

Introduction

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Baseball has long been recognized as America's national pastime. That title is neither an accident nor an arbitrary designation. The history of baseball, in its earlier rounders and townball forms as well as in its more modern versions, chronologically parallels the history of our nation. Further, baseball reflects virtually every aspect of American society, both good and bad. Literature and the arts, race relations, business, labor-management conflicts, gender issues, war, religion and myth, and the media are just a few of the areas in which the sport intersects with American culture in a symbiotic relationship. Readers who wish to explore the wide range of these intersections are invited to consult this author's *Baseball: An Encyclopedia of Popular Culture* (2000; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005).

So would anyone exempt education from the areas of social relevance to America's national pastime? Certainly not those college and university professors who have contributed essays to this volume. Baseball appears often in higher-education courses, both as the subject itself and as a teaching method. The focus in the essays that follow usually is on baseball as a pedagogical tool to teach specific disciplines. The academic range is wide: business, cultural studies, film, history, labor relations, law, literature (along with writing and grammar), Native American history, philosophy, public speaking, race studies, and social history. Essays also relate to archival research for pedagogical purposes, the formation of educational partnerships to facilitate instruction, and the use of experiential learning through a traveling summer course. Yet, as broad as this spectrum is, baseball is taught in other disciplines as well; regrettably, it was not possible to acquire essays in every academic area.

A number of high school teachers wrote concerning this volume when it was in its early stages. As worthwhile as essays regarding secondary education would have been, the decision was to maintain the higher-education focus in order to cover as many areas of college instruction as possible while keeping the size of the volume under control. Perhaps a second volume relating to secondary education would be a valuable future endeavor.

The essays are arranged by types of courses to help faculty quickly find the essays most relevant to their own teaching. It is important to remember, though, that most essays include pedagogical insights valuable for faculty in a range of courses; the initial headings merely guide rather than attempt to pigeonhole essays within one discipline each. Good teaching usually involves garnering ideas from many places, so readers are encouraged to read all of the essays.

Information on the contributors can be found at the end of the book. Readers will be impressed with the diversity and substantial accomplishments of the contributors.

It is the hope of all those involved in creating this collection of essays that readers will find the volume enjoyable, intellectually stimulating, and of practical value as they turn to their own teaching. Readers may find the origins of their own future courses within these pages, or they may discover ways, large and small, to enrich their current teaching.