

Stop Just Passing by and Become a Critical Agent! Combat The Normalisation of Gender-Based Violence

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Abstract

This paper is not only about innovative pedagogy addressing patriarchal and racial injustices against women and racialised people in sport. It is also an account of a middle-aged, left-leaning, revolutionary, and increasingly frustrated lecturer trying to survive the hostile terrain shaped by male undergraduate sport students, where legitimised misogyny, racism, and manosphere narratives are taking hold with alarming speed. After years of teaching critical thinking around gender and racial discrimination in sport and encountering manageable, if persistent, resistance, the last two to three years have marked a sharp and unsettling shift. Since the Rubiales case in August 2023, classroom dynamics have grown considerably more intense and difficult to navigate comments such as “they — referring to the Spanish National Women’s Football Team who accused Rubiales of sexual aggression — are like sharks that smelled blood” have ceased to be isolated incidents and have solidified into a disturbing pattern. In response, a six-week module was designed for the 2025–2026 academic year, structured around three core objectives: (i) to identify and foster empathy with the diverse forms and manifestations of gender-based violence among university students, both in the classroom and in sport; (ii) to examine the discourses fuelling the radicalisation and normalisation of gender-based violence, unpacking the mechanisms through which they operate and their impact in educational and sporting contexts; and (iii) to develop imaginative alternatives to counter gender-based violence at university and in sport, through the creation and dissemination of audiovisual content — memes, GIFs, and reels — for publication on social media.

Keywords: social media; feminism; manosphere; sport; classroom