

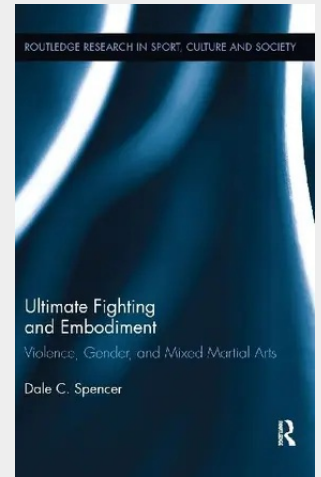
Spencer

Ultimate Fighting and Embodiment

Violence, Gender and Mixed Martial Arts

Mixed martial arts (MMA) is an emergent sport where competitors in a ring or cage utilize strikes (punches, kicks, elbows and knees) as well as submission techniques to defeat opponents. This book explores the carnal experience of fighting through a sensory ethnography of MMA, and how it transgresses the cultural scripts of masculinity in popular culture. Based on four years of participant observation in a local MMA club and in-depth interviews with amateur and professional MMA fighters, Spencer documents fighters' training regimes and the meanings they attach to participation in the sport. Drawing from the philosophical phenomenology of Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jean-Luc Nancy, this book develops bodies-centered ontological and epistemological grounding for this study. Guided by such a position, it places bodies at the center of analysis of MMA and elucidates the embodied experience of pain and injury, and the sense and rhythms of fighting.

Drawing on the theories of Merleau-Ponty and Jean-Luc Nancy, this study develops a body-centered epistemology as the grounding for a participant-observer ethnography of "ultimate fighting" or "mixed martial arts." It explores the gendered and racialized forms that embodiment takes in this context, considering how the co-mingling of male bodies transgresses the cultural scripts of masculinity in popular culture, and examining how the rigors of mixed martial arts reveal the potentialities of bodies.



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