

# Baseball and American Society: A Journey

COR 142J/LOS 170

**3 Credits**

This travel course examines the relationship of baseball to American society. It considers historical parallels between the coming of age of the United States and its "national pastime" along with a wide range of other issues. These include race, gender, stadium architecture, and business aspects of baseball, careers, and the ethics of sports.

Through the experience of museums and various baseball stadiums, along with guest lectures by people in and around the game, students will have the opportunity to understand a variety of different aspects of baseball and leadership that could not be gained from a book. This will include a trip to the National Baseball Hall of Fame; interviews with players, coaches, management, and officials involved in various levels of professional baseball; interviews with fans, vendors, and others at games and museums; and group discussions of the experiences each person is having (all guest lectures/interviews subject to availability).

## **Course Objectives:**

- **Students will understand baseball through the lens of history and at least one of the following: race, labor relations, and/or gender**
- **Students will understand perspectives from multiple viewpoints and voices that have impacted baseball history and leadership**
- **Students will understand conflicting narratives that appear in baseball culture and history**
- **Students will demonstrate skill in effective communication and analysis**

## **Required Texts**

Gilbert, D. A. (2013). *Expanding the strike zone: Baseball in the age of free agency*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press.

Rader, B. G. (2008). *Baseball: A history of America's game* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Students will also choose one text related to a minority group in baseball. This can focus on a group, such as Negro league baseball, or an individual, such as Hank Greenberg. If you aren't sure what to choose, consult the list at the end of this syllabus.

**Other course material (Purchase not required):**

Burns, K. (Producer, Director). (2010). *Baseball: A film by Ken Burns*. United States: PBS.

Clark, J. (Producer), & Helgeland, B. (Director). (2013). *42*. United States: Warner Brothers.

Other films as appropriate

**Assignments:**

**Journal:** Each day of our travel, you will write a journal entry that reflects upon your experiences and relates them to readings and discussions that have been done in the course. Each entry should include a thoughtful exploration of a part of the experience that has been meaningful to you and how it has impacted your understanding of baseball.

**Book Presentation:** Each student will be expected to give an oral report on the additional text they chose to read. The text should somehow be connected to a minority group and baseball. This could focus on the group as a whole or a pioneering individual from that group. The report should discuss the main concepts of the book and how it contributes to the overall understanding of the particular group related to the book. For example, a student could read *The Jackie Robinson Story* and then reflect on how this book contributes to the overall understanding of Negro League Baseball and the integration of Major League Baseball. Presentations will take place throughout the course

**Final Paper:** Once we return from our trip, you will use the books, other readings, films, and discussion to analyze your experience. This paper should draw from all aspects of the trip, including journal entries. Additionally, it should address new reflections that have come up since returning from the trip. Your paper should be 5-7 pages in length and should have an overall theme. This paper is not a summary of our trip, but rather an examination of your experience and its impact on your thinking.

## Suggested Student Choice Books

Note: This is not an exhaustive or exclusive list

### Negro League Baseball

Hogan, L. D., & Tygiel, J. (2006). *Shades of glory: The Negro Leagues and the story of African-American baseball.*

O'Neal, B., Wulf, S., & Conrads, D. (1996). *I was right on time: My journey from the Negro Leagues to the Majors.*

Madden, B. (2014). *1954: The year Willie Mays and the first generation of black superstars changed Major League Baseball forever.*

Maraniss, D. (2007). *Clemente: The passion and grace of baseball's last hero.*

Moore, J. T. (2011). *Larry Dobby: The struggle of the American League's first black player.*

Peterson, R. (1992). *Only the ball was white: A history of legendary black players and all-black professional teams.*

Ramersad, A. (1998). *Jackie Robinson: A biography.*

Tye, L. (2010). *Satchel: The life and times of an American legend.*

### Jewish Baseball

Kurlansky, M. (2013). *Hank Greenberg: The hero who didn't want to be one.*

Leavy, J. (2010). *Sandy Koufax: A lefty's legacy.*

Ruttman, L. (2013). *American Jews and America's game: Voices of a growing legacy in baseball.*

### Women in baseball

Berlage, G. (1994). *Women in baseball: The forgotten history.*

Fidler, M. A. (2010). *The origins and history of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League.*

Grogorich, B. (1993). *Women at play: The story of women in baseball.*

### Asian baseball

Fitts, R. K. (2005). *Remembering Japanese baseball: An oral history of the game.*

Franks, J. S. (2008). *Asian Pacific Americans and baseball: A history.*

Guthrie-Shimizu, S. (2012). *Transpacific field of dreams: How baseball linked the United States and Japan in peace and way.*

Nakagawa, K. Y. (2001). *Through a diamond: 100 years of Japanese American baseball.*

Whiting, R. (2005). *The samurai way of baseball: The impact of Ichiro and the new wave from Japan*

Whiting, R. (2009). *You gotta have wa.*

### Latino baseball

Burgos, A. (2007). *Playing America's game: Baseball, Latinos, and the color line.*

Echevarria, R. G. (1999). *The pride of Havana: A history of Cuban baseball.*

Klein, A. (2014). *Dominican baseball: New pride, old prejudice.*

Kurlansky, M. (2011). *The eastern stars: How baseball changed the Dominican town of San Pedro de Macoris.*

Ruck, R. (1999). *The tropic of baseball: Baseball in the Dominican Republic.*

Ruck, R. (2012). *Raceball: How the Major Leagues colonized the black and Latin game.*