

HREQ 1900 – CRITICAL ANALYSIS ASSIGNMENT

Sexuality, Gender, and Society

Info

Course Code: AP/HREQ 1900 – F/W 2022-23 – 6.0 Credits

Component: Critical Analysis Assignment – 25%

Due Date: 11:55pm – Feb 6, 2022 – via eClass

OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE

The purpose of this assignment is to further develop your critical analysis and communication skills. Based on the feedback you received on your research assignment, further develop your topic by answering one of the critical analysis questions listed below. In answering your critical analysis question, you may choose one of three options for completing the assignment: 1) an essay, 2) a recorded presentation, or 3) a creative work with accompanying reflection.

Your critical analysis must be based on research. You must submit your assignment with a bibliography in the Chicago style. Your bibliography must contain at least 8 sources: 4 scholarly sources (including any combination of scholarly journal articles, academic books, or chapters in an edited collection) **and** 4 newspaper articles. You may use the sources you found on the research assignment, these sources will count toward the minimums required. Sources listed on the HREQ 1900 course syllabus will not count toward the minimums required.

FORMAT OPTIONS

Essay

Write an essay of at least 1,500 words (word count does not include direct quotations or citations). Your essay must make a central argument / thesis statement related to your chosen topic on gender, sexuality, and society. Your thesis statement should be an answer to one of the critical analysis questions listed below. Your essay must reference all sources listed in your bibliography. Your references must be footnotes formatted in the Chicago style. You will be evaluated based on your writing, research, citing, and critical analysis skills.

Video Presentation

Record a 10-minute video presentation with visual slides. Your presentation must have at least 5 slides. Your presentation must make a central argument / thesis statement related to your chosen topic on gender, sexuality, and society. Your thesis statement should be an answer to one of the critical analysis questions listed below. Your presentation must

reference all sources listed in your bibliography. You will be evaluated based on your slide design, research, presentation, and critical analysis skills.

Creative Work + Reflection

Produce a creative work that demonstrates critical analysis of your chosen topic on gender, sexuality, and society. This creative work can be a graphic image, drawing, painting, photograph, musical composition, lyrics or poetry. Alongside your creative work, you must submit a reflection of at least 1000 words. Your reflection must make a central argument / thesis statement related to your chosen topic on gender, sexuality, and society. Your reflection must indicate how your creative work expresses your thesis. Your thesis statement should be an answer to one of the critical analysis questions listed below. Your creative expression must reference at least 4 of the sources listed in your bibliography. Your references must be footnotes formatted in the Chicago style. You will be evaluated based on your writing, research, citing, and critical analysis skills.

Note: For creative works you will not be evaluated based on the merits of the artistic creation. Instead, your evaluation will be based on your written reflection and how you have related your creative work back to your critical analysis.

Critical Analysis Questions

Your thesis statement must be an answer to one of these questions:

- What activist (individual or group) was most responsible for creating change related to your topic?
- What event related to your topic was the most significant turning point?
- Has there been more change over time, or more continuity over time, related to your chosen topic?
- What issue related to your topic has changed the most over time?
- What issue related to your topic has most remained the same over time?
- What issue related to your topic is most often misunderstood?
- What issue related to your topic is most often exaggerated?
- What issue related to your topic is most often ignored?
- What scholarly journal article has contributed the most to our understanding of your topic? Why?
- Has the media covered your topic in a fair and balanced way?
- **You may develop your own research question in consultation with your TA – you must receive permission from your TA to develop your own research question.**

Stefan Blacha

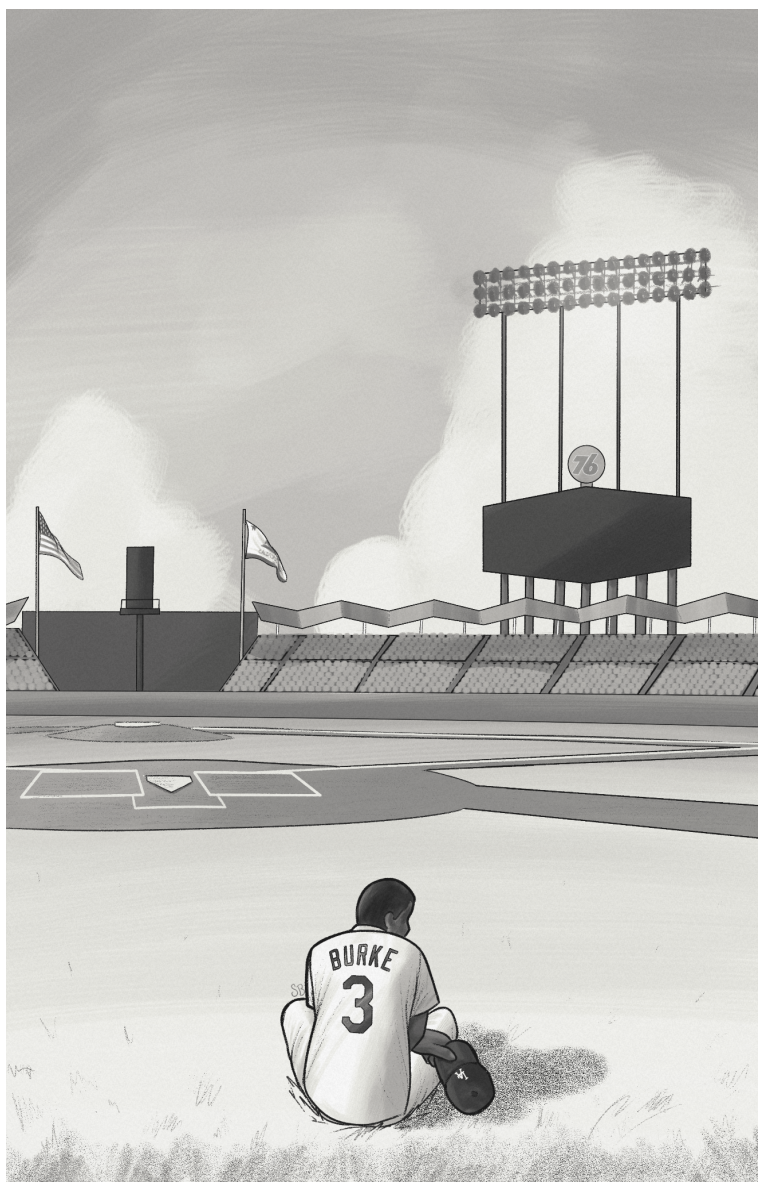
HREQ 1900 - Sexuality, Gender, and Society

March 2, 2023

Prof. Tom Hooper

Critical Analysis Assignment: Creative + Reflection Option

Out of the Park: A Creative Work & Reflection on Baseball's Subordinate Masculinities



By Stefan Blacha

Full resolution: <https://i.imgur.com/BKAs8Kv.jpg>

When I think of an activist, I imagine someone standing outside raising a picket sign. Perhaps they hold a megaphone or march in a group. I imagine activism as the agitating group that rises from within the people, fighting the oppression carried out by a combative establishment. The establishment kicks these agitators away from their institutions, down from positions of power, but the agitators persist in a fight for change.

To me, the idea of a professional athlete seems so distant from this notion. Today, these individuals make up to millions of dollars per year detached from the reality the rest of us live. These people are most often men, as sports leagues have justified their gender segregation for decades under the flawed assumption that women are biologically inferior to men.¹ This group is typically religious and conservative, often having grown up superhuman in rural America, courted by the multi-billion dollar industry of sports before reaching college. A gay baseball enthusiast such as myself might shy away from reading about the personal beliefs of any longtime childhood hero, for fear of having the parasocially-constructed illusion of apoliticism shattered. Many would be right to scoff at the flimsy gesture of Major League Baseball painting the Black Lives Matter acronym on the pitcher's mound in 2020.² Equally feeble is the league's widespread initiative of capitalistic promotional games and giveaways. Every team's schedule is filled with a laundry list of "heritage nights", featuring some sweater or hat gift gesturing to the aesthetics of a non-white culture to drag more people out to the ballpark. Pride Night could feature a rainbow towel with the team's branding, or the players might take to the field themselves wearing rainbow logos (though some, as seen with the Tampa Bay Rays, might

¹ Cheryl Cooky and Shari L. Dworkin, "Policing the Boundaries of Sex: A Critical Examination of Gender Verification and the Caster Semenya Controversy," *Journal of Sex Research* 50, no. 2 (2013): 106.

² Michael Shapiro, "MLB to Use 'Black Lives Matter' Stencil on Mound during Opening Week," *Sports Illustrated*, accessed February 6, 2023, <https://www.si.com/mlb/2020/07/22/mlb-black-lives-matter-stencil-mound-opening-week>.

refuse, citing religious apprehension³). It seems to suit an industry about appreciating unbelievable performances that its activism is unbelievably performative.

But to distinguish athletics from activism would be a disservice to history. In 1947, Jackie Robinson broke baseball's colour barrier. Even while confronting intense scrutiny and racial abuse as a Black man in a white man's sport, joining the Dodgers only after his physical prime, Robinson would go on to have one of the best ten year stretches in the history of the sport.⁴ Four years after Robinson's death, in the much more racially-integrated baseball of 1976, another Black pioneer would play for the Dodgers. He would win no MVP awards, All-Star selections, or World Series rings. He would play abysmal baseball until being traded to the Oakland Athletics in 1978, where he would soon be kicked out for reasons beyond his performance. This man invented the high five, though history would likely forget this fact, had it not been for the fame of his teammate, Dusty Baker. History would not understand who Glenn Burke was until he came out as gay in 1982. History would not hear about his full story until his autobiography, published posthumously in 1995.⁵ History has yet to truly grasp his importance in not only baseball, but culture as a whole. Being gay and subordinate to hegemony, Burke was no longer allowed in the ballpark.

³ Matt Lavietes, "5 Tampa Bay Rays Players Decline to Wear LGBTQ Pride-Themed Jerseys," NBC News, accessed February 6, 2023, <https://www.nbcnews.com/nbc-out/out-life-and-style/5-tampa-bay-rays-players-decline-wear-lgbtq-pride-themed-jerseys-rcna32121>.

⁴ David Schoenfield, "Why Jackie Robinson Was an Even Better Baseball Player than You Realize," ESPN, accessed February 6, 2023, https://www.espn.com/mlb/story/_/id/33731976/why-jackie-robinson-was-even-better-baseball-player-realize.

⁵ Peter Dreier, Robert Elias, and Dave Zirin, *Baseball Rebels: The Players, People, and Social Movements That Shook up the Game and Changed America* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2022), 212.

“I often think about how my life and career might’ve been different, had we known each other,” spoke the MLB Vice President for Inclusion, Billy Bean.⁶ Bean played six years of Major League Baseball, and in many of his 272 games, he was terrible. Like Burke, Bean is gay. He would disclose that he suited up for a game with the San Diego Padres on the same day his lover died, and reported to the club’s minor league team in Las Vegas on the same day partner was buried in California.⁷ Bean hid himself and conformed with the suffocating heteronormativity of baseball until it spit him back out on the other side of retirement. Bean came out in 1999 and wrote an autobiography about his experiences in baseball. Before long, he managed to sell his book rights for film production. Many of Bean’s fans celebrated when actor Brad Pitt was cast to play Billy in the non-fictitious film, *Moneyball*, nominated for six categories at the Academy Awards. Many of those who wrote to Bean failed to realize that the film was not about him, but his former teammate, Oakland Athletics general manager, Billy Beane. *Moneyball* is a film about Beane as a pioneer in baseball for his strategy of recruiting players overlooked due factors outside of their performance on the field. Bean’s book, which is a personal story about being a queer person struggling to fit into an industry of hegemonic masculinity, has yet to receive his film. Beane, the straight white conservative, swiftly snatched the title of the pioneer from his gay doppelganger.⁸ From his baseball career and from cultural relevance, Bean was shown the door.

If Bean could be called an activist, he works from within the establishment. In June 2022, the Los Angeles Dodgers honoured Glenn Burke in their LGBTQ+ Pride Night promotion. The

⁶ Billy Bean, “Dear Glenn Burke: A Letter from Billy Bean,” accessed February 6, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4AD5qF4w2RM>.

⁷ Kyle R. King, “Three Waves of Gay Male Athlete Coming out Narratives,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 103, no. 4 (2017): 381.

⁸ Billy Bean, “Brad Pitt Does Not Play Gay Billy Bean in ‘Moneyball,’ He Plays Straight Billy Beane,” *Outsports*, accessed February 6, 2023, <https://www.outsports.com/2011/10/2/4051942/brad-pitt-does-not-play-gay-billy-bean-in-money-ball-he-plays-straight>.

Pride Night as a concept began at Dodger Stadium in 2000, when an usher ejected a lesbian couple from the crowd after sharing a kiss. The Dodgers apologized and offered five thousand tickets to local gay and lesbian groups.⁹ Today, 29 of 30 professional teams host an annual Pride Night.¹⁰ Before the event, Billy Bean was tasked with describing what queer inclusion means for baseball. In the middle of Bean's explanation that Burke was blackballed from baseball for being gay, the broadcast cut to commercial (This is listed without citation on Bean's Wikipedia page,¹¹ though two¹² Tweets¹³ from that hour corroborate this event).

Hall of Fame Dodgers manager Tommy Lasorda often made homophobic jokes around a closeted Bean, and directed abuse at the casually out Burke.¹⁴ Lasorda's gay son, Tommy Lasorda Jr., had a very close relationship with Burke. Lasorda Jr. died from AIDS before Burke, though Lasorda Sr. would spend the rest of his life denying his son's sexuality, rejecting interviews with the producers of a documentary about Burke.¹⁵ When Lasorda Sr. died, the Dodgers held a ceremony in his memory. MLB commissioner Rob Manfred released a statement describing him as a man who made "baseball a strong, more diverse and better game", and who

⁹ Pat Morrison, "...A Smooch Too Far," *Los Angeles Times*, August 25, 2000.

¹⁰ Ken Schultz, "28.5 MLB Teams Announce Pride Nights, Unveiling Some Killer Swag," *Outsports*, accessed February 6, 2023, <https://www.msn.com/en-us/sports/mlb/28-5-mlb-teams-announce-pride-nights-including-some-killer-swag/ar-AAXYpWi>.

¹¹ "Billy Bean," Wikipedia, accessed February 6, 2023, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Billy_Bean.

¹² Mrs. Dingers, (@DodgerFoodie). "OK. Technical issues on SNLA while Bean was talking about Burke. Coincidence?" *Twitter*, June 3, 2022.

¹³ Metrojaneer (@Dfinx1). "Just as Billy Bean brought up Glenn Burke the SNLA feed cut, then they cut his mic and went to commercial #PrideNight." *Twitter*, June 3, 2022.

¹⁴ Dreier, Elias, and Zirin, *Baseball Rebels*, 213-14

¹⁵ Dawn Ennis, "Tommy Lasorda Has Died, Never Having Admitted the Truth about His Gay Son," *Outsports*, accessed February 6, 2023, <https://www.outsports.com/2020/11/16/21569490/tommy-lasorda-death-gay-son-tom-spunky-junior-aids-dodgers-mlb-obituary>.

“loved family, the United States, the National Pastime and the Dodgers, and he made them all proud”.¹⁶

The final of three known gay major league baseball players came out in December 2022, 23 years after Bean’s announcement. In a Facebook post, former Toronto Blue Jay T.J. House quietly announced his engagement to his boyfriend, whom he dated during his career.¹⁷ As a Torontonian, I could only vaguely recall his name. House made two appearances, closing out losing efforts for a mediocre 2017 Blue Jays team, and never played another game in Major League Baseball. At that time, I was closeted at a religious school. I might not have remembered House, but I did remember the distinct thought when I looked around at my classmates that there had to be others hiding. Today, I choose not to ask why more baseball players have yet to come out and I choose to define Glenn Burke as an activist because of this intimate knowledge of loneliness. Burke was out in a time where being out was foolish, that culture made it clear to him that he was alone, and he paid the price in his job and legacy. T.J. House also struggled through a short, modest career. He spent three years in Cleveland before his lightning-quick stint in Toronto. Much like Bean, and much like Burke, he was never very good. The unfathomable dominance of Jackie Robinson seems to play a trick in this regard: agitators to baseball’s straight, white, masculine hegemony are expected to achieve greatness. When they fail to, history seems content to forget them.

In writing this reflection, I struggle to say that sexuality in baseball has come a long way. With the high five, Burke made an impact on human culture arguably larger than any ballplayer outside of Robinson. But Glenn Burke was gay, and he was out in an environment that, much

¹⁶ Ken Gurnick, “Dodgers Icon Tommy Lasorda Dies at 93,” MLB, accessed February 6, 2023, <https://www.mlb.com/news/tommy-lasorda-dodgers-legend-dies-at-93>.

¹⁷ Ken Schultz, “Former MLB Pitcher TJ House Comes out with Post about Engagement to His Boyfriend, Invited to White House,” Outsports, accessed February 6, 2023, <https://www.outsports.com/2022/12/10/23501952/tj-house-gay-mlb-pitcher-coming-out>.

like with Bean, abused him, overshadowed him, and cast him away. In 2002, New York Mets star Mike Piazza held a press conference simply to dispel rumours that he was gay.¹⁸ In 2022, one of the Tampa Bay Rays who refused to wear a Pride patch as a symbol that queer fans were welcome explained his choice: “a lot of guys decided that it’s just a lifestyle that...we don’t want to encourage”.¹⁹ Association with gayness, even as a symbolic gesture that queer people should be welcome in this space, is too much for him, Mike Piazza, Tommy Lasorda Sr., and countless other straight men in baseball, insecure that it might tarnish their faith and adherence to the traditionally masculine, heteronormative status quo. Bean, as the one who was invited back in, worked with the establishment for years before it silenced him on national television. Once again, Bean was kicked out of the spotlight.

My creative work is devoted to the activism of Glenn Burke. He sits alone in an empty Dodger Stadium, dwarfed by open air, yet confined by the claustrophobic borders of the piece. Burke was alone in his black and white, heteronormative world, yet still very much a part of it. He chose not to hide himself, but in doing so, the system he participated in discriminated against him. The American and Californian flags fly beyond the far wall of the park, just as they did then. Baseball is deeply woven into American culture, reflecting its histories of segregation, racism, sexism, homophobia, and Indigenous genocide (reproduced in the misappropriated caricatures of the Cleveland Indians and Atlanta Braves). In moments of weaker resolve, I have decided to argue against cisgender, heterosexual fans questioning the worth of the Pride Night. Some argue that equality has been established on the baseball field, and that sex and politics endanger the escapism offered by the sport. This escapism was not available to Burke, Bean, or

¹⁸ Michael L. Butterworth, “Pitchers and Catchers: Mike Piazza and the Discourse of Gay Identity in the National Pastime,” *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 30, no. 2 (May 2006): 139.

¹⁹ Cyd Zeigler, “Some Tampa Bay Rays Players Refused to Wear a Pride Rainbow, Say They Reject Gay 'Behavior',” *Outsports*, accessed February 6, 2023, <https://www.outsports.com/2022/6/5/23155403/tampa-bay-rays-lgbtq-rainbow-pride>.

House, as they were forced to hide themselves and suffered for it. Burke has never really been acknowledged by the Dodgers in totality. His past has been painted over—the invention of the high five relegated to a footnote and his true story covered up by his oppressor. The Dodgers’ sanitization of Burke and the history of the Pride Night bears some resemblance to the myth of decriminalization. In these events, the team harmed people in ways they ignored, holding a ceremony and tossing up a rainbow flag in place of confronting their troubled histories. Instead, Burke is perceived as a great man who happened to be a bad baseball player, and Lasorda is deemed a bastion of diversity. The Dodgers held the first Pride Night, but only as damage control when they once again kicked queer people out. In my piece, with no one there to witness him, Burke remains on the field.

In spite of this and the persistent hegemony, Burke’s activism led to positives for queer people in baseball today. The Oakland Athletics’ “Glenn Burke Pride Night” sounds, at best, like a misplaced apology. Across the bay, the San Francisco Giants were the first team to incorporate Pride colours into their in-game uniforms. Giants manager Gabe Kapler, who is outspoken about queer inclusion and founded a charity to support marginalized people in baseball,²⁰ donated his hat to the Baseball Hall of Fame as a symbolic gesture.²¹ This sounds like more performative activism in a world where Burke has not been inducted into the Hall of Fame.

I own one of these hats. The official game-worn hat was as difficult to acquire as any limited time, hot button item, with a symbol carefully appropriated by marketing agents and uniform designers to appeal to a certain demographic of consumers. The symbol is also an

²⁰ Gabe Kapler, “Sports Are Everyone,” Kaplifestyle, accessed February 6, 2023, <https://kaplifestyle.com/2021/02/15/sports-are-everyone/>.

²¹ Ken Schultz, “Giants Donate Rainbow Pride Cap to Baseball Hall of Fame.” Outsports, accessed February 6, 2023, <https://www.outsports.com/2021/6/10/22527890/san-francisco-giants-rainbow-pride-cap-baseball-hall-of-fame>.

admission that these invisible players, coaches, officials, executives, and fans have always been a part of the sport and always will be. Despite the history, performative activism, and the loneliness of being subordinate to baseball's hegemonic masculinity, baseball is slowly coming to grips with the fact that it would not function without these people, much as baseball was never whole until the contributions of people like Jackie Robinson. What we see in the legacy of Glenn Burke is the opportunity to appreciate the value hidden by this exclusionary culture, yet to be out in the face of it. Cisgender, heterosexual fans might not get what that feels like, but I hope they come to learn about Burke. And that just makes me wonder, when the straight Beane first received letters mailed to the wrong Billy, from queer fans excited about finally seeing a gay baseball player in a blockbuster film, did he read them? What would he think, seeing what a pioneer meant to others who got kicked out of the park?

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