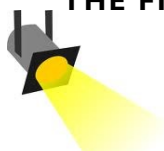




# Origins

THE FIRST-YEAR PROGRAM NEWSLETTER



## Instructor Spotlight: Justin Staley

January 2015 ♦ vol. 7, no. 5  
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There are few things that I enjoy more than reading, writing, and baseball, and this was the impetus for me to propose my Focal Point course, *The Crack of the Bat: Writers and Writing on Baseball*. Baseball is an American institution with its own mythos and language, with complex racial, social, economic, and political themes woven into it. I think that's one of the reasons there has been so much written about it. In my course, we explore baseball through literature and poems, personal essays, and arguments, helping students think critically about a game whose past is as rich and complicated as America's own.

Once America's most popular sport, baseball's popularity has wavered recently. I've always thought that in many ways, this has resulted from our lack of patience and ability to sit and think quietly without distraction. Baseball is a game that begs for patience and demands critical thinking in order to try to enjoy it, even if few of us will ever completely understand it.



We dig deeply into the readings in order to explore the nuances and intricacies of baseball, not only as a sport, but as a cultural tradition as well. I want students to think critically about the writers who have written about baseball and what the game means to them. In doing so, students develop an understanding of what the sport means to American culture, as well as to them personally, and why. While not every student who takes my class is an ardent

baseball fan, the critical reading and thinking that I try to foster in class is a skill that they can apply to the world outside the classroom. Each quarter we attend a Cubs game at Wrigley Field (so far that has always beat a Sox game in class votes), and we watch baseball and talk baseball, taking in the sights and the sounds of the game that so many writers have tried to capture.

So often the game is looked at through saccharine eyes: that most American of all sports, a game shared between fathers and sons, a timeless game that represents all that is good about America and its culture. But the complexity of the game and its history run far deeper than this, and my goal is to mine the game, the writers, the history, and the experience for all that its worth.

—Justin Staley  
Instructor

*Writing, Rhetoric and Discourse*

## From the Director

Happy New Year! Of course by now we're well into Winter Quarter with a full slate of Focal Point Seminars, including several new ones. Speaking of new Focal Points, a reminder that the annual deadline to submit a proposal is the quickly-approaching Feb. 1. For information and the online application, please visit the [proposing a course](#) section on the First-Year Program webpage.

For the third year, we invited Chicago Quarter teaching team members to nominate outstanding individuals for the annual recognition awards. It was a true pleasure to read the 45 entries illustrating teams who take exceptional efforts to help DePaul students transition into successful college careers. There were many nominees worthy of recognition, but we were able to choose a winner in each category: Phil Meyers (Political Science), faculty; Michelle Johnson (academic advisor in Biology), staff professional; and junior Dylan Plachta, Chicago Quarter Mentor. We will recognize these three and all the nominees at this Spring's Chicago Quarter Best Practices conference, which will be Friday, May 29 in the Lincoln Park Student Center.

This is the time of year when departments and colleges submit their 2015-2016 contributions to the First-Year Program. If you are planning to teach for us again, please make sure your scheduler/chair/dean knows of your interest. As always, please let us know if you or they have any questions.

—Doug Long

### Important Dates!

- ♦ Sunday, Feb. 1: Deadline for Focal Point Seminar proposals
- ♦ Friday, Feb. 13: 10:30-noon – Winter Quarter Focal Point Seminar Faculty Chat, Lincoln Park Student Center 316
- ♦ Receipts for reimbursement are due within 60 days of the date of purchase or by Tuesday, March 17, whichever is earlier.
- ♦ Friday, May 29: Chicago Quarter Best Practices 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.