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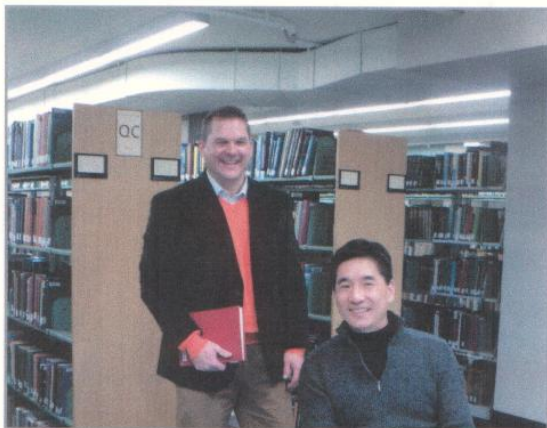


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Watching the Olympic Games from Millersville

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Millersville University's Dr. Jeffrey Wimer (left) and Dr. Ying Wushanley study the global impact of the Olympic Games

Few events have the power to generate worldwide interest like the Olympics. Designed to bring nations together as a symbol of unity, the Olympic spirit is a captivating ideal. But well beyond the opening ceremonies and lighting of the flame, there are issues that host cities don't like publicized.

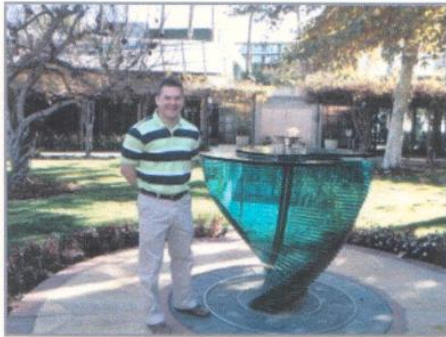
As the 2014 Winter Olympics take place February 6-23 in Sochi, Russia, Millersville University professors Drs. Ying Wushanley and Jeffrey Wimer, wellness and sport sciences, will again be closely watching and studying the games for their research of the Olympic phenomenon.

"The loss of entire neighborhoods has become a fact for many host Olympic cities," said Wimer. "Eminent domain is a frequently evoked legal strategy in the U.S. that has been used by the government to secure property from property owners in what seems for the public good, but which may later create hardships for families, especially in terms of fair market value. I have been conceptualizing and studying these connections as it relates to hosting the Olympic Games."

Wimer traveled to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to learn how thousands of people have been displaced in preparation for the games of the summer 2016 Olympics. "Large neighborhoods of people have been relocated," said Wimer.

Wushanley, who attended the summer games in Sydney in 2000 and the 2008 summer games in Beijing, says the people living near the Olympic venues were also forced to relocate when Beijing held the Olympics. “Traditional Beijing neighborhoods were just bulldozed over—never to be seen again,” said Wushanley.

Through their travel and study, both men have researched and written about the Olympics. Wushanley, a sport historian has written eight articles on the Olympics and authored a popular book “Playing Nice and Losing: The Struggle for Control of Women’s Intercollegiate Athletics, 1960-2000.”



Dr. Jeffrey Wimer poses next to the Olympic flame at a Los Angeles library for Olympic scholars.

Wimer, a licensed athletic trainer, has published on Olympic sport injury care and traveled to several Olympic sites. “Many individuals have a romanticized idea of the Olympics and the global goodwill it will create. Certainly there is a degree of truth and hope in the enduring value of the games—but the investment necessary to pull together these events often shadow the legacy it creates,” Wimer said.

Wushanley’s research has focused on women’s sports, primarily women from the U.S. and China. He began his career studying the role of women athletes during the Cold War, which further developed his interest in the modern Olympic movement.

“While China and the U.S. are the primary countries of interest to me, I really look at issues rather than just countries. I’m interested in the environmental impact—not from a health perspective but from a global consciousness—things like ideology, culture, politics and socioeconomics. Often a country will say they care about the environment but then remove a rain forest to hold the Olympics,” Wushanley stated.

While both scholars say the Sochi Games will be very secure, in light of recent terrorist attacks in Russia, Wushanley doesn’t think they would have received the bid if the voting was done today. “Sochi was behind in the first round of voting in 2007,” said Wushanley. “It was a very close call. I think because of that if there had been terrorist attacks then, they likely would have lost the bid.”

“Sochi will be much safer than most other Olympics,” said Wushanley. “In Russia the government has more power to arrest people who protest. In a true democracy, that’s much harder. This will be the largest security force ever employed in the Olympics.”

Wimer agrees. “In the past it was the local police who provided the security. Today the federal and international agencies are working together with local authorities to help to ensure a safe event. The sheer size of the security force will hopefully discourage possible threats,” he said.

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