

Semester Online - Baseball and American Culture (Fall 2013)
Professor Bill Gruber (wegrube@emory.edu)

Weekly topics and readings:

Week 1: Before There Were Major Leagues (Readings: selected historical images and writings on Blackboard, including--in addition to the images--Chadwick, "The Model Baseball Player" and *The Game of Baseball* [Introduction only], Thayer, "Casey at the Bat," Cummings, "How I Pitched the First Curve," and Seymour, chapters from *Baseball: The Early Years*).

Week 2: The Game Your Great-Great Grandparents Saw (Readings: selections from Ritter, *The Glory of Their Times*: Prefaces, and entries by Rube Marquard, Davy Jones, Sam Crawford, Fred Snodgrass, Joe Wood, Chief Meyers, Edd Roush, Lefty O'Doul, Goose Goslin, Heinie Groh, Hank Greenberg, and Paul Waner)

Week 3: Legends of the Game (Readings: novel, Greenberg, *The Celebrant*; film, *Eight Men Out*)

Week 4: The Batter (Reading: biography, Montville, *The Big Bam: The Life and Times of Babe Ruth*; first short essay due by Friday)

Week 5: The Pitcher (Reading, biography, Leavy, *Sandy Koufax: A Lefty's Legacy*)

Week 6: Baseball and Segregation in America (Reading, Posnanski, *The Soul of Baseball*)

Week 7: Sliders with Social History (Reading, biography, Kahn, *The Boys of Summer*; first research paper due by Friday)

Week 8: The People's Game (Readings include chapters from Seymour, *The People's Game*, and Johnson, *When Women Played Hardball*; film, *A League of Their Own*)

Week 9: Minor League Baseball (Reading, nonfiction, Price, *Heart of the Game*; film, *Bull Durham*)

Week 10: A Game of Numbers: Statistics and Salaries (Readings, selections from Schwarz, *The Numbers Game*; Helyar, *Lords of the Realm*; film, *Moneyball*)

Week 11: Fields of Play: The Ballpark in Urban America (Readings, selections from Kuklick, *To Every Thing A Season*; selected images of major league, minor league, collegiate, and historic baseball parks; second short essay due Friday)

Week 12: Oh What a Literary Game (Readings, selections from Silverman, *The Greatest Baseball Stories Ever Told*, including the pieces by Doris Kearns Goodwin, Roger Angell, John Updike, Red Barber, David James Duncan, Arnold Hano, Pete Hamill, Jimmy Cannon, Gary Smith, Richard Ben Cramer, W. C. Heinz, and A. Bartlett Giamatti)

Week 13: Baseball and the American Imagination (Readings, DeLillo, *Pafko at the Wall* and selections from Harbach, *The Art of Fielding*; film, *The Natural*)

Week 14: The Next Hundred Years (Readings, selections from Will, *Men At Work*; Turbow, *The Baseball Codes*; Rader, *Baseball: A History of America's Game* (second research paper due Friday)

Week 15: Reading week and final examination

Required Texts and Viewing

Below are listed the books you need to buy and the films I'd like you to see. You can watch the films on your own, or, if you know some of your classmates, in small groups.

Texts: Jeff Silverman, ed., *The Greatest Baseball Stories Ever Told*; Roger Kahn, *The Boys of Summer*; Eric Rolfe Greenberg, *The Celebrant*; Lawrence Ritter, *The Glory of Their Times*; S. L. Price, *Heart of the Game*; Joe Posnanski, *The Soul of Baseball*; Don DeLillo, *Pafko at the Wall*; Jane Leavy, *Sandy Koufax: A Lefty's Legacy*; Leigh Montville, *The Big Bam: The Life and Times of Babe Ruth*

Films: *Bull Durham*; *The Natural*; *Eight Men Out*; *Moneyball*; *A League of Their Own*

Class Participation

The success of an online class such as this one depends to a great extent on the active participation of every one of its members; our class is, in a real sense, a team effort. To help promote lively and thoughtful conversations about the game of baseball, I'll ask you to complete all reading and writing assignments on time, including papers, quizzes, and short weekly responses. That way our synchronous class sessions will be lively and mutually informative.

Assignments

There will be four papers due at regular intervals throughout the term, two short personal essays (about 3 pages each) and two longer research papers (the first, about 5-6 pages, the second about 7-8). Due dates for the papers are included on the syllabus. The personal essays are just that: short, informal pieces in which you write about something having to do with baseball of particular interest or significance to you. (Note: just because these essays are personal and informal does not mean they don't have to be thoughtful and carefully written. Don't worry if you have little experience with this form of writing; I'm absolutely confident you'll find personal essays interesting and pleasurable to write. If you're not sure what a "personal essay" looks like, in our course documents you'll find a separate file with several sample personal essays by professional writers and students as well as a brief set of guidelines for writing them.) The remaining graded assignments include brief, weekly quizzes on the reading assignments and a 90 minute final examination the last week of class; we'll use our "live" sessions that week for general review.

In the longer, critical papers you should write about a particular topic of interest to you that concerns some aspect of the game of baseball or its history. These papers will normally require you to do research on subjects that in most cases have not been fully covered (if at all) in the readings or in weekly assignments or discussions. At least once during the term you will need to make a presentation of your work on one of these research papers to the rest of the class.

Grading

Finally, about term grades: these will be based mainly on the four papers and to a lesser extent on your scores on the weekly quizzes and the final examination. The two research papers will count about 50%,

the personal essays about 20%, and the quizzes and final exam the remaining 30%. In determining a final grade I will also take into consideration the quality of your participation in all other class activities.