

History 345 "Baseball and American Society, 1840-Present"

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"Whoever wants to know the heart and mind of America had better learn baseball"--Jacques Barzun

"The sad truth about baseball, I'm afraid, is that there is not enough in it to occupy a man's mind"--Jim Bouton

"The whole history of baseball has the quality of mythology"--Bernard Malamud

"[Baseball] breaks your heart. It is designed to break your heart."--A. Bartlett Giamatti

". . .there are [those] who were born with the wisdom to know that nothing lasts. There are the truly tough among us, the ones who can live without illusion, or without even the hope of illusion. I am not that grownup... I am a simpler creature, tied to more primitive patterns and cycles. I need to think something lasts forever, and it might as well be that state of being that is [baseball]; it might as well be that, in a green field, in the sun."

--A. Bartlett Giamatti

"[Baseball is a game whose participants] mostly like to stand around, chew things, spit, and scratch their nuts."
--Dan Jenkins.

"Baseball sets off the meaning of life precisely because it is pure of meaning . . . the diamonds and rituals of baseball create an elegant, trivial, enchanted grid on which our suffering, shapeless, sinful day leans for the momentary grace of order."--Donald Hall

"Some adults think that to watch baseball is to waste one's time in childish ways. But I have always loved that game. I don't care or not whether it is childish. Long before I possessed any capacity to examine myself or the reason for the game's appeal to me, I loved it."--James T. Farrell

". . . the one constant through all the years has been baseball. America has been erased like a blackboard, only to be rebuilt and then erased again. But baseball has marked time with America, has rolled by like a procession of steamrollers. It is the same game that Moonlight Graham played in 1905... It continually reminds us of what once was, like an Indian head-penny in a handful of new coins."--W.P. Kinsella

"The game of baseball cannot be mastered. All a player can do is try to get better each year."--Deion Sanders

"[Baseball] is like a church. Many attend but few understand." --Wes Westrum

"Baseball is the one single thing the white man has done right."

--An Indian character in Kinsella's *The Iowa Baseball Confederacy*

HISTORY 345 "Baseball and American Society, 1840-Present"

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course deals both with the role and significance of baseball in American society for the past century and a half. It also focuses on the history of the game itself, including the playing styles, personalities, teams, and public coverage. The course assumes that baseball and its history reflects the society that produced it and continues to sustain it. As society has changed, so has the game. But innovations within the game have also encouraged modifications in the larger community. Can there be any doubt, for instance, that the exploits of Jackie Robinson and Roy Campanella to some degree fostered better understanding between blacks and whites in American communities and opened new opportunities for blacks in other arenas?

In general terms this course seeks to view the developments in baseball in the larger context of United States history as well as against the backdrop of other sports and their evolution.

ASSIGNED READINGS:

Four books are required for each student, including Charles Alexander's *Our Game: An American Baseball History* (PB); Charles Alexander's, *John McGraw* (PB); and Robert Peterson's, *Only the Ball Was White* (PB). Each student must also read a book of his or her choice from the bibliography treating post-Pearl Harbor baseball (1941 to the present).

On Reserve are Several videos: "*America's Classic Ballparks*," "*The History of Baseball*," (put out by MLB), and Ken Burns' 9 video series on "*Baseball*." Students should be familiar with those tapes by the time of the final exam. They can be viewed in the audio visual center, basement floor of Michener, near Government Documents.

Each student also is asked to become familiar (if he or she has not already done so) with four movies: (1) *The Natural*, (2) *Bull Durham*, (3) *Field of Dreams*, and (4) *Eight Men Out*. Each can be rented at a local video store, if need be.

EVALUATION SCHEME:

Students will be evaluated on the basis of two examinations (50% of your class grade), class attendance and participation (20%), a book review (10%) and a short paper (20%). Each exam will consist of identifications and essay questions.

CLASS ORGANIZATON:

The class has a lecture-discussion format. Each lecture seeks to achieve three goals: (1) to describe a particular historical development, (2) to identify a broad theme in our country's history or in the history of baseball, and (3) to raise questions about our historical values, assumptions, and priorities. A number of movies, videos, and slides also will be incorporated into this course and should be treated the same as lecture material.

CLASS SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS:

The class is divided into two sections and assignments are indicated for each. Whether a student takes advantage of these suggestions to keep up on the assigned readings on a daily basis is the student's prerogative. The instructor assumes, however, that materials will be read by examination time. How-ever, reading assignments connected with Discussion Days are due on those days.

CRUCIAL DATES:

First Examination February 28

Paper Permission required March 7 (and 3X5 card turned in)

Book Review due March 28

Paper due April 21

Final Examination May 09

SECTION ONE: Jan. 15 to Feb. 28, "Baseball and American Society, 1840-1930."

For this section students must read Charles Alexander's *Our Game*, 1-186; Charles Alexander's *John McGraw*, 1-324; Robert Peterson's *Only the Ball Was White*, 1-144;

Wed., Jan. 15: Introduction: "*The 'Mythology' of Baseball*"

Fri., Jan. 17: Possible Themes: "*Baseball and American Society.*"

Mon., Jan. 20: Holiday

Wed., Jan. 22: Themes (cont.): "Baseball and the Movies" [video]

Fri., Jan. 24: Discussion #1 (see "*Student Assignment Sheet*")

Mon., Jan. 27: Baseball and its Origins, 1845-1883

Wed., Jan. 29: The Players and the Game, 1870-1890 [slides]

Fri., Jan. 31: Discussion # 2 (see "Student Assignment Sheet")

Mon., Feb. 03: Challenges to Major League Baseball, 1883-1890

Wed., Feb. 05: Reorganization and a New League, 1890-1901

Fri., Feb. 07: The Changing Game, 1880-1901

Mon. Feb. 10: The Players, 1890s

Wed. Feb. 12: "The Glory of their Times" [video]

Fri., Feb. 14: The Stars and the Teams, 1901-1920 [slides; videos]

Mon., Feb. 17: The Progressive Era, the Federal League, and MLB

Wed., Feb. 19: Baseball and the War Years, 1914-1918

Fri., Feb. 21: Discussion #3 (see "Student Assignment Sheet")

Mon., Feb. 24: A Dynasty Emerges: The Yankees

Wed., Feb. 26: Players in the 1920s

Fri., Feb. 28: FIRST EXAMINATION

SECTION TWO: Mar. 03 to April 28, "Baseball and American Society, 1930 to the present."

For this section students must read Charles Alexander's *Our Game*, 187-360; and Robert Peterson's *Only the Ball Was White*, 145-255. Be sure you see (or review) "Field of Dreams," "Bull Durham," and "The Natural."

Mon., Mar. 03: Branch Rickey Creates a Farm System

Wed., Mar. 05: Business, Baseball, and the Golden Age of MLB

Fri., Mar. 07: Stars and Teams, 1930-1941

*deadline for paper topic: 3x5 card due.

Mon., Mar. 10: The Creation of the Hall of Fame--and Disagreements

Wed., Mar. 12: Discussion #4 (see "Student Assignment Sheet")

Fri., Mar. 14: Discussion #5 (see "Student Assignment Sheet")

Mon., Mar. 17: Spring Break

Wed., Mar. 19: Spring Break

Fri., Mar. 21: Spring Break

Mon., Mar. 24: War, the Armed Services, and Baseball

Wed., Mar. 26: Jackie Robinson Breaks the Color Line

Fri., Mar. 28: Discussion #6 (see "Student Assignment Sheet")

*book reviews are due today

Mon., Mar. 31: Baseball and Communism: The McCarthy Years
Wed., Apr. 02: Women and Professional Baseball
Fri., Apr. 04: The Decline of the Minor Leagues

Mon., Apr. 07: Migrating Franchises
Wed., Apr. 09: Discussion #7 (see "Student Assignment Sheet")
Fri., Apr. 11: "*When it was a Game*" (1940s-1950s; video)

Mon., Apr. 14: The Stars and Teams, 1950s-1970s
Wed., Apr. 16: Television Shapes the Game
Fri., Apr. 18: Discussion #8 (see "Student Assignment Sheet")

Mon., Apr. 21: Unions, Agents, and Arbitration
*class papers due
Wed., Apr. 23: The New Stars, 1980s and 1990's
Fri., Apr. 25: "Great Moments in Baseball" [video]

Mon., Apr. 28: The 1994 Strike and Beyond
Wed., Apr. 30: Discussion #9 (see "Student Assignment Sheet")
Fri., May 02: Discussion #10 (see "Student Assignment Sheet")

Fri., May 09: Final Examination (10:45 - 1:15)

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT SHEET

** when papers are required as part of discussion days, they are to be typed or written in ink, double spaced on standard sized paper, and written in proper English. There should be no profanity or questionable slang used in these assignments unless part of quotations. These papers should be thoughtfully done and carefully proofread. They will be read closely by the instructor and much of each student's "participation" grade will come from this source.

The papers are also to be folded vertically; that is, down the middle, length-wise, and the student's name should appear on the outside just where one would find the title of a book (but at the top). The instructor should be able to read your name, then open your paper to read your work. Failure to follow directions will result in penalties.

Fri., Jan. 24: Discussion no. 1: There is no specific outside assignment for students to prepare for this discussion day. An exam regarding baseball rules and issues will be administered in class and that text will form the basis of the discussion that will follow. Students may want to brush up on their understanding of baseball rules, terms, slang, and statistical methodology before coming to class but it is not required. Two reliable sources for this type of information are the Baseball Encyclopedia and Total Baseball, both found in the GV section of Reference on floor one.

Fri., Jan. 31: Discussion no. 2: Again, there is no specific outside assignment. We will continue to discuss the questions on the "exam" given on January 24. Should you not be able to answer questions on the test that will be discussed today, it might save you embarrassment if you look up the answers before coming to class. See sources discussed under the previous assignment.

Fri., Feb, 21: Discussion no. 3: To prepare for this discussion day you should either rent the video "Eight Men Out" or read the book of the same name. Today we will discuss the scandal of the 1919 World Series in general and the treatment of it in "Eight Men Out" in particular. Come to class prepared to discuss the film.

Wed., Mar. 12: Discussion no. 4: Your assignment today is to write a one page paper to be turned in at the beginning of class. The paper is to argue that someone (of your choice) no longer playing but not yet in the Hall of Fame should be there, OR that someone currently in the Hall of Fame should not be there. You will be evaluated on the intelligence of your choice and on the strength of your argument. Be prepare to announce your choice to

the class and defend it to your classmates and the instructor. Some of you may wish to check the list of Hall of Famers in the Baseball Encyclopedia or Total Baseball or look at Bill James' provocative *The Politics of Glory*.

Fri., Mar. 14: Discussion no. 5: Today's discussion day will be determined by students. Each student is to turn in at the beginning of class a one or two page paper on a topic of his or her choice. The only requirements are that it concerns baseball, that it interests or intrigues you, and that it will educate, entertain, or provoke the instructor. Be prepared to discuss your paper in class.

Fri., Mar. 28: Discussion no. 6: The topic of today's discussion is Jackie Robinson. Each student should read the folder on Robinson on RESERVE (circulation desk, floor 1 of Michener Library, and be prepared to discuss that material in class. The material is listed on RESERVE under the instructor's name and this class.

Wed., Apr. 09: Discussion no. 7: Each student must write a one or two page paper on a player that he or she has never seen play in person or on TV, but that he or she would like to watch or would like to have watched when he played. The paper should include reasons for the choice. Be prepared to discuss and defend your choice in class.

Fri., Apr. 18: Discussion no. 8: Today you must turn in a one page paper identifying and explaining a change you would like to see made in major league baseball today. Your choice can range from rules of the game to how it is packaged. How would you change the game if you had the power to do so? Be prepared to discuss and defend your choice in class.

Wed., Apr. 30: Discussion no. 9: By April 30 you will have seen the video, "*Great Moments in Baseball*." The moments on that video were chosen by others. Your task today is to write a one to two page paper identifying what you consider to be a "Great Moment" that should be included on such a video. You must of course describe your moment and defend your choice.

Fri., May 02: Discussion no. 10: The question to be addressed today is what topic should have received greater attention in a class on baseball than this class gave it? You are to turn in a one to two page paper indicating your choice and explaining it. Be prepared to discuss your thoughts in class.

CLASS NOTES:

NO make up exams will be given UNLESS the instructor receives on the day of the exam information that the student has a medical or other verifiable, legitimate excuse for missing the assignment. Contact the History Department (351-2905) or the instructor (351-2391), or have a friend or acquaintance do so.

Students failing to take the final examination when it is scheduled will either receive an "I" or an "F," depending on the instructor's assessment of the situation.

NO early exams will be given.

Examinations must be written in ink. Exams written in pencil will not be read and no opportunity for a make up exam will be permitted.

The exam must also be taken in a blue book. Each student must provide a blue examination book to the instructor prior to the scheduled exam.

Plagiarism (the attribution of other's work as your own) also is unacceptable and it too will result in a failing grade in the course for those culpable. You must write your own papers.

Missed discussion days are viewed the same as missed exams. Students who miss Discussion Days (and the assignments required on those days) should contact either the secretary of the History Department or the instructor, or have a friend do so on that day. The relevant phone numbers appear above.

Students signing the instructor's name on any materials, including official university forms such as drop cards, will be held legally accountable.

BOOK REVIEW:

Each student is required to read a book about post-1941 baseball of his or her choice from the attached bibliography and write a book report on it. The book must be a work of non-fiction. The report is due March 28 and must be between two (2) and four (4) pages in length. It must be typed, double-spaced, on standard sized paper, and written in proper English. It should discuss and evaluate the author's thesis, approach, and evidence, in addition to any weaknesses and strengths you deem important. Should you have questions about this assignment, feel free to contact the instructor to discuss them. Remember, you are to write a critical book report not a summary of the book.

STUDENT PAPER:

Each student is required to write and submit a paper on a topic relevant to this course and agreed upon by student and instructor alike by Friday, March 7. That is, each student is required to contact the instructor and gain his permission for a paper topic by that date. Obviously it behooves students to meet with the instructor before March 7 to begin "negotiations." Papers not cleared with the instructor will not be accepted.

A 3x5 card must be turned in during class on March 7 indicating the agreed upon topic/title.

The paper must be between five (5) and seven (7) pages in length, typed, double-spaced, on standard sized paper, and written in proper English. Bibliography form must conform to the History Department Writing Manual. The manual can be purchased or consulted on RESERVE. Footnote form may conform to that same manual or footnotes may be included in the text, (i.e., Abbott, 33) once a proper bibliography is provided.

The paper is due Monday, April 21 at the beginning of class.

Research aids include newspapers available in Michener on microfilm, The Sporting News (1886-1938), also on microfilm in Michener, The Baseball Encyclopedia (10th ed.), and John Thorn's Total Baseball.

The attached bibliography also provides individual categories and topics that could be the focus of class papers.