

HIS 526: Topics in the Civil War and Reconstruction  
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Fall 2009  
MHRA 2208  
Thurs. 6:30-9:20

## Experiences of the American Civil War

This course focuses on the cultural and social history of the American Civil War. Instead of studying the actions of political or military leaders, this class will study the meaning of the war for ordinary people and its impact on their lives. By examining primary sources, works of history, and historical fiction, this course explores different ways of understanding and accessing historical experiences. The experiences of specific individuals and well-defined groups will be emphasized, and through them students will come to a better understanding of the different ways in which American society as a whole was transformed by the upheaval of the war. The importance of race, class, gender, region, and religion in shaping the different experiences of the war will be highlighted. Students write their own research papers and present their research findings to the class.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

- Students will improve their ability to analyze and interpret historical documents, and to understand them in their historical contexts.
- Students will improve their ability to undertake historical research by collecting and interpreting historical documents.
- Students will explore the role of historical imagination and creative interpretation in the writing of history.
- Students will improve their ability to make historical arguments, and to assess those made by others.
- Students will improve their ability to express themselves in front of others, and to lead discussions.
- Students will develop their skills in making both formal and informal presentations, both individually and as part of a group.

### **COURSE POLICIES:**

#### **Attendance:**

A student who is not present to sign the attendance sheet at the beginning of class will be marked "absent." More than one absence may lower your final grade by one-third of a grade for each subsequent absence (that is, your second absence will cause an "B" to become an "B-," your third will make it a "C+," your fourth will make it a "C," etc.). Missing a total of 5 or more classes (one-third of the

semester) will result in an automatic “F” for the course. No exceptions. Please use your one “free” absence wisely, reserving it for an emergency or serious sickness. Students are responsible to complete on time all work assigned (or due) on days in which they are absent.

**Participation:**

You are expected to complete each week’s reading before class so that you can participate constructively in a class discussion and be informed for the lectures. You must be attentive and awake during class. Sleeping or leaving class early without permission will also cause you to be marked absent. Cell phones should be turned off and stored away. No talking, twittering, texting, e-mailing or internet browsing during class.

**Presentations:**

Each student will be assigned to a team of four or five students. Each team will be asked to do two in-class presentations based on the assigned readings. When it is their turn, each team will prepare a handout that identifies the main issues addressed in the readings in a one-page outline, and raises 4-6 questions for class discussion. During presentation times, the class will be broken up into their teams for roundtable discussions. Each member of the presenting team will be given the task of making a 10-12 minute presentation to one roundtable, and then leading a ten minute discussion on the readings. Each team will conduct presentations twice over the course of the semester.

**Blackboard Discussion Forum**

The Blackboard site for the course will allow for class discussion to continue beyond the normal time/place constraints of the classroom. You are required to make at least ONE substantial comment, and ONE constructive/observational reply to another student’s posting each week. A “week,” for our purposes, begins and ends at 12:00 midnight on Wednesday. Your forum postings will be read by the entire class, and you will receive a grade for the quality of your postings at the end of the semester.

Your “substantial comment” must address the course material in some way. It may address the upcoming week’s reading. It may simply be a comment you wanted to make in class, but did not have the opportunity to make. Otherwise, it may be a reflection on an issue discussed in class, on something you read for this class, or another class, or on your own that relates to the course material in some way. Your response to another student’s posting must be a thoughtful and constructive response (such as if you were having a conversation with them). The rules for use of the forum is as follows:

1. Your grade will be based on the substance of your posting which includes the thought and effort you put into it as well as the length. You can post more than twice a week, but make sure that you have at

least *one substantial posting each week of at least 200 words*, and one reply.

2. You will receive a zero for the week if you fail to post before 12:00 midnight on Wednesday of each week. Therefore, you have a full week, including the weekend, to read the forum comments and respond to them or create new postings (Note: you do not have to be finished with your reading to make a substantial post. A reflection on any aspect or part of the reading will do fine). I will check the forum each Thursday morning to record who posted an entry for that week (and I will monitor the board all week and post my own comments to help discussion along).
3. Maintain academic civility, use respectful language and avoid rude remarks. Even *more* than in face-to-face debate, caution must be exercised in “virtual” debate to avoid insulting or offending others. Nothing derogatory may be said about any student or faculty member on the forum. Misuse of the forum will result in the removal of the offender from the forum discussion list, and a Failing grade for the assignment.
4. Do not use the forum to communicate private questions to me, or anyone else in the class (such as “When is the paper due?”).

### **Written Work:**

First, students will be asked to write a creative essay of 1500-1750 that explores the uses of fiction in understanding and writing history (due **October 19**). Secondly, students will write a 3000-3500 word essay based on their own primary research. After identifying a topic (no later than **October 8**), students will be expected to collect primary sources that will become the basis of their final research paper. The final grade on this paper will be based on each assignment in the evolution of the term paper including a proposal, an annotated bibliography, an outline, and a final draft. The final paper must present a thesis supported by primary source evidence. Students must use formal footnotes according to the **Chicago Manual of Style** and include a bibliography of sources.

### **Academic Integrity Policy:**

All work submitted in your name must be your own original work for this class with proper citation or credit given to all sources. All papers will be turned in using the “Safe Assignment” function on Blackboard which automatically scans your paper for plagiarism. Each student should be familiar with the Academic Integrity Policy, and the penalties for plagiarism. Refer to this address on the UNCG website for more details:

<http://studentconduct.uncg.edu/>

**Final Grade:**

Your final grade will be based on the following formula:

- 15% Class participation.
- 15% Blackboard Discussion posting
- 20% Short paper.
- 20% Oral presentations on readings.
- 30% Research Paper and Presentation.

**Readings:**

**Required Books:**

Edward Ayers, *In the Presence of Mine Enemies*  
Chandra Manning, *What this Cruel War was Over*  
David Blight. *A Slave No More: Two Men who Escaped to Freedom*  
Drew Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*  
Louisa May Alcott, *Hospital Sketches*  
E.L. Doctorow, *The March*  
William Barney, *The Making of a Confederate*

**Week 1. INTRODUCTION**

**Aug. 27.** Class Introduction

**Week 2. THE COMING OF THE WAR**

**Sept. 3** **Reading:** Ayers, *In the Presence of Mine Enemies*, 1-187.

**Week 3. SOLDIERS AND SLAVERY**

**Sept. 10** **Reading:** Manning, *What this Cruel War was Over*, 3-111.

**Week 4. WARFRONT AND HOMEFRONT**

**Sept. 17** **Reading:** Ayers, *In the Presence of Mine Enemies*, 191-41.

**Week 5. THE CHANGING MEANING OF THE WAR**

**Sept. 24** **Reading:** Manning, *What this Cruel War was Over*, 113-221.

**Week 6. WOMEN AND GENDER AT THE FRONT**

**Oct. 1** **Reading:** Alcott, *Hospital Sketches*, 1-119.

Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 3-31

- Week 7. EMANCIPATION**
- Oct. 8 Reading:** Blight, *A Slave No More*, 1-260 [Due: Term Paper Topic]
- Week 8. FICTION AND HISTORY**
- Oct. 15 Reading:** Doctorow, *The March*, 1-147
- Week 9. FICTION AND HISTORY**
- Oct. 19 Assignment:** First paper due via Blackboard, 2:00 pm, Monday  
**Oct. 22 Reading:** Doctorow, *The March*, 148-362.
- Week 10. FICTION OR HISTORY?**
- Oct. 29 Reading:** Excerpt from Jenkins and Stauffer, *The State of Jones*, 1-8, 159-385
- Week 11. THE TRAUMA OF THE WAR**
- Nov. 5 Reading:** Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, xi-xviii, 32-271.  
**Assignment:** Annotated Bibliography due
- Week 12. HISTORY AND PERSONAL MEMORY**
- Nov. 12 Reading:** Barney, *The Making of A Confederate*, 1-228.
- Week 13. ORAL PRESENTATIONS**
- Nov. 19** Paper Presentations  
**Assignment:** Research Paper Outline Due
- Week 14. NO CLASS**
- Nov. 26 THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY**
- Week 15. ORAL PRESENTATIONS**

**Dec. 3**

Paper Presentations

**Assignment:** Final Research Paper Due