

**George Mason University  
School of Recreation, Health, and Tourism**

**SPMT 321, Section A01 – America Through Baseball  
Three (3) Credits**

Instructor: Richard Hardesty  
Location: Online  
Day/Time: Online  
Email: [rhardest@masonlive.gmu.edu](mailto:rhardest@masonlive.gmu.edu)  
Office Hours: By Appointment

**Course Description:**

Baseball has often been considered America's national pastime, a game that has helped define the history of the country. As Terrance Mann told Ray Kinsella in the film *Field of Dreams*, "The one constant through all the years, Ray, has been baseball. America has rolled by like an army of steamrollers. It has been erased like a blackboard, rebuilt and erased again. But baseball has marked the time. This field, this game: it's a part of our past, Ray. It reminds us of all that once was good and it could be again." Mann's quote highlights the centrality of baseball in America.

This course is an examination of the role of baseball in American culture. The course studies baseball as a cultural and social institution in the United States over the past 150 years. This class will **not** engage in baseball trivia, or enter into debates over the greatest player or team. Instead, this class will focus on how baseball highlighted many of the promises, perils, and paradoxes inherent in American history. Baseball tells the story of American democracy and progress. Yet, it also tells the story of the conflicts that arose, specifically rural against urban, labor against capital, and civil rights against racial segregation and the struggle for racial equality. Studying the history of baseball can help us better understand the history of the United States.

**Course Objectives:**

The student will be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the role of baseball in American culture
- Present an understanding of baseball as a cultural institution
- Demonstrate an understanding of the social, political, and legal issues that have affected baseball
- Analyze using a variety of primary sources
- Analyze baseball through film and literature
- Reflect on his or her relationship with baseball

**Structure:**

The course will be broken into six (6) modules. Each module will cover baseball during a specific period, containing readings from the required texts, selected primary sources, and films for you to view. Furthermore, each module contains notes that will help you identify important people, events, and themes from that period. All the primary sources will be made available on Blackboard.

**Adding and Dropping the Class:**

The last day you may add or drop the class without a tuition penalty is May 21, 2014. The deadline to drop the class with a fifty percent (50%) tuition penalty is May 23, 2014. Complete tuition liability for dropping the class begins on May 24, 2014.

**Academic Integrity:**

All assignments are governed by the George Mason University honor code, online at <http://oai.gmu.edu/honor-code/masons-honor-code/>. You are expected to work independently and to acknowledge all sources, including assigned texts and materials found online.

**Students with Disabilities:**

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at (703) 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS. <http://ods.gmu.edu>.

**Email:**

I encourage you to use email as a means of sharing any questions or concerns you may have. To ensure that I receive your message, please send it from your George Mason address. Your messages should be grammatically correct with proper spelling. Do not use text messaging abbreviations. Please allow me at least twenty-four (24) hours to reply. **Emails containing additional module information may occur during the course, so it is important for you to regularly check your email.**

**Campus Resources:**

*Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS):* The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance. <http://caps.gmu.edu>.

*Writing Center:* The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing. <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>.

For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, School of Recreation, Health, and Tourism, please visit our website at <http://rht.gmu.edu>.

**Required Texts:**

- Jules Tygiel, *Past Time: Baseball as History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).
- Rob Ruck, *Raceball: How the Major Leagues Colonized the Black and Latin Game* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2011).

**Required Films:**

- *Baseball* by Ken Burns
- *Eight Men Out*
- *The Natural*
- *A League of Their Own*
- *61\**
- *42*
- *Field of Dreams*
- *Sugar*

**A Note on Films:** All the films are readily available through Netflix, Redbox, or Amazon, while also being held on reserve at the George Mason library.

### **Course Requirements:**

*Syllabus Quiz:* The syllabus quiz is designed to help you understand the course policies outlined. On the first day of class, the syllabus quiz will be emailed to you. The quiz will be due by 11:59 p.m. on May 20. **You are responsible for notifying me in the event you do not receive the email. Please do so as soon as possible.**

*Weekly Responses:* Each module will contain an open-ended question designed to get you to critically analyze the required readings, primary sources, and films. You will be required to write a response to each module question. This is **not** an assignment that asks you to simply paraphrase the materials. Rather, in two to three pages, you must formulate an argument on the question being asked, and then use the assigned readings and videos to support your position. **Please make sure you cite the assigned materials you use.**

In all, you are required to write six (6) responses. The point values for the responses will increase during the course as a means of rewarding improvement. Your responses must be submitted to me via email attachment in Microsoft Word or RTF formats only. Each response will be **due no later than 11:59 p.m. each Friday.**

*Book Review:* A book list will be distributed at the start of the semester, containing important works on baseball and the issues surrounding the game. You are required to select one (1) book from the list to write a four to five page book review. This is **not** an assignment that asks you to provide a play-by-play account of the book. Instead, you are asked to highlight the author's main thesis, his or her main points, and the overall strengths and weaknesses of the book. For the purpose of this assignment, you are also asked to connect the book to some of the larger themes discussed in the course, highlighting the book's overall significance.

You must email your **book selection** to me **no later than 11:59 p.m. on Friday, May 23.** If there is a book you would like to read, but it is not on the book list, please email me **before the deadline** so we can discuss this further. Your book review must be submitted via email attachment in Microsoft Word or RTF formats only. The **deadline** for the book review is **11:59 p.m. on June 27.**

### **Late Assignments:**

Because this is an online course, you are expected to regularly have access to the internet, especially concerning the timely submission of required assignments. Please make sure you have contingency plans in place in the event that your computer crashes or your internet goes out at an inopportune time. Equally important, please make sure you back up your assignments in the event that your files become compromised.

With that said, I will deduct five (5) points for each day any assignment is submitted late, **unless documentation can be provided.**

### **Grade Breakdown:**

Syllabus Quiz:	5%
Module One Response:	5%
Module Two Response:	10%
Module Three Response:	10%
Module Four Response:	15%
Module Five Response:	15%
Module Six Response:	15%
Book Review:	25%
Total:	100%

**Grading Scale:**

A: 93-100	B: 83-87	C: 73-77	F: 0-59
A -: 90-92	B-: 80-82	C-: 70-72	
B+: 88-89	C+: 78-79	D: 60-69	

**Course Schedule:**

<p><b>Module One</b> <b>May 19 to May 23</b></p>	<p><b>“It’s our game – the American game”: The Origins and Growth of Baseball</b></p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tygiel, 3-34</li> <li>• Ruck, 1-25</li> </ul> <p>Additional Readings (on Blackboard):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Nine Surviving Descriptions of Baseball-like Games Written and Published Before 1845,” in David Block’s <i>Baseball Before We Knew It</i></li> <li>• “The Cricket Mania,” <i>Harpers Weekly</i>, October 15, 1859</li> <li>• “Why Discriminate?” <i>Sporting Life</i>, March 14, 1888</li> <li>• “Nowhere So Sharply Drawn as in Baseball,” <i>Sporting Life</i>, April 11, 1891</li> <li>• “Nation’s Game is Purely American,” <i>Sporting Life</i>, March 14, 1908</li> <li>• “An Early Quest for Equality on the Diamond,” <i>Philadelphia Media Network</i>, September 13, 2010</li> <li>• “Myth of Baseball’s Creation Endures, With a Prominent Fan,” <i>New York Times</i>, November 12, 2010</li> </ul> <p>Videos:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Baseball Discovered,” Link on Blackboard</li> <li>• “Inning 1”: Burns’ <i>Baseball</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Response Question</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By the start of the twentieth century, baseball had emerged as a purely American game, a symbol of the nation’s progress and democracy. How did the game evolve and grow during the nineteenth century? Why did Americans of the period view baseball as a symbol of progress and democracy? Do you agree or disagree? Why?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Deadlines</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Syllabus Quiz Due by 11:59 p.m. (EST) on May 20</li> <li>• Module One Response Due by 11:59 p.m. (EST) on May 23</li> <li>• Book Selection Due by 11:59 p.m. (EST) on May 23</li> </ul>

<p><b>Module Two</b> <b>May 26 to May 30</b></p>	<p><b>“Say it ain’t so”: The Rise of Professional Baseball and the Black Sox Scandal</b></p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tygiel, 35-63</li> <li>• Ruck, 26-48</li> </ul> <p>Additional Readings (on Blackboard):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Players’ Combine,” <i>Sporting Life</i>, April 7, 1900</li> <li>• “Pennant Winners to Meet,” <i>The Washington Post</i>, September 2, 1903</li> <li>• “Reserve Rule is the Corner-Stone of Organized Ball,” <i>Sporting Life</i>, February 24, 1912</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Baseball Proves Real Help to Country in War Crisis,” <i>Chicago Daily Tribune</i>, September 2, 1917</li> <li>• “1918 Baseball Badly Wounded But Recovering,” <i>Chicago Daily Tribune</i>, December 29, 1918</li> <li>• Arnold Gandil, “This is My Story of the Black Sox Series,” <i>Sports Illustrated</i>, September 17, 1956</li> </ul> <p>Videos:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Inning 2” and “Inning 3”: Burns’ <i>Baseball</i></li> <li>• <i>Eight Men Out</i></li> </ul>
<b>Response Question</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What factors contributed to the growth of professional baseball during the early twentieth century, and did any of these factors contribute to the Black Sox scandal in 1919? Why is the Black Sox scandal considered one of the most notorious scandals in professional sports history? Please explain your answers.</li> </ul>
<b>Deadlines</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Module Two Response Due by 11:59 p.m. (EST) on May 30</li> </ul>

<b>Module Three June 2 to June 6</b>	<p><b>“The national tonic”: Baseball in Prosperity and Depression</b></p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tygiel, 64-115</li> <li>• Ruck, 49-71</li> </ul> <p>Additional Readings (on Blackboard):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Admiring Mob in Riot Over Babe Ruth,” <i>The Washington Post</i>, April 8, 1929</li> <li>• “A Dirge for Baseball,” <i>North American Review</i>, July 1929</li> <li>• “All-Star Game Just What Doctor Ordered for Baseball,” <i>Chicago Daily Tribune</i>, June 20, 1933</li> <li>• “Night Baseball Makes Major League Debut,” <i>Chicago Daily Tribune</i>, May 23, 1935</li> <li>• “Babe Ruth, Baseball’s Great Star and Idol of Children....,” <i>The New York Times</i>, August 17, 1948</li> <li>• “Sports-Loving Nation Mourns Death of Homer King Babe Ruth,” <i>The Los Angeles Times</i>, August 17, 1948</li> </ul> <p>Videos:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Inning 4” and “Inning 5”: Burns, <i>Baseball</i></li> <li>• <i>The Natural</i></li> </ul>
<b>Response Question</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 1931, <i>The Sporting News</i> called baseball “[t]he national tonic. The reviver of hope. The restorer of confidence.” How did baseball distance itself from the Black Sox scandal to earn this reputation? What challenges did the American game face during the Depression, and how did the game respond? Were the responses successful? Please explain your answers.</li> </ul>
<b>Deadlines</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Module Three Response Due by 11:59 p.m. (EST) on June 6</li> </ul>

<b>Module Four June 9 to June 13</b>	<p><b>“[I]t would be best for the country”: Baseball During World War II</b></p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ruck, 72-96</li> </ul> <p>Additional Readings (on Blackboard):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Green Light Letter,” January 15, 1942</li> <li>• “Baseball’s Big Contribution,” April 25, 1942</li> <li>• “Servicemen Want Baseball to Stay,” <i>Atlanta Journal Constitution</i>, March 25, 1943</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Casey is a Lady!,” <i>The Los Angeles Times</i>, August 27, 1944</li> <li>• “Wrigley, Rickey Formed ‘Lipstick League’ as Backstop in Case War Blotted Out Majors,” <i>The Washington Post</i>, May 7, 1952</li> <li>• “Three Reichs, You’re Out,” <i>Slate</i>, April 2, 2013, Link on Blackboard</li> </ul> <p>Videos:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Inning 6” – Top of the 6<sup>th</sup>: Burns, <i>Baseball</i></li> <li>• “Baseball Heroes of World War II,” Link on Blackboard</li> <li>• <i>A League of Their Own</i></li> </ul>
<b>Response Question</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Under a cloud of war, President Franklin D. Roosevelt believed the nation’s best interests could be served if baseball continued. How did World War II disrupt baseball, and how did the game attempt to survive in wartime? What did baseball reveal about the American and Latin American home front?</li> </ul>
<b>Deadlines</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Module Four Response Due by 11:59 p.m. (EST) on June 13</li> </ul>

<b>Module Five June 16 to June 20</b>	<p><b>“An American Dilemma”: A Time of Grand Expectations and Great Experiments</b></p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tygiel, 116-164</li> <li>• Ruck, 97-171</li> </ul> <p>Additional Readings (on Blackboard):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “An Open Letter to Jackie Robinson,” in <i>Jackie Robinson and Race in America</i></li> <li>• “Jackie Robinson’s Life Threatened in Two Letters,” <i>The Washington Post</i>, May 21, 1951</li> <li>• “Yankees Conquer Baseball World Again,” <i>Chicago Daily Tribune</i>, December 23, 1956</li> <li>• “I Love Maris,” <i>The Los Angeles Times</i>, October 3, 1961</li> <li>• “Sport as Social Force,” <i>Baltimore Evening Sun</i>, October 10, 1966</li> <li>• “Happy Series, You-all,” <i>Afro-American</i>, October 15, 1966</li> <li>• “Hank Aaron: Hammerin’ Back at Racism,” by Larry Schwartz via ESPN, Link on Blackboard</li> <li>• “As MLB honors Jackie Robinson, can it reverse a trend?,” <i>USA Today</i>, April 15, 2014, Link on Blackboard</li> </ul> <p>Videos:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Inning 6” – Bottom of the 6<sup>th</sup>, “Inning 7,” and “Inning 8”: Burns, <i>Baseball</i></li> <li>• <i>42</i></li> <li>• <i>61*</i></li> </ul>
<b>Response Question</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The end of World War II ushered in a period of grand expectations, but also a period where American ideas conflicted with societal realities. How did baseball reveal the paradox that confronted American society in the post-war period? How did the game influence the civil rights movement for African Americans and other minorities? Can baseball be seen as a game that can facilitate social change?</li> </ul>
<b>Deadlines</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Module Five Response Due by 11:59 p.m. (EST) on June 20</li> </ul>

<p><b>Module Six</b> <b>June 23 to June 27</b></p>	<p><b>“Where have you gone, Joe DiMaggio?”: Nostalgia in an Age of Relocation, Labor Disputes, and Steroids</b></p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tygiel, 165-222</li> <li>• Ruck, 172-221</li> </ul> <p>Additional Readings (on Blackboard):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Cronin, Freeney: Curt Flood Suit a Sports Threat,” <i>Chicago Daily Defender</i>, January 19, 1970</li> <li>• “Court Again OKs Reserve Clause,” <i>Chicago Daily Defender</i>, June 20, 1972</li> <li>• “Messersmith Signs A Braves' Contract,” <i>New York Times</i>, April 11, 1976</li> <li>• “Rose’s Grim Vigil,” <i>Sports Illustrated</i>, April 3, 1989</li> <li>• “Baseball Season Ends, Now Aftermath Begins,” <i>The Washington Post</i>, September 15, 1994</li> <li>• “One Sign Fits All: ‘Thank You, Cal, For Saving Baseball’,” <i>Sun-Sentinel</i>, September 7, 1995</li> <li>• “Former Pitcher Tom House Describes Past Steroid Use,” <i>USA Today</i>, May 3, 2005</li> <li>• “Lying About Age Not Uncommon for Dominican Baseball Players,” <i>Houston Chronicle</i>, May 4, 2008</li> <li>• “The Man Who Warned Baseball About Steroids,” <i>Time</i>, February 23, 2009, Link on Blackboard</li> </ul> <p>Videos:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Inning 9” and “Inning 10”: Burns, <i>Baseball</i></li> <li>• <i>Sugar</i></li> <li>• <i>Field of Dreams</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Response Question</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In a game that featured segregation and connections to gambling, why do Americans wax nostalgic about baseball? Do issues facing baseball shape nostalgia, or does nostalgia shape how people view the game’s issues? What does baseball today reveal about American society and values?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Deadlines</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Module Six Response Due by 11:59 p.m. (EST) on June 27</li> <li>• Book Review Due by 11:59 p.m. (EST) on June 27</li> </ul>