

The History of Baseball  
HIST 411/511  
University of Montevallo  
Summer I 2022  
Dr. John Bawden

**Class Time/Place:** Online

**Credit:** 3 hours

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### **Course Description**

Poet and essayist Walt Whitman is supposed to have said, in 1888, "baseball is our game: the American game: I connect it with our national character." Indeed, professional baseball offers a powerful lens through which to view the history of the American republic. In this course, we will examine how the game developed and spread across the United States and what various professional leagues reveal about American society and the history of race, immigration, population movements, business, and popular culture. Although it would be impossible to cover all the important milestones and interesting figures in baseball history, each week we will consider a handful of baseball personalities with a focus on what they reveal about the game and American society. Other topics that will receive attention include the international reach of baseball, analytical approaches, and business of aspects. The goal of the course is to examine baseball from many perspectives and within the broader context of American society.

### **Required Texts**

Fommer, Harvey. *Old Time Baseball: America's Pastime in the Gilded Age*. Lyons Press, 2006. ISBN: 1630760064  
<https://www.amazon.com/Old-Time-Baseball-Americas-Pastime/dp/1630760064>

Lebovitz, Hal, and Paige, Satchel, *Pitchin' Man: Satchel Paige's Own Story* (Kindle Edition) ASIN: B008AVNFA8  
<https://www.amazon.com/Pitchin-Man-Satchel-Paiges-Story-ebook/dp/B008AVNFA8/>

### **Course Assessment**

Quizzes: 40%

Discussion: 45%

Research presentation and final essay: 15%

### **Course Evaluation**

8 quizzes, 10-15 points each

8 discussions, 10-15 points each

Final reflection and presentation, 40 points

I will drop the lowest quiz or discussion grade at the end of the semester.

### **Quizzes**

You will take nine multiple choice/true& false quizzes covering material from my PowerPoints and readings. The quizzes are all open book/note. However, your quizzes will have a time limit. Make sure you are in a distraction-free environment when you begin. You need to be prepared for the quiz. Studies show that taking handwritten notes while watching my video lecture is the best way to ensure comprehension of the content. You cannot spend valuable quiz time scanning through the PowerPoint, using Google, phoning friends, etc. Be sure to check the course schedule to see when the quizzes will take place. The quizzes are never comprehensive as they just cover the material for the day. We have no midterm or final exam.

### **Discussion**

I enjoy teaching and learning from students. The point of our online discussion is to create a "learning community" through our discussion board. Your goal is to engage with the course material and your fellow students in a meaningful way. To do so, you'll need to write something substantive about the question and then interact with other students. It is important to remember that the discussion "closes down" at 11:59pm. Online discussion involves interaction between you and your fellow students (and me). Discussion forums will open the day they are due. You should respond to my initial

question(s) and then after you have posted your response you will then be able to see responses from the other students. You must make a response to another student's post at least one time per discussion. To do so, ask questions, offer other ideas, suggestions, and different perspectives of the topic. Don't simply repeat what someone has said or just simply agree. If you do agree, discuss why. If you disagree, explain your disagreement. Elaborate and provide detail as you comment back in forth. Here are two examples of responses to one discussion question--one good and one poor.

**Sample Discussion Question:** Jacques Barzun wrote, "Whoever wants to know the heart and mind of America had better learn baseball, the rules, and reality of the game." Barzun, a professor of cultural history at Columbia University, made this statement about baseball in the mid-twentieth century. Why do you think Barzun, a French-born academic and naturalized American said what he said?

**Student Response #1:** As a naturalized citizen of the United States, Barzun probably noticed that baseball had influenced American idioms and metaphors (take a raincheck, give me a ballpark figure, swing for the fences). The fact that he lived in New York City during the 1950s is significant because baseball teams from New York dominated MLB at that time and were fiercely loved by their fans in Brooklyn, Manhattan, and the Bronx. Barzun would have been aware of baseball's importance to the American people during WWII and its association with the American character (e.g. as American as baseball or apple pie). More generally, I think Barzun might be commenting on the fact that Americans talked about baseball teams at work and listened to games on the radio. He undoubtedly witnessed American children playing the game during recess and on weekends.

**Student Response #2:** I agree with Barzun. If you want to know about the American people, you should study baseball. Barzun probably made this statement because he saw people playing baseball in the United States.

**Grade?:** If you were the professor, how would you grade response #1 and response #2? I have a grading rubric on canvas for you to review my grading guidelines.

### **Discussion Rules**

- Do not confuse our discussions (which is a zone for college level discussions of content) with a Chat Room. They are two different things and have completely unrelated expectations.
- Respect differing views.
- When posting to the board, read the discussions carefully and respond in a meaningful and deliberate (well thought out) matter. Remember, you are trying to engage other students and move the conversation forward. Stimulate the discussion by adding new ideas and thoughts.
- Do not use texting shortcuts (i.e., i, u, r, LOL, cu, etc...) within a college discussion board or slang or jargon. You are responding to a question posed in a college course. Thus, respect the platform. Write using Standard English, respecting all rules of grammar, syntax and usage.
- Never use ALL CAPS in a Discussion Board; that is considered yelling (online).

### **Online Participation Requirements**

Although online students enter class during the day and time that is most convenient for them, they need to enter class regularly (i.e., daily). If not, the student will not be fully engaged and will miss key announcements, discussions, and activities. Students should know that instructors can see on Canvas all student activities: how often, how long, and when they are on Canvas.

### **Student Presentations**

Each student will develop a baseball research question, research the topic, and make a short (3-5 minute) presentation to the class via Zoom.

### **Graduate Level**

Graduate students will develop a baseball research question, research the topic, and submit a bibliography to me that includes two scholarly sources written by professional historians (books or articles) and two primary sources (memoirs, statistics, images, reports, etc.). During class presentations, graduate students will demonstrate knowledge of academic debates and scholarly perspectives with respect to their topic. Additionally, graduate students must receive my approval for their topic and bibliography at least one week before the oral presentation.

## Final Reflective Essay

During the last week of class, I will post a prompt about the history of baseball. This is not a research paper, but rather a final reflection on what you have learned. Part of the final reflection will include the results of your investigation into a baseball topic (see the list of topics available on Canvas).

## Online research tools

Society for American Baseball Research - <https://sabr.org/>

Baseball Hall of Fame Digital Collection - <https://collection.baseballhall.org/>

Baseball Reference - <https://www.baseball-reference.com/>

Google Scholar – <https://scholar.google.com/>

Baseball Index - <http://www.baseballindex.org/>

## Disclaimer

I reserve the right, after written announcement, to change course requirements or the method of assessment.

## Course Withdrawal Deadline

The last day for students to withdraw from a course and receive a grade of “W” is June 21.

## ADA Statement

The University of Montevallo provides equal opportunity to qualified students. If you have a disability (medical, physical, learning, psychological, etc.) and wish to request disability-related accommodations to complete course requirements, contact Disability Support Services (located in Main Central [Lower Level], rear entrance; 665-6250). Course requirements cannot be waived, but reasonable accommodations may be provided based on disability documentation and course objectives. Accommodations cannot be made retroactively.

## Student E-Mail

UM e-mail is an official means of communication among students, faculty, and administrators at the University of Montevallo and might be THE official means of communication between you and your instructors. You may receive very important UM e-mail messages from offices on campus for which some timely response will be required. The official email system for students is identified by [userID@forum.montevallo.edu](mailto:userID@forum.montevallo.edu) and can be accessed at the Campus Email link on the Montevallo website. You are responsible for monitoring and managing your account regularly, even during breaks. The University is not responsible for the handling of forwarded e-mail. Having e-mail forwarded does not absolve you from the responsibilities associated with communication sent to your official UM e-mail address. If you have any questions regarding or problems with your UM email account, you should contact the Solution Center (205-665-6512). The Solution Center is available Monday – Thursday, 8:00 am-7:00 pm; Friday, 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

## Course Schedule

Monday, June 6

Why Study Baseball?

**Course Introduction live Zoom @ 3pm**

<https://montevallo-edu.zoom.us/j/8738215003?pwd=YjZYdlA5dnhGT1hNL1NSbzBqc3dhZz09>

Tuesday, June 7

Origins of the National Pastime

**Quiz #1**

Read: Fommer, *Old Time Baseball*, 1-58 (Chapters 1-2)

Wednesday, June 8

Baseball during the Gilded Age (1865-1900)

**Quiz #2**

Read: “[A Brief History of the Baseball](#)”, Smithsonian, 2013.

Read: Fommer, *Old Time Baseball*, 59-118 (Chapters 3-4)

Thursday, June 9

Harvey Fommer, *Old Time Baseball: America's Pastime in the Gilded Age*

## **Discussion #1**

Friday, June 10

The Dead-Ball Era, 1901-1920

### **Quiz #3**

Monday, June 13

Read: Charles Leerhsen, "Who Was Ty Cobb? The History We Know That's Wrong," *Imprimis*, 2016.

Read: Black Sox Scandal Committee, "Eight Myths Out: The Black Sox Scandal," *SABR*, 2019.

Read: *Pitching Man: Satchel Paige's Own Story* (Chapters 1-7)

### **Discussion #2**

Tuesday, June 14

The Live-Ball Era, 1921-1945

Read: Bill Plott, "Nobody would have believed she was a professional baseball player" *The Birmingham News*, February 27, 1994

### **Quiz #4**

Wednesday, June 15

The Integration of Baseball, 1946-1957

Read: "[How Bill White, Curt Flood, and others integrated Cardinals spring training](#)"

Read: *Pitching Man: Satchel Paige's Own Story* (Chapters 8-14)

### **Quiz #5**

Thursday, June 16

Discuss *Pitchin' Man: Satchel Paige's Own Story*

### **Discussion #3**

Friday, June 17

Westward Expansion, Unionization, and the "Year of the Pitcher", 1958-1969

### **Quiz #6**

Monday, June 20

HOLIDAY

Tuesday, June 21

Rule Changes, Free Agency, and Individualism, 1970-1979

Read: Excerpts from Jim Bouton, *Ball Four*

### **Discussion #4**

Wednesday, June 22

The Business of Baseball, 1980-1994

### **Quiz #7**

Thursday, June 23

Read: George Plimpton, "The Curious Case of Sidd Finch", *Sports Illustrated*, April 1, 1985.

Read: John R. Bawden, "How average CEO pay mirrors the salaries of elite baseball players," *Business Insider*, May, 2017.

### **Discussion #5**

Friday, June 24

Retro Stadiums, Surging Power, and the Steroid Era 1992-2007

### **Quiz #8**

Monday, June 27

Sabermetrics, Big Data, and the Analytics Revolution, 2000-present

Read: Excerpt from Michael Lewis, *Moneyball* (E-Reserves)

Review: Excerpt from Travis Sawchik, *Big Data Baseball* (E-Reserves)

**Discussion #6**

Tuesday, June 28

Minor League Baseball

Read: Excerpts from Dirk Hayhurst, *Bullpen Diaries* (E-Reserves)

Read: Steve Treder, “Delving into the Dalkowski depths”

**Discussion #7**

Wednesday, June 29

Baseball Outside of the United States

**Quiz #9**

Thursday, June 30

Sport and the Human Condition

**Discussion #8**

Friday, July 1

**Student presentations via Zoom @ 3pm**

<https://montevallo-edu.zoom.us/j/8738215003?pwd=YjZYdIA5dnhGT1hNL1NSbzBqc3dhZz09>

**Final reflection due July 3**