

# American Mythology: Baseball and American Culture

## American Studies 101

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During the next several weeks, we'll be reading baseball, watching baseball video, listening to baseball music, talking baseball, writing baseball, eating & sleeping & drinking baseball, dreaming baseball, nightmaring baseball. Man! If you don't have a high capacity for baseball, you're in the wrong place!

### **Required Texts and Materials**

Buy these:

*Baseball: An Illustrated History*, Burns & Ward

*The Natural*, Bernard Malamud

One way or another, have access to:

*Baseball: A Film by Ken Burns*

*The Natural*, film

The easiest (though not the cheapest) way of accessing the Burns/Ward material is to purchase the package deal, containing book, DVD series and music CD. This course will be offered again in the fall, so you should be able, if you choose, to market the DVD and CD. You should consider the book a keeper (great for the coffee table or bedside stand), because you should annotate the heck out of it.

You might find the video at a local library or video store. BCC Media Center has a copy, and it's always more fun to watch with an interested crowd. Make a "date" with other class members to meet for video.

### **Course Description**

This course requires a major time commitment—during the compressed summer schedule that would be in the neighborhood of 15-20 hours per week. This is an 11 week course compressed into 7 weeks. Why, the running time of Burns' *Baseball* video alone exceeds 25 hours. Then there are the movies. Your reading will demand many hours. Good writing takes time. Your online hours will add up. You'll be spending a good chunk of your life engaged in online "discussion." And you'll be needing to work on research. Much of this can be done on line

We will examine the history of baseball in America. You will learn surprising information about the mythic origins of the game. Also, how the history of baseball has in part mirrored the development of the nation. We will see how baseball has evolved in the last 170 or so years, and see the game today in the perspective of the past. Many of the issues of today—economics, race, class and gender—have been a part of baseball, too.

You will become versed in important events in the history of baseball, and learn about many of the storied players, managers 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, strategy. Your enjoyment of the game will thus become richer, and you will appreciate its special beauty.

Here's some of the good stuff we'll be doing:

- Detail the surprising origins of Our National Pastime, as well as its growth.
- Evaluate myths that baseball has evoked, such as its pastoral nature and fulfillment of the Jeffersonian ideal.
- Place the game in historical, economical, and sociological contexts in eras ranging from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- Analyze issues affecting baseball and society, including race, gender and class; gambling; globalization; and drug use.
- Create projects that will inform and entertain your fellow students (and me).
- Recognize the names and roles of the sport's most historically influential people.
- Pick and justify an all-time All-Star team.

**Class Policies and Expectations**

- **You** are responsible for all assigned work. This includes knowing assignments, getting instructions right and turning in all work in a timely manner.
- You will read and comply with the policy statement of the Arts and Humanities Division.
- You must complete satisfactorily complete every assignment in order to be eligible for a passing grade. For more on this read “Course Requirements” below.

**Attendance**

If this were a “live” course, this would be the policy:

*Missing class excessively can prevent you from passing. If your absences exceed 20% of class meetings, you cannot get a passing grade. Arriving late and leaving early can count as partial absence.*

In the on-line environment, frequent participation is also paramount. You come and go as you please, since there is never a particular time when we all “meet” together. There are, however, strict limits on taking quizzes and tests, but these offer a window of many hours, sometimes a full day.

Experience tells me that those who spend little time checking in almost never do well. While frequent “attendance” offers no assurance of a high grade, it at least puts you in position to do well.

It is unacceptable to start days late, offering an explanation about travel or other commitments. You signed up for the course aware of the BCC academic calendar. Due dates, and the grace period for late work, are non negotiable. I always listen sympathetically to the reasons a student might be turning in work late, but I never accept these reasons as excuses. To be fair, it works like this: late is late.

**More Course Requirements**

In order to be eligible for a passing grade, a student must complete ALL assignments in a timely manner--even the smallest, seemingly insignificant or idiotic assignment!

Each assignment will have a due date and a “last acceptable late date.” Late assignments will lose points at a drastic, apparently heartless rate. If the assignment is not turned in by the “last acceptable late date,” the student will no longer be eligible for a passing grade.

Here’s a summary of how grades will be calculated (This gives the rough picture, but note that things change. If we delete or abbreviate an assignment, I might need to shuffle point values in the interest of fairness.)

Introductory exercises	10
Book chapter quizzes (9)	82
Book chapter discussions (9)	90
Burns’ film discussion (9)	45
Essay discussions (9)	90
Novel discussion	20
Movie discussion	20
Mid term exam	100
Final exam	150
<u>Extra innings project</u>	<u>50</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>657</b>

You will find details about these various items as you get into the course.

**Notice:**

If you require accommodation based on a documented disability, have emergency medical information to share, or need special arrangements in case of emergency evacuation, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible.

If you would like to inquire about support from the Disability Resource Center, call 425-564-2498 or go in person to the DRC (Disability Resource Services) reception area in the Student Services Building.

