

The Black Athlete: Manhattanville Professor Explores Race and Gender in Sports

Samantha White, PhD, Assistant Professor of Sport Studies, has been a part of the Manhattanville community for two years. Previously working as a coach and youth worker, Dr. White has ample experience working in youth and sports. Holding degrees in Childhood Studies, Youth Development, and French, Dr. White teaches a variety of courses such as Intro to Sport Studies, Youth and Sport, Ethics in Sport, and the Black Athlete. By taking a hands-on approach to her teaching she hopes students can leave her classroom thinking about sport critically and be inspired to create change.

Dr. White published an article titled *Black Girls Swim: Race, Gendered, and Embodied Aquatic History*. In her research she aimed to discover “what it meant to be a black girl engaged in the sport of swimming” during the early 20th century. Focusing mostly on the YWCA, she found that there are barriers to the sport of swimming. She explains how looking at the historical barriers helped her connect to present day barriers. She also explored examples of how young girls challenge those barriers “by becoming the first black girl on their swim team or competing in competitions where lots of people in their community came out.”

Dr. White’s research embodies the “understanding [of] diverse perspectives, thinking about the importance of equity and inclusion” which are also hallmarks of the Manhattanville mission. As Manhattanville thrives on teaching students to be globally aware citizens, Dr. White inspires her class to be aware of the inequities in sports and how to recognize them in the larger historical picture.

Dr. White explains that while her classes are not necessarily historical in nature, she still tries to give her students context for what they see in sports today. As we honor the 50th anniversary of Title IX, she believes that “it is important to recognize the experiences of people who have been viewed as outside the sports sphere, like marginalized folks.” In her classes she aims to tie history to the present day as well as look at inequities in both the past and present.

The cornerstone of Dr. White’s classroom experience is hands-on learning. Dr. White describes her teaching style as interactive. She likes to engage in discussion with students to help them learn rather than just lecturing. Her students will participate in hands-on projects that are challenging yet engaging. She had her students “create a display in the library of books that are about black athletes.” Her classes leave an impact not only inside the classroom but also on the larger community.

Dr. White’s enthusiasm for her research projects is reflective of her students’ classroom experience. Teaching classes examining subjects like race, racism, and youth, Dr. White encourages her students to explore how both race and gender effects athletes’ experience of sports.

Dr. White is an asset to the Manhattanville Community. From providing her students with a well-rounded education to her impact on the community at large, she has left her mark on the College. Her knowledge and experience are invaluable and Manhattanville is lucky to have her as a part of the community.