

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

Spring 2010

Professor: Dr. Jennifer Lansbury
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Course Time and Place:
TTh 10:30–11:45 a.m., Science/Tech II-019

Office Hours:
T noon–1 p.m., W 3–4 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

Final (25%), **Final Exam Date:** Thursday, May 6, by 1:00 p.m.

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 in hard copy at the beginning of Tuesday's class. These papers are 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, and components of the project, and due date in more detail the first day of the course.

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:

***No late work is accepted.**

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: February 2; Last Day to DROP: February 19

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*.
Neil J. Sullivan, *The Dodgers Move West*.
Jules Tygiel, *Past Time: Baseball as History*.

Class Schedule:

Week 1 (Jan. 19–22)	Course Introduction (Jan. 19) Origins: “The Culture of Organized Baseball” (Jan. 21) Reading: Warren Goldstein, <i>Playing for Keeps</i> , Part I; Jules Tygiel, <i>Past Time</i> , Ch. 1
Week 2 (Jan. 25–29)	Henry Chadwick and the Emergence of Major League Baseball Reading: <i>Playing for Keeps</i> , Part II; <i>Past Time</i> , Ch. 2 *Response Paper Due
Week 3 (Feb. 1–5)	“Incarnations of Success”—Baseball at the Turn of the Century Reading: <i>Past Time</i> , Ch. 3; Begin Nathan, <i>Saying It's So</i>
Week 4 (Feb. 8–12)	1919: The Black Sox Scandal Reading: Finish <i>Saying It's So</i> *Response Paper Due
Week 5 (Feb. 15–19)	The Biggest Cultural Sport Hero of Them All: Babe Ruth and the Emergence of Radio Reading: <i>Past Time</i> , Ch. 4 *Response Paper Due
Week 6 (Feb. 22–26)	Baseball during the Depression Reading: <i>Past Time</i> , Ch. 5
Week 7 (Mar. 1–5)	Baseball in Jim Crow America—The Negro Leagues Reading: <i>Past Time</i> , Ch. 6 *Midterm on Thursday
Week 8 (Mar. 8–12)	Spring Break! Enjoy!
Week 9 (Mar. 15–19)	A League of Their Own—Women and Baseball Reading: Susan Cahn, “No Freaks, No Amazons, No Boyish Bobs: The All-American Girls Baseball League,” <i>Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women's Sports</i> (electronic reserve) Film: <i>A League of Their Own</i> *Response Paper Due

- Week 10 (Mar. 22–26) **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)
- Week 11 (Mar. 29–Apr. 2) **The Age of Television Begins**
Reading: *Past Time*, Ch. 7; Begin Neil Sullivan, *The Dodgers Move West*
- Week 12 (Apr. 5–9) **The Era of Expansion**
Reading: *Past Time*, Ch. 8; Finish *The Dodgers Move West*
***Response Paper Due**
- Week 13 (Apr. 12–16) **Hammerin’ Hank and “the Chase”**
Reading: Excerpt from Hank Aaron with Lonnie Wheeler, *I Had a Hammer: The Hank Aaron Story* (electronic reserve)
- Week 14 (Apr. 19–23) **The Arrival of Free Agency**
Reading: Richard Crepeau, “The Flood Case,” *Journal of Sport History* (Summer 2007): 183–91.
***Response Paper Due**
- Week 15 (Apr. 26–30) **Baseball in Contemporary America**
Reading: *Past Time*, Ch. 9
- May 6 ***FINAL EXAM—Due Thursday, May 6, by 1 p.m.**