

HIST250: Baseball and American Life
Classroom: Golisano 103
3 credits

Instructor: Melanie Sheehan (she/her)
Office: Golisano Hall 331
Office Hours: M/F 11:30-12:30; T/Th 11:00-12:30

College Deadlines: <https://www.hartwick.edu/academics/student-resources/academic-deadlines-important-dates-2025-2026/>

Last Day to Add a Full Term Course: January 6
Last Day to Drop a Full Term Course: January 21

Course Description:

In this course, we will use the history of baseball as a lens for understanding broader themes and developments in American life. Topics covered will include racial segregation and desegregation, gender discrimination and equity, immigration, and the nature of cultural diplomacy. Throughout the course, students will be encouraged to think critically about historical memory. What stories do we tell when we think about the history of baseball? What stories—and whose stories—do we choose to include and exclude? Why, and to what effect?

Learning Outcomes

- Understand how Americans of diverse backgrounds have historically engaged with the sport of baseball (GEO4)
- Critically analyze primary sources and situate them within the broader historical context in which they were created
- Critically analyze public memory and commemoration of the sport of baseball
- Develop the ability to communicate effectively in both writing and speaking

Required Texts

- Adrian Burgos, Jr., *Playing America's Game: Baseball, Latinos, and the Color Line* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).
- Debra A. Shattuck, *Bloomer Girls: Women Baseball Pioneers* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017).
- All other course materials will be available electronically via D2L.

Assignments (See attached for more detailed instructions)

- Discussion Leader-Reader Responses (2): 2x15%=30%
 - Assesses Learning Outcome 1
- Primary Source Analysis: 15%
 - Assesses Learning Outcome 2 and 4
- Hall of Fame Reflection Paper: 15%

- Assesses Learning Outcome 1, 3, and 4
- Final Project: 20%
 - Assesses Learning Outcomes 1 and 3
- Final Presentation: 10%
 - Assesses Learning Outcomes 1, 3, and 4
- Participation: 10%
 - Analyzes all Learning Outcomes

All papers will be assigned a letter grade, which will be translated to a number grade according to the breakdown below. The final average will then be calculated and converted into the final letter grade.

C+: 77-79

A+: 97-100

A: 93-96

A-: 90-92

B+: 87-89

B: 83-86

B-: 80-82

Class Policies

C: 73-76 C-: 70-72 D+: 67-69 D:

63-66 D-: 60-62 F: <60

Attendance: Attendance is critical for success in this class. A student who needs to miss a class because of illness, personal emergency, or participation in a College-sponsored event may be excused at my discretion. To be excused, students must contact me **in advance** of the class via email. The first absence **with advance notification** will be excused without a required makeup assignment. For subsequent absences, students will be asked to submit an alternative assignment to make up participation credit. All other absences will be considered unexcused, and the student will receive a participation grade of zero for that day's class.

Late Work: Late submission of the primary source analysis paper or the Hall of Fame reflection paper will receive a deduction of 1/3 of a letter grade for every 24-hour period after the deadline. Please note that late reading responses **WILL NOT** be accepted, and failure to submit a reading response will result in a zero for that assignment. Extensions may be granted on assignments in extenuating circumstances (i.e.: illness or personal emergency) at my discretion if requested **in advance** via email.

Electronic Devices: Students may use electronic devices for taking notes or for accessing readings only. If students need access to phones or other devices for other reasons (i.e. family emergencies, etc.), please consult with me ahead of time. All other uses of electronic devices will result in a deduction applied to the student's daily participation grade.

Best Ways to Contact Me: Students are encouraged to visit office with questions or concerns. I am generally unable to adequately provide feedback on ideas or drafts via email. If you have substantive questions about course content or would like to discuss ideas for assignments, I recommend attending my office

hours. Please also note that I do not typically respond to emails in the evening, and my email availability is limited on the weekends.

Inclement Weather Plans: In the case of inclement weather, class will be held virtually. Students will be contacted via email no later than two hours before class with information on how to access the class meeting.

Policy on AI: The purpose of the assignments in this course is to encourage thoughtful, critical, and synthetic engagement with primary sources and secondary literature in the field of history. Therefore, the use of AI will not be permitted for completion of course assignments. Paper submissions that show evidence of AI usage will receive a grade of zero.

Sample Course Schedule

Class 1: Course Introduction

Class 2: Key Concepts: Race, Gender, and Baseball Heritage

- Shattuck, *Bloomer Girls*, Introduction (1-8)
- Burgos, *Playing America's Game*, Introduction (1-14)
- Ramshaw and Gammon, "More than Just Nostalgia?"

Class 3: Early Baseball History and the Amateur Game

- Shattuck, *Bloomer Girls*, Chs. 1-2 (9-61)

Class 4: Mass Leisure and the Emergence of the Professional Game

- Shattuck, *Bloomer Girls*, Ch. 3 (62-92)
- Burgos, *Playing America's Game*, Ch. 1 (17-33)

Class 5: Baseball's Color Line in Jim Crow America

- Burgos, *Playing America's Game*, Ch. 3 (53-67)

Class 6: Bloomer Girls and New Women

- Shattuck, *Bloomer Girls*, Ch. 5 (135-178)
- "Harry Hooper" and "Joe Wood," in Ritter, *The Glory of their Times*

Class 7: Baseball and Empire

- Burgos, *Playing America's Game*, Ch. 4 (71-87)
- Zeiler, "Basepaths to Empire"
- ASSIGNMENT DEADLINE: Primary Source Analysis Paper

Class 8: The Negro Leagues

- Burgos, *Playing America's Game*, Ch. 6 and part of 8 (111-140, 162-170)

Class 9: Latinos in Major League Baseball, 1900-1945

- Burgos, *Playing America's Game*, Ch. 5, 7, and part of 8 (88-110, 141-161, 170-176)

Class 10: Baseball and Desegregation—FIELD TRIP

- Burgos, *Playing America's Game*, Ch. 9 (179-197)
- Lanctot, *Negro League Baseball*, Ch. 10 (320-362)
- 10:45 AM: Meet at National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown
 - Option to meet at Oneonta Bus Depot—Bus Departs at 9:00 AM (\$6.25 round trip)

Class 11: NO CLASS—MLK JR. DAY—WORK ON FINAL PROJECTS! ASSIGNMENT DEADLINE: Hall of Fame Reflection Paper

Class 12: Baseball after Desegregation

- Burgos, *Playing America's Game*, Ch. 10-11 (198-242)

Class 13: Women and Baseball in the 20th Century

- Berlage, *Women in Baseball*, 133-156
- Ring, *Stolen Bases*, 116-133
- Suzyn Waldman interview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4PHT2RUB8F0>

Class 14: Presentations

Assignments

Discussion Leader-Reader Responses (2): 2x15%=30%: Deadlines listed on attached “Discussion Questions” Document

Each student will be assigned to lead discussion for two specific class sessions. Students assigned as discussion leaders are expected to submit written responses to that day's discussion questions in class on the assigned day. Strong responses will provide approximately a paragraph length explanation to each question based on the assigned reading and will include specific examples and direct quotes from the text. Discussion leaders' contributions to class discussions will be assessed separately, as part of the student's overall participation grade.

Primary Source Analysis: 15% (2-3 pages)

The primary source analysis will require students to analyze the accounts of Harry Hooper and Joe Wood published in Lawrence S. Ritter's *The Glory of their Times*. What can we learn from these sources about professional baseball in the nineteenth century? How do these primary sources illuminate themes discussed in our other course readings? Strong papers will explain the accounts, place them in historical context using lectures and assigned secondary readings, and analyze the sources' broader significance for understanding early professional baseball. These papers DO NOT entail outside research.

Hall of Fame Reflection Paper: 15% (2-3 pages)

How would you assess your experience at the National Baseball Hall of Fame? In what ways did the exhibits reflect and/or diverge from the history of baseball as traced in this class? How would you assess curators' efforts to balance nostalgia and history? Strong responses will include direct quotes from course texts.

Final Project: 20%

The final project for this course will ask students to prepare a museum exhibit proposal for the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown. More information on this assignment is forthcoming.

Final Presentation: 10%

Students will be asked to present their exhibit proposals to the class during our final class session. Presentations will be graded on clarity and on students' engagement with their classmates' presentations. More detailed information on the presentations is forthcoming.

Participation: 10%

Preparation and participation are crucial for success in this course. This includes active listening, note-taking, and engagement in group and class discussion. It also includes students' contributions as discussion leaders. Students are expected to complete each day's assigned readings before class and to arrive on time ready to discuss the materials. A rubric will be distributed with further guidelines for evaluation of participation.

Resources:

Academic Accommodations:

Hartwick College is committed to the creation of an inclusive and safe learning environment for all students and welcomes students with disabilities into all the College's educational programs. The AccessAbility Services Office is responsible for the determination of appropriate modifications for students who encounter barriers due to a disability. If a student with a disability wishes to request academic accommodations, they should contact Lara Sanford, Director of AccessAbility Services and Academic Inclusivity at AccessAbilityServices@hartwick.edu. To serve you best, requests should be made as early as possible. Please let me know if you have questions or need assistance. I am committed to creating a course that is inclusive in its design. If you encounter barriers, please let me know immediately so that we can determine if there is a design adjustment that can be made or if an accommodation might be needed to overcome the limitations of the design. I am happy to consider creative solutions if they do not compromise the intent of the assessment or learning activity.

Academic Integrity:

Students are expected to know and abide by Hartwick's Academic Integrity Policy, and to ask questions when they are unsure of what they need to do to ensure that their work remains clearly their own. Briefly, claiming others' ideas as one's own, or borrowing others' ideas or language without providing proper credit, is considered plagiarism, which is a violation of academic honesty. If a student isn't sure how to provide the proper credit for others' ideas when using them in an assignment, they should ask the instructor. The Writing Center is also a great resource for this! Because charges of academic dishonesty can have serious consequences, the successful strategy is to seek help and ask questions before an assignment is due. Hartwick's Academic Integrity Policy can be found here: <https://www.hartwick.edu/academics/student-services/academic-affairs/academic-policies/>

Counseling:

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning. These might include strained relationships, anxiety, stress, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, or loss of motivation. The Counseling Center is available to help with these issues and may be reached

by calling (607) 431-4420 or emailing counselingcenter@hartwick.edu. Counseling services are free of charge and confidential. Heart, a peer counseling service, is also available if you are more comfortable talking with a fellow student who has been trained to offer information and support in a safe, non-judgmental atmosphere. To reach a Heart Peer Counselor, email heart@hartwick.edu.

Title IX & Sexual Misconduct:

Hartwick College is committed to equal opportunity and providing a safe community free from all forms of sexual misconduct including sexual/gender-based harassment, discrimination, dating or domestic violence, stalking, sexual exploitation, and sexual assault. If you wish to make an official report to the College or have questions about the College's policy and procedures regarding sexual misconduct, please contact the Title IX Coordinator at titleix@hartwick.edu or (607) 431-4293. Additional reporting and policy information is available online at <https://www.hartwick.edu/about-us/employment/human-resources/title-ix/>.

If you wish to speak confidentially about an incident of sexual misconduct, please contact one of the following resources: Perrella Wellness Center, Health - (607) 431-4120, or Counseling – (607) 431-4120; or Opportunities for Otsego's Violence Intervention Program – (607) 432-4855. All other employees, including faculty, are responsible employees at Hartwick College and are required to report any incident of sexual misconduct that is personally reported to them to the Title IX Coordinator so that support and resources can be provided for all parties.

Tutoring Services: <https://www.hartwick.edu/academics/student-services/center-for-student-success/css-services/tutoring-services/>

The Writing Center: <https://www.hartwick.edu/academics/student-services/writing-center/>
The Charlotte Orr Hoteling Writing Center (Clark 230) offers free one-on-one writing support for any stage of writing, including brainstorming, outlining, drafting, and revising. The Writing Center offers personalized feedback on short assignments, essays, senior theses, resumes, graduate school applications, scholarship applications, and other documents. Students can request in-person or online video support by scheduling 30-minute or one-hour appointments through Navigate. Asynchronous email support is also available by emailing your assignment prompt, assignment, and any questions to WritingCenter@Hartwick.edu. The Writing Center is open Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm. Drop-in visits are welcome.