

American Studies 101: Popular Culture: Baseball and American Culture  
Syllabus

Instructor Ewan Magie

Office Hours M/W 11:30-12:20pm or by appointment

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Required Texts:

*Baseball: An Illustrated History*, Burns and Ward

*I Never Had It Made*, Robinson

*Out of Left Field*, Thiel (excerpts on BCC library reserve)

Course Description:

We will learn about the history of baseball in America, examining how this sporting history has in part mirrored the history of our nation. At the same time, you will also do a lot of writing, in class and on your own. The requirements of this course will help you comprehend the evolution of this history more fully. By the end of the course, whatever appreciation for the game of baseball you may have had before the course, will inevitably be deepened, on both a personal and historical level.

We will read history and sociology, short essays and novels, and, of course, newspaper articles by local and national writers who cover the game. We will also read each other's essays, engage in peer review and in general, deepen each other's appreciation of this complex social phenomenon known as baseball. We will also be movies and music, and we will have on reserve, Ken Burns' documentary series on baseball, which you should consider as a super lecture that accompanies the large textbook. There will be relatively little live lecture, though we will do a lot of writing in class.

You will create projects that will inform and entertain your fellow students (and me).

You will write your brains out, and in doing so learn to develop sound writing habits and improve all writing skills. You will produce writing that will speak of your own relationship to the game, as well as the game as a part of American life and history. Part of how this course joins together a serious understanding of American history and the fun of playing one of America's best games, is to help each of us realize our own participation in an ongoing history.

You will become versed in important events in the history of baseball, and learn about many of the storied players, managers, owners and others that make the game so colorful. In other words, you will become a student of the game, able to speak of players, issues, and strategy. Your enjoyment will become richer, and you will likely come to appreciate the game's special beauty.

Expected Outcomes:

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Comprehend texts written at college level or above.
2. Write coherently and informatively on the history, sociology, and economics of baseball.
3. Recognize different styles of texts, from journalism to fiction, to personal essay, to academic essay, and so on.
4. Write an effective critical film review.
5. Write an effective journalistic account (summary) of a baseball game.

6. Make specific connections between the past and present of American baseball and culture.

Class Policies and Expectations:

1. We will begin class on time, and end on time.
2. We will learn to value the differences among us, and we will always treat each other respectfully, even when we disagree.
3. YOU are responsible for all assigned work. This includes knowing assignments, getting instructions right and turning all work in on time.

Attendance:

Missing class can prevent you from passing this class. If your absences reach to or exceed two weeks of class (10 sessions), you cannot get a passing grade in this class. Arriving late and leaving early may also count as absences. Your instructor values promptness in all matters. Specifically, late arrival or early departure counts for one half of a full absence. Missing class will affect your grade as follows: 0-5 absences, no grade change; 6-7 absences, grade drops one full letter grade; 8-9 absences, grade drops two full letter grades; 10+ absences, F. As an instructor, I understand that illness and other hazards of life occur, however, as with life in the professional world, an absence is an absence, regardless of “excuses.” YOU are responsible for meeting the standards of attendance; please keep track of your own absences, and don’t come asking me for your record.

Course Requirements:

1 Major Paper (4-6 pages, 2x spaced)  
Critical Response Papers (1 page, 1x spaced)  
Weekly Quizzes on the Readings  
Baseball Journal (Due at term’s end)  
Mid-Term Exam  
Final Exam

**GRADING SCALE FOR FINAL COURSE GRADE:**

A = 950-1000	B = 830-869	C = 690-759	D = 550-599
A- = 900-949	B- = 800-829	C- = 650-689	D- = 500-549
B+ = 870-899	C+ = 760-799	D+ = 600-649	F = 0-499

**COURSE CONTENT**

Please be aware that this is a college course and that all students will be expected to complete all assignments, including readings (and other textual materials) that may contain adult content. As per BC and Arts and Humanities Division policies, all students are adults (including students under 18) and will be expected to participate fully without the option for alternative assignments. All students will be expected to complete all the assignments without exception. Please keep in mind that the college environment is one that promotes and expects everyone to respectfully participate in the learning process. This includes the Affirmation of Inclusion statement posted in every classroom, and applies also to the expectations of mutual respect in speaking and listening in class. This

course will follow the guidelines for course content explained more fully in the Arts and Humanities website, [www.bcc.ctc.edu/artshum](http://www.bcc.ctc.edu/artshum).

### AFFIRMATION OF INCLUSION

Bellevue College is committed to maintaining an environment in which every member of the campus community feels welcome to participate in the life of the college, free from harassment and discrimination.

We value our different backgrounds at Bellevue College, and students, faculty, staff members, and administrators are to treat one another with dignity and respect.

<http://bellevuecollege.edu/about/goals/inclusion.asp>

### THE STUDENT CODE

“Cheating, stealing and plagiarizing (using the ideas or words of another as one’s own without crediting the source) and inappropriate/disruptive classroom behavior are violations of the Student Code of Conduct at Bellevue College. Examples of unacceptable behavior include, but are not limited to: talking out of turn, arriving late or leaving early without a valid reason, allowing cell phones/pagers to ring, and inappropriate behavior toward the instructor or classmates. The instructor can refer any violation of the Student Code of Conduct to the Vice President of Student Services for possible probation or suspension from Bellevue College. Specific student rights, responsibilities and appeal procedures are listed in the Student Code of Conduct, available in the office of the Vice President of Student Services.” The Student Code, Policy 2050, in its entirety is located at:

[http://bellevuecollege.edu/policies/2/2050\\_Student\\_Code.asp](http://bellevuecollege.edu/policies/2/2050_Student_Code.asp)

### DISABLED STUDENT SERVICES (DSS)

Disabled Student Services serves students with a wide array of learning challenges and disabilities. If you are a student who has a disability or learning challenge for which you have documentation or have seen someone for treatment and if you feel you may need accommodations in order to be successful in college, please contact us as soon as possible.

If you are a person who requires assistance in case of an emergency situation, such as a fire, earthquake, etc, please meet with your individual instructors to develop a safety plan within the first week of the quarter.

The DSS office is located in B 132 or you can call our reception desk at 425.564.2498. Deaf students can reach us by video phone at 425-440-2025 or by TTY at 425-564-4110. . . . Please visit our website for application information into our program and other helpful links at [www.bellevuecollege.edu/drc](http://www.bellevuecollege.edu/drc)

### IMPORTANT LINKS

#### Bellevue College Email and MyBC

All students registered for classes at Bellevue College are entitled to a network and e-mail account. Your student network account can be used to access your student e-mail, log in to computers in labs and classrooms, connect to the BC wireless network and log in to MyBC. To create your account, go to: <https://bellevuecollege.edu/sam> .

BC offers a wide variety of computer and learning labs to enhance learning and student success. Find current campus locations for all student labs by visiting the [Computing Services website](#).

## PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC HONESTY

Plagiarism is the use of someone else's words or ideas as your own. You are plagiarizing when you copy someone else, in part or whole, or when you receive "help" to the extent that the paper is no longer in your words or is no longer your own idea. This is an immensely serious issue that goes to the heart of writing and learning; this course is an opportunity for each student to learn how to write and read English better, and plagiarizing someone else's work destroys that opportunity. Do your own work and you will learn all the more for your effort.

Obviously, copying an article or book, or even using a sentence from one of these sources without putting quotation marks around it and citing the author is plagiarism. If you do use other sources, whether they are books, magazines, or literary journals, etc., you must document them. Since many of the papers in this course focus on the writings of others, we'll learn early on how to document sources, using the MLA (Modern Languages Association) method. Plagiarism can be grounds for failing the course. If I catch you plagiarizing an assignment, you will certainly fail that assignment; plagiarizing found in the portfolio would be more serious yet. If I suspect you of plagiarism, I reserve the right to place more weight on your in-class writings to calculate your final grade. Be aware that BC provides a website guide (<http://www.bcc.ctc.edu/writinglab>) to plagiarism that you can use if you have any doubts as to general and school-specific policies on this issue. Please use this guide if you are at all uncertain if you might be plagiarizing other texts of any sort.

### Things to Remember:

ALL Assigned Work must be turned in to receive a passing grade! Exams must be taken on the assigned date. Exams cannot be taken at other times. Failure to do these things will mean failure in the course.

On the positive side of things, we will be steeping ourselves in a living history, one that we ourselves continue to make, even today. We will learn about the evolution of baseball as a sport and pastime; we will examine the traditions of baseball and how they are handed down through generations. Delving into the history of baseball, we will ask what parts of the past we find still active and influential in our own time. We will ask what has changed, what is unique to our own moment, and how. We will examine how aspects of the present interact with specific aspects of American and baseball history. Also, we will delve into the sociology of baseball, looking at how it has figured in issues of class, race, and gender in America; we will explore the social background of how America has evolved together with baseball: its agrarian roots, its urbanization, its sense of community identity. Obviously, we will look at the economics of baseball: how issues of labor and management pervade baseball, from the signing of contracts to financing stadiums to player relations, the reserve clause, and free agency. The individual heroes of baseball and their impact on American society will be considered, along with famous executives who have and continue to influence the game today. The scandals of baseball are not new phenomena: we will explore the history of gambling,

drugs and alcohol which have accompanied the game throughout its history. Naturally, we will explore the reciprocal relationship between the media and baseball, including the rise of broadcasting, the great age of radio, and the effects of TV and 24-hour sports networks such as ESPN. We will watch and discuss several films, writing about how they represent our American ideas about baseball. Last, but not least, we will explore the literature and language of baseball, how it gets written about and talked about, and represented in the images of film.

In order to do all this effectively, we must write effectively. We will focus on how to write a Thesis Statement, how to develop a Research Question, how to write a Topic Sentence, and how to create Paragraph Unity. We will look at Introduction Strategies, Conclusion Strategies, and how different Modes of Writing use these strategies differently. This will naturally lead us to issues of style, and we will learn to recognize when different writers use different styles, and for what purposes. In other words, you will become more sophisticated writers yourselves, capable of writing in different modes and styles, each suited to different audiences. Let's work hard, and you will enjoy your quarter. Let's "Play Ball!"