

HISTORY 341-001
United States Sports History and Culture
Monday/Wednesday 9:00–10:15 * Robinson B 222
Professor Ryan Swanson

Office: Robinson B 377D
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Office Hours: Monday: 1:30-3; Friday: by appt.



Course Description

Howard Cosell once said, “Sports is human life in microcosm.” While perhaps an oversimplification, his statement reflects the reality that sports have played and continue to play a vital role in American society. Sports are also a valuable tool for historical and cultural assessment. Chronologically, this course will focus on the years from the Civil War onward, and pay special attention to the development of race, class, and gender structures in the United States. This will not be an exercise in sports trivia, where the focus will be on remembering the last ballplayer to hit .400 or the last horse to win the triple-crown. Rather this course will use sports, and the many documents surrounding the games to gain a new understanding of US history. As a rule, students will spend less time on Jackie Robinson the ballplayer, for example, and more on questions such as “Why, in 1947, were African-Americans allowed back into professional baseball?”

Course Level and Participation:

This is an upper division history class; therefore I assume that you have a general knowledge of U.S. history. Students should take personal responsibility for filling in the gaps in their knowledge when it comes to basic people and events. If you come across a person or event that seems important but you don’t know it, look it up. Use the Internet or a standard textbook to refresh basic chronology as needed. In this course you will be asked to read, discuss, and write about the role of sports in U.S. history. Few class sessions will consist solely of a lecture from the professor; rather lectures will be mixed with discussion. Make sure to do each week’s assigned reading *before* coming to class so you can contribute.

Students will earn participation credit by ... being in class and participating. Ask questions, disagree with the authors we read, have opinions. Any quizzes missed due to an unexcused absence cannot be made up. Only under extreme and documentable circumstances will the absence policy be reconsidered. Plan wisely.

Required Readings The following books are available for sale in the bookstore:

- Elliott Gorn. *The Manly Art: Bare Knuckle Prize-Fighting in America*. 1986.
- Benjamin Rader. *American Sports: From the Age of Folk Games to the Age of Televised Sports*. 2009.
- Max McElwain. *The Only Dance in Iowa: History of Six-Player Girls’ Basketball*. 2004.
- Daniel S. Pierce. *Real NASCAR: White Lightning, Red Clay and Big Bill France*. 2010.
- Sally Jenkins. *The Real All-Americans: The Team that Changed a Game, a People, a Nation*. 2008.

Blackboard: The syllabus, unit study guides, and all supplementary readings are available via blackboard. The supplementary readings are short, but *vital* to this class.

Due Dates: Response Papers (February 22, April 18); Midterm Exam (March 7), Reading Quizzes (Unannounced and Periodically)

Assignments

Participation/Reading Quizzes	15%
Midterm	20%
2 Response Papers (3-5 pages)	40%
Final Exam	25%

****NOTE** Deadlines are FIRM; requests for extensions will not be granted.** The *only* exceptions to the “no extensions” rule will occur in cases of illness (documented by doctor’s note) or family emergency of which I am informed *before* the assignment is due. *Lots of other work does not count as an emergency.* Late assignments will be penalized by a third of a letter a day, including weekends and holidays (A day-late B becomes a B-). Plan responsibly; submit work on time.

Office Hours:

I’m here to help. I am excited about history and sports, and I welcome opportunities to discuss the course and your progress in it. In addition to scheduled office hours, please feel free to email me to set an alternative time to meet. I rather obsessively check my email Monday through Friday. I am not available to meet immediately prior to the start of class.

Description of Assignments

I. Class Participation (15%). You are required to attend and participate in this course. Taking an active role in discussions and activities comprises just as much of your responsibility in this class as writing the papers and taking the quizzes. The way to prepare for discussion is to do the reading listed on the syllabus before coming to class, listen to the related lecture and your classmates’ responses to the reading, and contribute your own. The class participation grade honors the fact that interaction with each other comprises a major part of this course. In this



class you will also be asked to participate in sports play (at a very recreational level). If you choose not to participate in class discussions, you cannot do well in this course. There will be four class periods devoted to discussing the four monographs assigned for the course. There will also be History Labs where we dive into the documents to solve a sports history question. Participation in the discussion and labs will count for double participation points.

Absences: You get one free absence for the semester. After that freebie, missed classes will decrease your participation grade.

Discussion Facilitator: In addition to doing the reading and participating every week, each student will be asked to be a discussion facilitator for one class session. Don’t worry, this does not mean that you have to run the class for that day. It simply means that you need to come prepared (i.e. you’ve already thought about and written down) a couple of questions/insights on the day’s topic. These questions should not be meant to stump your colleagues. On the contrary, the point is to facilitate conversation. If you have a problem understanding a certain concept in the reading, don’t try to hide it. Put it on the table and see what your

classmates think. You may be called on to start off the class period or to interject somewhere in the middle. Be ready. From a grading standpoint, your session as a discussion facilitator will be weighted as double your daily participation grade.

Reading Quizzes: Regularly during the semester we will begin class with a short reading quiz. These quizzes will be straight-forward and designed to ensure that you are keeping up with the course content.

II. Midterm Exam (20%). Since factual knowledge is the basis of historical debate, there will be a midterm exam. A review guide will be provided by the professor.

III. Response Papers (40%). You will turn in two response papers during the semester. In each 3–5 page paper, you will respond to an interpretive question. There are two sources of questions for these papers. 1) Use one of the questions on the study guide provided for each unit. 2) If you have a burning question/topic that you would like to address, get email approval from the professor. You must get *prior* approval to do a non-list question. The email will be your proof that you did so.

All papers must be thesis-driven and analytical. They must engage with the texts and primary sources we use in class. No outside research is necessary. All papers must state a thesis, organize the paper to support that thesis, and use evidence (specific examples from the text) to prove the point. Don’t simply tell a narrative story. You must cite your sources. All papers will be due at the beginning of class on the specified date. You must hand in a hardcopy.

IV. Final Examination (25%). The final examination will consist largely of essay questions drawing on the themes/books/topics we have focused on throughout the semester.

How Paper Grades are Determined: The response papers and the research paper will be evaluated on three main criteria: thesis, organization, and evidence. Each of these categories will be discussed more fully in the context of each assignment, but in general, a paper that does a good job in each category is a B. A paper that almost does is a B-, and a paper that performs well in each category and goes beyond in one category is a B+. A paper that is satisfactory but weak in one or two categories is a C. A D paper is weak in three or more categories, or omits one criterion completely (i.e. lacks evidence). An A range paper performs exceptionally well in each category, and achieves something extraordinary in two or more categories.

Appealing a Grade: You are always welcomed and encouraged to discuss a paper with the professor. But if you want a grade reconsidered, you must first submit (by email is fine) a paragraph in which you evaluate your paper in each of the 3 criteria. Having the appeal in written form ensures that you take the time to assess your own paper and that I will be able to fully consider your appeal. Please remember that a grade does not reflect process (it does not measure whether you worked hard) and it certainly does not reflect a value judgment about you as a person. Rather a grade constitutes an evaluation of the quality and analytical rigor of the thesis, evidence, and style of a single piece of work. Appeals must be submitted no later than one week after graded papers are returned in class.

Adds/Drops

Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class. Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Schedule of Classes. (Deadlines each semester are published in the Schedule of Classes available from the Registrar's Website registrar.gmu.edu)

Last Day to Add: January 31, 2012

Last Day to Drop: February 24, 2012

After the last day to drop a class, withdrawing from this class requires approval of the dean and is only allowed for nonacademic reasons. Undergraduate students may choose to exercise a selective withdrawal. See the Schedule of Classes for selective withdrawal procedures.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Resources at 703.993.2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

Academic Honesty: George Mason University has an Honor Code, which requires all members of this community to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing are all prohibited. All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee. See honorcode.gmu.edu for more detailed information.

Schedule

Week 1:

January 23 – Class Introduction – America's Sporting Obsession

January 25 – The History of Organized Sports

* *American Sports*, Preface, Ch. 1

Week 2:

January 30 – The Puritans at Play

* *American Sports*, Ch. 2

February 1 – History Lab: Early Sports and Games: Tavern Games, Rounders, Town Ball, the Massachusetts Game (meet at GMU fieldhouse)



Week 3:

February 6 Sport and Mythmaking: How Baseball Did *Not* Begin in Cooperstown, NY



* PRIMARY DOCUMENTS (ALL AVAILABLE ON BLACKBOARD): Baseball Hall of Fame Articles

February 8 – The Civil War Begets a National Sporting Culture

* *American Sports*, Ch. 3, 4

Week 4:

February 13 – Cities, Immigrants, and Boxing

* *The Manly Art*, first half

February 15 – **Discussion**, *The Manly Art*

* *The Manly Art*, finish

Week: 5

February 20 – The “Flying Wedge” and the Rise of College Sports

PRIMARY DOCUMENT: “Football’s Death Record for 1907,” *New York Times*

* *American Sports*, Ch. 5

February 22 – Irish-Catholics and Notre Dame Football

PRIMARY DOCUMENT: “Gipp Loses Long Fight,” *New York Times*

* *American Sports*, Ch. 6

*****PAPER 1 DUE*****

Week 6:

February 27 – Jim Thorpe, Native Americans, and the West

* *American Sports*, Ch. 11

* *The Real All-Americans*, first half

February 29 – **Discussion**, *The Real All-Americans*

**The Real All-Americans*, second half

Week 7:

March 5 – Jack Johnson, White Women, and the Mann Act

* *American Sports*, Ch. 12, 13

March 7 – Midterm Exam

Spring Break – March 12-16 Enjoy!

Week 8:

March 19 – The Trials and Triumphs of Babe Didrikson

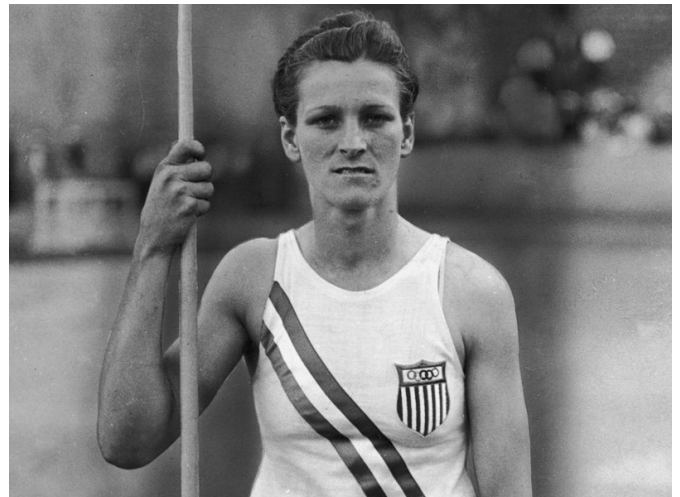
* *The Only Dance in Iowa*, first half

March 21 – History Lab: 6 on 6 BB Game (meet at GMU field house)

* *The Only Dance in Iowa*, second half

Week 9:

March 26 – **Discussion**, *The Only Dance in Iowa*



March 28 – Sport Heroes: From Babe Ruth to Sports During the Depression

* *American Sports*, Ch. 9, 20

Week 10:

March April 2 – World War II, Jim Crow, and Jackie Robinson

PRIMARY DOCUMENTS: Jackie Robinson Articles, “Greenlight” Letter

April 4 – Brown v. Board and Black Power: John Carlos, Tommy Smith, and Muhammad Ali

PRIMARY DOCUMENTS: Smith, Carlos, Ali Articles

* *American Sports*, Ch. 18

Week 11:

April 9 – Regional Differences: NASCAR and Southern Sports

* *Real NASCAR*, first half

April 11 – **Discussion, *Real NASCAR***

* *Real NASCAR*, second half

Week 12:

April 16 – Controlling College Sports: Southern Methodist University and the Death Penalty

* *American Sports*, Ch. 16

* Taylor Branch, “The Shame of College Sports,” *Atlantic Monthly*.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2011/10/the-shame-of-college-sports/8643/>

April 18 – Curt Flood and the Fight for Athletic Labor Rights

PRIMARY DOCUMENTS: Curt Flood Articles

* *American Sports*, Ch. 15

*****PAPER 2 DUE*****

Week 13:

April 23 – The Cold War and the Miracle on Ice

PRIMARY DOCUMENTS: Miracle on Ice Articles

* *American Sports*, Ch. 17

April 25 – History Lab: Ronald Reagan Conservatism and the Olympic Boycotts of 1980 and 1984

PRIMARY DOCUMENTS: Olympics Articles

Week 14:

April 30 –1992 Dream Team: Commercialization and Globalization

PRIMARY DOCUMENT: “Dream Team Makes 1992 a Year to Remember,” *Wall Street Journal*

* *American Sports*, Ch. 19, conclusion

May 2 – Course Summary and Review for Final Exam

Final Examination: Monday 5/14 – 7:30-10:15