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Turf to be shared by sports and geography

By Gary Henley

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Summertime!

will share the same turf this summer in a new University geography department course called Geography of Sports.

Instructor Peter Russell will survey America's professional and collegiate sports in Geography 410, which will meet the first four weeks of summer session on Mondays and Wednesdays from 3:30 to 5:20 p.m. in Condon Hall, Room 106.

"We'll be looking at the three main sports — baseball, basketball, and football," he said. "Some of the things we'll cover will be why pro teams diffuse, the history and economics of sports, demographics, and the impact of cable television on sports."

Other topics will include factors determining the location of a stadium, and fanbases — geographic areas from which specific teams draw crowds, he added.

The impact of cable television has created a new era in sports. ESPN (the 24-hour sports net-

work), WTBS, USA, and HBO all televise major sporting events.

Other sports coverage on television included the Cowboys televising six weeks of training camp practices last season on a pay-per-view basis — an example of what you can get with a satellite dish.

A good example of a fanbase, Russell said, would be that of the Cowboys. Once called "America's Team," the Cowboys have fans all across the country and draw spectators wherever they go. Radio stations carrying their games number 167 in 13 states. And 11 Spanish stations cover the games via the Dallas Cowboys Spanish Radio Network.

Other possible topics will be trends in professional and college athletics, such as migration of athletes from certain parts of the United States, and major recruiting areas for certain college sports.

Why are some professional teams attracted to playing out-

side city limits, such as the Dallas Cowboys playing in Irving, and the Detroit Pistons playing in Pontiac? Russell said cheaper land values and proximity of stadiums to highways provide major incentives for some migrations, citing the exodus of many New York teams to New Jersey.

Right now, the major hotbeds for recruiting college football players is Texas and California, Russell said, and one will find the major college basketball stars in New York.

The powerhouse teams of NCAA football have included the universities of Nebraska, Oklahoma, Texas, and Alabama for many years. But Russell contends "this is a trend that will cycle, and eventually balance out."

The cycle has already taken place in college basketball. UCLA was the dominant team of the 1960s and early 70s, but now Big East basketball is where it's at. Except for the University of Nevada at Las Vegas, basketball teams in the west are no longer considered threats.

Russell said drivers who are members of NASCAR, a national racing association, "are coming from the south mainly Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina."

He also said a lesser-known sport, lacrosse, is popular in northeastern schools but not in Oregon where track dominates.

Discussions on rival sports leagues and why professional women's sports haven't caught on may round out the course which also will include one class project and three to four small projects.

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