

TO: Participants in USM's Summer Course, COR 142-J:
"Baseball and American Society: A Journey"

FROM: Mike Brady and Al Bean

RE: Preparations and Protocols

DATE: April 5, 2007

The summer course for which you have applied and been accepted, "Baseball and American Society: A Journey," has been designed from the start as an academic experience. We have undergone the rigors of getting this course approved by the Core Council of the University of Southern Maine for three undergraduate interdisciplinary core credits. In addition to undergraduate students, we are also inviting people who are not interested in earning academic credits to participate in this experience. As has been the case since our "rookie season" in 1996, a number of highly experienced and knowledgeable people will be joining us this year in our study of baseball. We expect that **all participants in COR 142-J**, whether or not taking the course for academic credit, will consider this to be, first and foremost, a learning experience.

There are three books we expect all participants to read prior to boarding the bus on July 27th. The books may be purchased in the USM (Portland Campus) bookstore or anywhere else convenient to you. All are in paperback.

Baseball: A History of America's Favorite Game by George Vecsey.
(Modern Library, 2006).

Clemente: The Passion and Grace of Baseball's Last Hero.
By D. Maraniss (Simon and Schuster, 2006).

Moneyball by Michael Lewis. (W.W. Norton, 2003).

The USM – Portland bookstore, located in the Woodbury Campus Center, has copies of all these course materials. You can pick them up in person or order them by calling 780-4070 and asking for the COR 142-J books.

In addition to these "core readings," people taking this course for undergraduate or re-certification credit are required to select and read one book from the accompanying bibliography. Select a book that is of particular interest to you, read it carefully, and come on July 22nd prepared

to share a summary as well as what you believe to be that book's major implications for understanding the relationship between the game of baseball and American Society. We'll schedule these book reports at appropriate times during the course.

Important note for non-credit ("audit") students – We welcome your participation in this book sharing process as well. Over the years we have learned a great deal from one another through these peer-led book reports, given by both credit and non-credit students, and welcome everyone on the course to participate.

In the tradition of intensive summer institutes at USM, credit students will be expected to read and write prior to the actual class experience and submit written work to the instructors several weeks after the completion of the course. Please refer to "Guidelines for Writing Assignments" for information about how to organize and manage this writing.

We also strongly encourage the non-credit participants to consider keeping a personal journal. Our plan is to begin each bus trip with a 10 - 15 minute period of reflection and writing so people can gather their thoughts, write down meaningful experiences, note important observations, and/or keep a record of questions. While this journaling is required of students earning USM academic credits, it should enhance the learning experience of all other participants as well.

A detailed itinerary of sites to be visited, motels (with telephone numbers), and other information will be mailed to you several weeks prior to departure. We'll also include guidelines about what to bring on the journey.

If you have questions or concerns, Mike can be reached at 780-5312 (e-mail = mbrady@usm.maine.edu) and Al at 780-5588 (e-mail = albean@usm.maine.edu).

We are looking forward to meeting you and sharing this experience of "Baseball and American Society: A Journey."

COR 142-J: GUIDELINES FOR WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

(To be read carefully by all who are taking this course for university or re-certification credit. Others are welcome to read about these writing assignments in order to come to a better appreciation of the academic nature of this course-journey).

I. Course Journal

Each student taking COR 142-J for three academic credits will keep a journal of reflections on the journey. This journal will be a reservoir of ideas, questions, quotations, observations, and personal reactions. It will also serve as baseline data for your final course essay (see part III).

You may bring any form of journal you wish on the trip (this is your document). One suggestion would be to purchase a 5 x 7" loose-leaf journal which you can divide into various sections: thoughts on films, ideas generated by discussions, observations at ballgames, meaningful quotations, unanswered questions, etc.

Most of this journal will be for your eyes only. However, one of the post-institute requirements will be to submit (along with one re-written "Reflection Response Essay" and the "Final Course Essay") what you consider to be your **five best pages of journal entries**. All of the rest of the journal is intended to (1) to serve as a baseline of thoughts to help you write your final course essay and (2) represent a memoir of this unique travel-learning experience.

II. Reflection Response Essays

For each of the four course books (three "core" and one that you will select), write a 3 - 4 page (double-spaced) response. Each reflection response will include the following sections:

(a) A summary of the main points of the text. Think of this as a *Cliff's Notes* for other students. Explain what the main points are and what key issues the author(s) treat.

(b) A section that explains how the book expresses relationships between baseball and American Society. You might consider issues such as race, gender, money, attitudes toward fame, "The American Dream," melting pot, the frontier, business, career ladders, entertainment, etc.

(c) A final section that describes and analyzes your attitudes toward the text. While you need not respond to all of them, below are a list of prompts that may help to guide your thinking and writing:

- * What are the book's strengths and weaknesses?
- * What issues do you wish the text had covered?

- * What should have been covered more fully?
- * How does the book misunderstand or analyze correctly?
- * How does the author's viewpoint differ from yours?
- * What is your overall evaluation of this book?
- * How is this book similar to or different from other works in its genre?

Please bring **one copy** of each of these essays with you on July 22nd. You may wish to bring a second copy of the essay about the book that you have individually selected in order to make reference to it during your oral report.

The spirit of this writing is to be "reflective" rather than "finished." We are interested in the quality of your ideas and how the books have stimulated thinking about baseball's relationship to American Society. After the journey you will be asked to re-write one of these reflective essays, improve it by integrating ideas learned from the course experience, and submit it along with the other post-institute assignments.

III. Final Course Essay

Write a 6 - 8 page (double spaced) essay on the relationship between the game of baseball and American Society. In your essay, you may find it helpful to reflect upon one or more of the following quotations (although using these quotes are in no way required for this assignment):

"Next to religion, baseball has furnished a greater impact on American Life than any other institution."

(Herbert Hoover)

"Whoever wants to know the heart and mind of America had better learn baseball."

(Jacques Barzun)

"Baseball's legends are, in some ways, the most enduring part of the game. Baseball has even more of them than the Civil War, and its fans prize them highly."

(Bruce Catton)

“America and the minor leagues, each a metaphor for the other.”

(David Lamb)

"I don't have to tell you that one constant through all the years has been baseball. America has been erased like a blackboard, only to be rebuilt and then erased again. But baseball has marked time with America . . . "

(W. P. Kinsella)

Use whatever insights and observations you have derived from your pre-course readings, our discussions, guest speakers, your ballpark observations, and any other source derived from the class experience. Your journal reflections should be of great assistance in supplying material for this essay.

By **Friday, August 24th, 2007** mail one copy of the following texts to Mike (address = 400 – B Bailey Hall, U.S.M., Gorham, ME. 04038):

- (1) Photocopies of what you consider to be your five best journal entries from the journey. These should not be edited or revised. Simply photocopying them from your journal book is fine.
- (2) One re-written Reflection Response Essay (based on one of the three "core" books or the book you have personally selected). Please clearly mark on the top of the first page that this is your revised essay.
- (3) Your final course essay

Timely submission of these end-of-course papers will expedite final course grades.

Our best wishes for enjoyable reading, writing, and mental preparation for this course. For the two of us, stretching, warm-ups, batting and fielding practices, and other pre-game rituals have long been underway. Soon the starting line-ups will be announced and the National Anthem played. And then, on July 27th, those two miraculous words – "PLAY BALL!"

Baseball and American Society: A Journey (COR 142-J)

OFFICIAL RULES

(Addendum to the University of Maine System's Student Conduct Code)

Baseball is a game governed by rules. *Baseball and American Society: A Journey* is a unique educational, travel, and baseball experience similarly governed by rules. In order to have a safe, pleasurable, and productive travel and learning experience, it is important that members of this course adhere to a code of conduct. Transgression of any of the following rules may result in dismissal from the course. If a student is asked to leave the course due to a violation of these rules, all appeal procedures will be conducted on the home campus.

1. There will be no possession or use of illegal drugs.
2. Persons who are of legal age may drink alcohol during ball games. However, drinking which results in belligerent behavior or activities that reflect negatively on the university will not be tolerated. The provisions outlined in the Student Conduct Code for the consumption and possession of alcohol are in full effect.
3. There will be no drinking alcohol or smoking on the bus.
4. Members of the course are expected to arrive at scheduled rendezvous points at the designated time.
5. Members of COR 142J who wish to excuse themselves from official course events in order to pursue self-directed activities must receive permission from one of the course instructors.
6. Language that is offensive or disrespectful of others is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.
7. Illegal activity such as disengaging motel smoke alarms and stealing from ballparks or museums may result in arrest by local authorities. The bus will continue on to its next scheduled destination and the arrested party will be responsible for their own legal counsel, for damages incurred, and for transportation home.

I understand and acknowledge that I have received a copy of the UMS Student Conduct Code and agree to abide by that code and the rules outlined above.

Printed Name

Signature

Date