**Seminar Plan: Sport, Christianity, Health and Well-Being/Wellness**

While religious and spiritual beliefs and practices may seem to be focused primarily on intangible aspects of human life, they can profoundly affect and be affected by physical health and illness.

How might religious and spiritual beliefs and practices be harnessed to promote healthy living without distorting their intrinsic value? How might the science of sport serve as a rich resource for theological reflection? How might physical health practices shape spirituality and vice versa? How do we balance the spiritual and physical well-being of individuals with the well-being of teams and communities?

Dominic Malcom will be looking at how the passions and practices of those who seek physical health and well-being bear some similarity to the passions and practices of those who pursue spiritual and/or religious health and well-being.

Erik Dailey will be looking at how we might create theological justification—or build a theological foundation—for people of faith (specifically, Christians) who believe that physical well-being is or should be part of their spiritual world-view and daily living.

Natalie Campbell will be exploring how the religious and spiritual needs and practices of Olympic and other elite athletes (arguably, some of the most physically fit people on the planet) are an integral part of their identity and practice as athletes, as well as acknowledging that these needs and practices may have quite an important impact on teammates, coaches and the larger organisation.

Each section will include a brief introduction, approximately 20 minutes of content and 15 minutes for group discussion. There will be a brief break between each session.

**Seminar structure and content:**

Introduction and welcome: Jacqueline Cameron, Rush University Medical Center

Time: 1:00pm – 1:05pm

Session 1: Dominic Malcom, Loughborough University

Time: 1:05pm – 1:40 pm

Overview:

The nature of what is meant by 'health' has changed over time. While previously health was essentially taken to be the opposite of illness, increasingly health has come to be a relational term (how healthy am I relative to population averages?). Moreover, while health and illness used to be seen in relation to luck or 'God's will', now it is seen as and something which all 'good citizens' should strive to self-manage. Sport and exercise is fundamentally implicated in these changes, as people in Western cultures are increasingly compelled to work out with religious-like devotion. Sport and health subsequently take on what sociologists might call the functional characteristics of religion. This presentation explores the changing conception of health, it's impact on sport and exercise experiences, and the relationship between these social phenomena and religion.

Session 2: Erik Dailey, Fuller Theological Seminary

Time: 1:50pm – 2:30pm

Overview: The obesity epidemic is real, with worldwide obesity rates having doubled in the last thirty years, and quadrupling in many developed nations. It is estimated that in the United States alone, health care costs for obesity related diseases are near $200 billion a year. So how should the church respond? What theological framework does the Christian church have for addressing this global issue? In this seminar we will look at folk theologies of health, fitness, and embodiment, and work toward constructing a robust theology of physical fitness that can support a healthy church.

Session 3: Natalie Campbell, St Mary’s University, London

Time: 2:40pm – 3:20pm

Overview: A consideration that elite sport and religion can be described as paralleled practices is well researched - the commitment, the sacrifice, the dedication to 'practice what you preach'.  Whilst a great deal of literature explores the notion of sport 'as' religion (tradition, rituals, fandom and followings) or sport 'for' religion (embodied of practices of physical activity for healing, health and reconnection), little is understood about sport 'through' religion (the embodied practice of sport through the spiritual practice of religion).  In this session we will contextualise the well-being of an elite athlete as a person of faith - can you be committed to your sport as well as to your faith?  Navigating through real life case studies of Christianity, Islam and Sikhism, we consider the spiritual and psychosocial needs of those at peak physical fitness, and how they negotiate their life as an athlete and a person of faith existing within the unforgiving elite performance culture of Team GB.