

**SPMT 321**  
**America through Baseball**  
**School of Recreation, Health and Tourism**

**Fall 2010**

**Professor:** Dr. Jennifer Lansbury  
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**Course Time and Place:**  
MW 9:00–10:15 a.m., Robinson A105

**Office Hours:**  
MW 12:30–1:30 p.m.  
or by appointment

**Course Description:**

This course is designed for the student to gain an understanding of the past and present role of baseball in American culture. The course focuses on the development of professional baseball over the past 160 years and the ways in which the history of America as a nation and culture can be “read” through baseball.

**Course Objectives:**

At the completion of this course students should be able to:

- Demonstrate how baseball became a central part of American history and popular culture as it developed;
- Formulate interrelationships between baseball as a sport and baseball as a cultural artifact;
- Present an analytical project that examines an aspect of the role of baseball in American culture;
- Present findings from readings, films, and other course materials that evidences an understanding of the place of baseball in American culture.

**Grading and Assignments:**

In this course you will be graded in three major areas:

- 1) **Participation—In Class and Response Papers:** (25%)
- 2) **Analytical Project:** (25%)
- 3) **Exams:**

Midterm (25%)— Week 7, Wednesday, Oct 13

Final (25%), **Final Exam: Due** Monday, Dec. 13

**Assessment:**

**Participation:** There are two components to this grade. First, you are expected to participate in class discussions. This means that all reading assignments must be done prior to class, and that regular attendance and active participation are priorities. Second, throughout the semester, you are responsible for several

response papers, as noted on the class schedule. For the weeks that you write a response paper, it is due at the *beginning* of class. These papers are brief (1–2 pages), relatively informal in structure and should address your reactions and interpretations of the readings for that week. In other words, you may discuss whatever you found intriguing about the readings without organizing the paper around a central argument as you would in a more formal paper. Yet, they are not to be so informal that you forget to address the texts assigned. For complete details about response papers, see the “Response Paper Guidelines” posted on Blackboard.

### **Analytical Project:**

You will have an analytical project to develop on some aspect of baseball and American culture. These will be group projects with several components, one of which includes a class presentation. We will discuss topics, composition of groups, components of the project, and due date in more detail the first day of the course. More detailed information on the group project will also be posted on Blackboard.

### **Exams:**

You will also have an in-class midterm and a take-home final exam. In the exams, you will be responsible for all material covered in course readings, lectures, discussions, and any additional materials--films, exercises, etc.

### **Late Work:**

**Due dates listed on the syllabus are firm.** There are two exceptions to this: illness documented with a doctor’s note (on his/her letterhead or prescription notepaper), or a family emergency that I am made aware of *before* the due date. “I have a very busy week,” or “My book has not arrived” are not acceptable reasons. I realize you have other work to do; so do I. Plan your time accordingly. Late papers will be penalized a full letter grade per day (24-hour period) late.

### **Miscellaneous:**

#### **Enrollment:**

Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class. Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Schedule of Classes.

#### **Last Day to ADD: September 14; Last Day to DROP: October 1**

After the last day to drop a class, withdrawing from this class requires the approval of the dean and is only allowed for nonacademic reasons.

Undergraduate students may choose to exercise a selective withdrawal. See the Schedule of Classes for Selective Withdrawal procedures.

#### **Honor Code:**

All of George Mason University's academic policies and honor code apply to this course. In short, no cheating, lying, or plagiarism. If you are unclear as to what constitutes the above, see me or refer to the Undergraduate Catalog.

**Disability:**

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

**Required Reading:**

Warren Goldstein, *Playing for Keeps: A History of Early Baseball*.

Daniel K. Nathan, *Saying It's So: A Cultural History of the Black Sox Scandal*.

Jules Tygiel, *Past Time: Baseball as History*.

**Class Schedule:**

Week 1	<b>AUG 30: Course Introduction</b> <b>SEPT 1: Looking Back on the Rise of Baseball</b> <b>Reading:</b> Tygiel, <i>Past Time</i> , Ch. 1
Week 2	<b>SEPT 6: No Class—Happy Labor Day!</b> <b>SEPT 8: The Appeal of Baseball to Victorian Americans</b> <b>Reading:</b> Goldstein, <i>Playing for Keeps</i> , Prologue–Ch. 4
Week 3	<b>SEPT 13: Professional Baseball and the Birth of the National League</b> <b>Reading:</b> <i>Playing for Keeps</i> , Chs. 5–8 <b>*First Response Paper Due</b>
Week 4	<b>SEPT 20: Henry Chadwick, Statistics, and Baseball at the Turn of the Century</b> <b>Reading:</b> <i>Past Time</i> , Chs. 2&3 <b>*Second Response Paper Due</b>
Week 5	<b>SEPT 27: A First Look at the Black Sox Scandal</b> <b>Reading:</b> Nathan, <i>Saying It's So</i> , 1–57
Week 6	<b>OCT 4: Emergence of American Sport Heroes: Babe Ruth and Radio</b> <b>Reading:</b> <i>Past Time</i> , Ch. 4
Week 7	<b>OCT 12: Midterm Review</b> <b>*Note: Monday Class Meets on Tuesday</b> <b>OCT 13: Midterm Exam</b>
Week 8	<b>OCT 18: Baseball, the Depression, and the Continuing Significance of the Black Sox Scandal</b> <b>Reading:</b> <i>Past Time</i> , Ch. 5; <i>Saying It's So</i> , Ch. 2
Week 9	<b>OCT 25: Baseball in Jim Crow America—The Negro Leagues</b>

**Reading:** *Past Time*, Ch. 6  
**\*Third Response Paper Due**

Week 10  
**NOV 1: A League of Their Own—Women and Baseball**  
**Reading:** Susan Cahn, “No Freaks, No Amazons, No Boyish Bobs: The All-American Girls Baseball League,” *Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women’s Sports* (electronic reserve)

Week 11  
**NOV 8: Jackie Robinson and the Integration of Major League Baseball**  
**Reading:** Excerpt from Jules Tygiel, *Baseball’s Great Experiment: Jackie Robinson and His Legacy* (electronic reserve)  
**\*Fourth Response Paper Due**

Week 12  
**NOV 15: Postwar: The “Golden Age” of Baseball and the Emergence of Television**  
**Reading:** *Past Time*, Ch. 7; *Saying It’s So*, Ch. 3

Week 13  
**NOV 22: The Era of Expansion—A Truly “National” Pastime at Last**  
**Reading:** *Past Time*, Ch. 8  
**\*Fifth Response Paper Due**  
**Note: No class on Wednesday—Happy Thanksgiving!**

Week 14  
**NOV 29: Hammerin’ Hank and “the Chase”**  
**Reading:** Excerpt from Hank Aaron with Lonnie Wheeler, *I Had a Hammer: The Hank Aaron Story* (electronic reserve)  
**DEC 1: The Arrival of Free Agency**  
**Reading:** Richard Crepeau, “The Flood Case,” *Journal of Sport History* (Summer 2007): 183–91 (link on Blackboard)  
**\*Sixth Response Paper Due**

Week 15  
**DEC 6: Cultural Retellings of the Black Sox Scandal in the Eighties and Nineties**  
**Reading:** *Saying Its So*, Chs. 5&6  
**\*Response Paper—Extra Credit**  
**DEC 8: Baseball in Contemporary America**

**\*Take Home Final Exam—Due Monday, Dec 13, by 5 p.m. No late exams will be accepted.**