’ (2011c, 93). Mindful of these competing discourses on the Olympics writ large, the lead author constructed a university course to demonstrate how Olympic ideals could be effectively explored within the context of an East Asian Liberal Arts framework.

As outlined above, within the Liberal Arts domain, Olympic education programmes have the potential to introduce students to important philosophical ideals and to a range of social and cultural values that may enable them to understand their lives, the worlds they inhabit, and their sporting experiences therein. Yet, as other scholars have forewarned, educators should adopt care in developing a balanced curriculum, that is, one that employs a critical perspective addressing all Olympic and Olympism issues rather than just those that focus on the positive aspects of the Olympic Movement (Kohe 2010). The Olympic curricula proposed here, for example, has been structured around criticality and, in so doing, aim to have students challenge orthodox understandings of Olympic history and the IOC's idealistic and corporate propaganda and consider the wider effect and affects of the Olympic Movement.

The general intention with this particular Olympic course was to help students understand that they are not individuals who stand apart from society, but rather could conceive of themselves as cosmopolitan citizens, who are, amongst other characteristics, internationally aware, engaged in global/international interactions, cognizant of the possibilities of social unity and inclusion, and open to the potential of more equitable human order. Attempting to foster these values in students is, understandably, difficult. And, we respect, no one curricula programme is likely to achieve this aim. For instance, the notion of accepting that sports possess innate social values – is not unproblematic. Many practitioners who work in international settings, or try to teach the nuances and specificities of localized sports and sporting values in other settings, will be familiar of the contextual conundrums of (re)appropriating sports and their associated ethos. In Taiwan, for instance, there are difficulties in employing Western sports that are not widely recognized/spread as a means to teach Olympic values. Coupled with this, there are additional difficulties in trying to familiarize students with Olympic ideals, or more generally, the notion of a holistic education that does not emphasize practical knowledge or research skills.

Notwithstanding these concerns, there is some indication in our limited experience that there is a unity between Olympic ideals and Liberal Art imperatives that may effectively, and affectively, challenge students' ontologies. The Olympic course conducted by one of the authors of this paper has been positive teaching and learning experience. After conducting the course for two semesters, of course, there is still room for improvement in terms of students' engagement and scholarly development, and the teacher's continued development of best practice. In any case, a knowledge database has been created for future teaching. The curriculum material may hopefully serve as a useful reference for other teachers. Admittedly, in keeping with other globally orientated sport courses, the curricula still requires more dynamic approaches to infuse more critical thinking and international perspectives for Taiwanese students. We could, for instance, take cues from colleagues who have closely analysed the permeation (and permutation) of Olympic education into specific local/national/domestic contexts (e.g. Messing and Müller 2008; Monnin 2012; Monnin and Renaud 2009). Or, we might also include material and research within the course that provides students with opportunities to understand the comparative complexities inherent with modern sport (and the Olympic Movement) and investigate the political and philosophical nuances that come to bear on their own sporting existence(s) (see, for example, Monnin and Renaud 2009; Nauright and Parrish 2012). What matters, we believe, is for Taiwanese students (and admittedly those elsewhere too) to appreciate the many and varied ways in which the Olympics might be effectively utilized as a contextual space for facilitating a dialogue between themselves, their fellow citizens, and the broader



world. The course at present does, however, provide a blueprint for the future curricula that might challenge Western-Olympic education orientations.

Ideally, the desire is to create a strong cross-cultural study programme that may better link tertiary students in Taiwan with key sport institutions in East Asia, and also throughout the wider communities around the world. As Kidd (1996, 84–86) has reminded us, ‘participation in the Olympic sports does not encourage a concern for social issues, nor enhance the ability to address them . . . We cannot simply assume that because sports bring people together, feelings of intercultural brotherhood and sisterhood automatically result’. As such, our emphasis has been to implement a course premised on developing socially minded critique and fostering cross-cultural relations. As Nussbaum concurs, ‘educators should also not forget about the soul – positively connecting the soul, and connect people to the world in a rich, subtle, and complicated manner’, but rather ‘should develop abilities that are associated with the humanities and the arts in order to awaken students to be world citizens’ (2010, 6–7). To end we recall the words of the respected Confucius who proclaimed that ‘an educator’s basic responsibility is to enlighten learners . . . and inspire them to become superlative in character. The educator should arouse students to an admiration of exemplary persons and instil in them the desire to become this kind of ideal person’ (Chen 2008, 322). In our various and varied Olympic projects, we would do well, perhaps, to keep these words at the fore.

## Notes

1. We follow the directions encouraged by Philosopher Immanuel Kant (see, Kant and Meredith [1790] 2007) (and others) that axioms are not stable and fixed entities, but fragile and fragmentary notions whose position within rhetoric and logic is only legitimated through power hierarchies and political relations. Such a system – inherently human (social-constructed) in its design and implementation – is thus certainly susceptible (and in very need of) critique and disruption. To this end, Olympic axioms (in the most simplest form, the assumption proffered by the Olympic movement that humanistic ideals are synonymous and/or aligned with athletic virtues and modern sporting excellence) are capable of being critiqued as both an ideology and human practice.
2. To note, in most international contexts, Olympism/Olympic education has, by both tradition and design, predominantly resided within the discipline of Physical Education. Namely, this has been due to the explicit position of Olympism and Olympic education as a domain that intertwines sport, culture and education through practices of the body. While there have been some moves to extend the educational dissemination of Olympism beyond Physical Education (in United Kingdom and New Zealand, for instance), by in large Olympic education (with its discernable proselytizing of humanistic and corporeal values and ideals) remains strongly rooted with Physical Education pedagogy, rhetoric and praxis. As such, the positioning of Olympism within/ alongside Liberal Arts and General Education in this paper is quite unique (certainly within the Taiwan/East Asian context), and also atypical of most approaches. For a more detailed discussion of the symbiotic relationship between Physical Education and Olympism/Olympic education, see Chatziefsthathiou (2011b, 2012) and Kohe (2010).

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