

## HTS 2013 HP – *Modern America: The Art and Science of Baseball*

**Instructor:** Dr. Gregory Nobles (gregory.nobles@gatech.edu)  
Professor of History  
Director, Georgia Tech Honors Program  
103 A. French Building  
404.385.7535

**Purpose:** Baseball has long been called the “National Pastime,” a game that somehow transcended being just a game to become a symbol, or perhaps a barometer, of American society from the middle of the nineteenth century to, arguably, the present. Long before football, basketball, and other games gained a widespread following among the American people, baseball stood at the center of sport, a source of passion, delight, and debate for its fans. In the process, it also inspired an enormous body of writing, and not just in the sports pages, but in song, poetry, fiction, film, science, and social analysis. This course will examine baseball’s place in American society, looking both at the game on the field, or “between the lines,” and at the changing impact and meaning of the game far beyond the diamond. This approach will allow us all to think about “the art and science of baseball” in the broadest possible terms, encouraging each student to explore the various aspects of baseball that best inspire one’s interest and imagination.

**Expectations:** An Honors Program Special Topics Course is not a spectator sport. When it works well, it is a student-driven discussion in which the instructor sets the basic framework and moderates the conversation but otherwise invites students to exchange and discuss information and ideas with each other. Each student must therefore assume responsibility for the success of the course by coming to each class meeting well prepared for taking an active part in the discussion, having already read the assigned works with attention to both the specific information and the broader ideas and implications that come from the readings.

**Readings:** The following texts (paperback) are available at Engineer’s Bookstore and from Amazon.com or other Internet outlets:

Jules Tygiel, *Past Time: Baseball as History*

Jules Tygiel, *Baseball’s Great Experiment: Jackie Robinson and His Legacy*

Michael Lewis, *Moneyball: The Art of Winning and Unfair Game*

Don DeLillo, *Pafko at the Wall*

The following readings will be made available in electronic versions on the course T-Square site:

John Updike, "Hub Fans Bid Kid Adieu"

Roger Angell, "Down the Drain"

Bob Edwards, selections from *Fridays with Red*

Additional brief readings will be made available on the T-Square site or distributed in class

### ***Requirements and Grading Policy:***

On the days indicated on the syllabus with an asterisk (\*), there will be **seven short, five-question, in-class quizzes** on the reading assigned for the week; each student is required to take six quizzes.

There are **three written requirements** to be completed outside of class and submitted on the days indicated on the syllabus.

1. **Two short papers** (ca. 4-5 pages, typed, double-spaced) based on the course readings, on a topic either assigned by the instructor or devised by the student, subject to the instructor's prior agreement.
2. **A final individual or group project**, including a paper (ca. 15 pages, typed, double-spaced) and a poster or other form of presentation for the Honors Program Expo.

In all written requirements for the course, the standards of the Georgia Tech Honor Code will apply and will be stringently enforced. Anyone not fully familiar with those standards should become so immediately, and if there is any question as to their interpretation, please consult the instructor.

In the determination of the final grade for the course, the presentation/written requirements will be weighted accordingly:

In-class quizzes:	30% (6 @ 5% each)
Short papers:	30% (2 @ 15% each)
Final group project:	20%

The remaining 20% of the final grade will be based on attendance and attentiveness. Attendance is required for all classes and off-campus activities, and absences will be excused only in case of illness or some similar situation that makes attendance impossible. Attentiveness is active and informed engagement during class meetings.

### ***Learning Objectives:***

1. Gain an understanding of the place of baseball in US history and culture since ca. 1900, with particular emphasis on critical events and developments in both the game and American society and their implications for understanding change over time.

2. Develop skills in historical/social science research by framing a question for further inquiry, then consulting and analyzing appropriate primary- and secondary-source documentary materials to complete a final research project.
3. Refine effective skills and behaviors in group work by engaging in projects that promote student collaboration and accountability.
4. Refine communication skills by writing three short papers and a longer paper based on the research project noted above.
5. Refine communication skills by participating regularly and actively in a group discussion in an informed fashion; by making brief oral presentations in class and at the Honors Program Expo; and by responding to the presentations of classmates.

***Class Topics and Reading Assignments:***

<b>Week 1:</b>	Read Tygiel, <i>Past Time</i> , Chap. 1; Mahler, “Is the Game Over?”	
Jan. 7:	Introduction(s)	
Jan. 9*:	Warm-ups	<b>[Practice quiz]</b>
<b>Week 2:</b>	Read Tygiel, <i>Past Time</i> , Chaps. 2 and 3	
Jan. 14*:	The early days of baseball	<b>[Quiz 1]</b>
Jan. 16	What makes a great player? The 1914 All-Stars	
<b>Week 3:</b>	Read Tygiel, <i>Past Time</i> Chaps. 4-6	
Jan. 21*:	Making baseball modern	<b>[Quiz 2]</b>
Jan. 23:	Baseball in the South	
<b>Week 4:</b>	Read Tygiel, <i>Baseball’s Great Experiment</i> , Part I	
Jan. 28*:	The Negro Leagues	<b>[Quiz 3]</b>
Jan. 30:	The All-American Girls Pro Baseball League	
<b>Week 5:</b>	Read Tygiel, <i>Baseball’s Great Experiment</i> , Part II	
Feb. 4:	Project preparation: What is a good question?	
Feb. 6:	Breaking in: Jackie Robinson	<b>[Paper 1 due]</b>
<b>Week 6:</b>	Read Tygiel, <i>Baseball’s Great Experiment</i> , Part III; <i>Past Time</i> , Chap. 7	
Feb. 11*:	“The Shot Heard ‘Round the World”	<b>[Quiz 4]</b>
Feb. 13:	Baseball’s “Golden Age”?	
<b>Week 7:</b>	Read Updike, “Hub Fans Bid Kid Adieu”; Angell, “Down the Drain”	
Feb. 18*:	Knowing when it’s over, Part I	<b>[Quiz 5]</b>
Feb. 20:	Knowing when it’s over, Part II	
<b>Week 8:</b>	Read Tygiel, <i>Past Time</i> , Chap. 8; Lewis, <i>Moneyball</i> , Preface, Chaps. 1-7	
Feb. 25*:	The business of baseball	<b>[Quiz 6]</b>
Feb. 27:	The science of baseball	

**Week 9:** Read Lewis, *Moneyball*, Chaps. 8-12, Epilogue, Postscript  
Mar. 4: Stats and strategy  
Mar. 6: What really works? **[Paper 2 due]**

**Week 10:** Project work: no assigned reading; attend GT game @ Chandler stadium, Mar. 7-9, 11  
Mar. 11: Individual meetings re: projects  
Mar. 13: GT game report

### **SPRING BREAK**

**Week 11:** Read Tygiel, *Past Time*, Chap. 9; DeLillo, *Pafko at the Wall*; Edwards, *Fridays with Red*, pp. 43-49, 65-74, 90-95, 110-117  
Mar. 25\*: Baseball as memory **[Quiz 7]**  
Mar. 27: Baseball as fantasy

**Week 12:** Project work: no assigned reading  
Apr. 1: Project review  
Apr. 3: Project review

**Week 13:** Read Braves-Mets scouting reports  
Apr. 8: Preparation for Braves-Mets @ Turner Field, April 9  
Apr. 10: Braves game report

**Week 14** Project work: no assigned reading  
Apr. 15: Project presentation I  
Apr. 17: Project presentation II

**Week 15:** Project work: no assigned reading  
Apr. 22: Project presentation III (if needed)  
Apr. 24: Honors Program Expo presentation

**Projects due in Honors Program office by 5 pm, Thursday, May 1.**