

History 6630, Spring 2015
Graduate Readings Seminar in the Civil War and Reconstruction Era (1831-1890s)
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Course Description and Aims

This is a graduate-level readings seminar in the history of the Civil War and Reconstruction era, defined for our purposes as the rise of conflict over slavery beginning in the earlier 19th century to the end of Reconstruction and the beginnings of Civil War “memory” from the 1870s to the 1890s. For many of you, this course will be preparatory to the subsequent research component, History 7630. At the end of this readings seminar, those going on to take the research seminar will be required to have chosen a topic and prepared a short list of primary and secondary sources for their topic. We will read eleven books, accompanying articles, and a handful of documents, with the intention of giving students a firm grounding in the history and historiography of the Civil War and Reconstruction era.

Class Attendance and Participation

All students will be expected to participate in classroom discussion weekly and vocally. **Class attendance is absolutely mandatory except in case of significant illness; class “skips” will result in grade penalty, and after more than two you will need to drop the class or receive a failing grade. If you have a work conflict with this class, work that conflict out *now*. If you can’t work it out, drop the class *now*. Here are some common reasons for missing class which will not be accepted as reasons to miss class: *I couldn’t get off work tonight; I couldn’t find a babysitter this week; I have an appointment with my child’s teacher/doctor/etc.; I just started a new job and have to be there; I have a meeting at work so sorry can’t make it tonight;* And so on. If you are taking the class, you must be present in the class. More than one “miss” will result in a grade penalty.**

Class Assignments and Grading Policy

Class Attendance, Participation, Discussion Leadership, Short Analyses	40%
Teaching Exercise and “Follow the footnote” exercises	20%
Semester Paper	40%

REQUIRED BOOKS

Edward Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and American Capitalism*.
John Ashworth, *The Republic in Crisis, 1848-1861*
Lesley Gordon, *A Broken Regiment*
Chandra Manning, *What This Cruel War Was Over: Soldiers, Slavery, and the Civil War*.
Edward L. Ayers, *In the Presence of Mine Enemies: War in the Heart of America*
Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*.
James McPherson, *War on the Waters: The Union and Confederate Navies*.
Judith Giesberg, *Army at Home: Women and the Civil War on the Northern Home Front*
Paul J. Springer and Glenn Robins, *Transforming Civil War Prisons*
Earl Hess, *The Civil War in the West*
Douglas Egerton, *The Wars of Reconstruction*.

REQUIRED ARTICLES, BLOG POSTS, AND RECORDED LECTURES

“Who Won the CW?” <http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2013/07/02/who-won-the-civil-war>

Film: “John Brown’s Holy War,” to be discussed on first day of class

J. David Hacker’s estimate of Civil War deaths:

<http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/09/20/recounting-the-dead/#more-105317>

Edward J. Blum, “Satan Was the First Secessionist” (article will be provided to you via pdf)

Mark Noll, “The Crisis Over the Bible,” chapter 2 from *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*

Gary Gallagher, “Nationalism,” chapter 2 from *The Confederate War*

Gary Gallagher, lecture at Virginia Historical Society:

http://www.vahistorical.org/news/lectures_gallagher.htm

Ira Berlin, “Who Freed the Slaves?,”

<http://www.library.vanderbilt.edu/Quaderno/Quaderno5/Q5.C3.Berlin.pdf>

James McPherson, “Who Freed the Slaves?,” <http://www.jstor.org/stable/986716> (use VPN)

Lecture by Eric Foner on *The Fiery Trial*, <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/296968-1>

Stephanie McCurry, chapter excerpt from *Confederate Reckoning*

David Blight, chapter excerpt from *Race and Reunion*

REQUIRED PRIMARY DOCUMENTS

(note: read the primary documents each week as indicated below).

January 20: John Brown’s last speech, at

<http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/johnbrown.html>

January 27: follow any of Baptist’s footnotes to a *primary* source

February 3: Speech of Henry Benning, from Records of the Secession Commissioners:

<http://civilwarcauses.org/benningva.htm>

February 10: anything from “Valley of the Shadow Project”:

<http://valley.lib.virginia.edu/VoS/choosepart.html>

February 17: anything from the Civil War section of “Soldiersstudies.org”

February 24: Use “The Making of America” or another database to find a memoir from a Union soldier, and analyze how that soldier remembers the war

March 3: choose from among Matthew Brady photographs, or read a portion of Oliver Wendell Holmes’s memoir of the Civil War

March 10 and 17: relevant materials from *The War of the Rebellion: The Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 127 Volumes, available in our library at E464 U6. Available various places online, including <http://ehistory.osu.edu/books/official-records>. You will be required to bring in at least one document from the hard copy version.

April 7: follow a footnote from Giesberg or McCurry to a primary source

April 14: find a document from a Civil War POW (northern or southern), and bring to class

April 21 and 28: Ira Berlin et al., eds., published papers of the Freedmen’s Bureau, 6 volumes to date, under the general title *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation* (E 185.2 F88)

SCHEDULE

Jan 20 Introduction: Who Won the Civil War? (at *New York Times* link listed above); film “John Brown’s Holy War” (film on reserve in library or watch at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vkWqbj2A1Is>
What is the best way to understand John Brown and the astonishing violence of the CW?

- Jan 27 Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told*
What was the relationship between slavery and modern capitalism?
- Feb 3 Ashworth, *The Republic in Crisis*; Blum, "Satan was the First Secessionist."
How do you explain the failure of Compromise and the coming of the CW?
- Feb. 10 Ayers, *In the Presence of Mine Enemies*
How do you explain the ferocity of the fight given the similarity of the sections?
- Feb. 17 *What This Cruel War Was Over* + chapter from and lecture by Gary Gallagher
Which historian best captures the motivations/views of Civil War soldiers?
- Feb. 24 Gordon, *A Broken Regiment*
How do you compare the experience of fighting in the war with postwar memories of the conflict?
- March 3 *This Republic of Suffering*; chapter from Mark Noll's *CW as Theological Crisis*; *New York Times Disunion Blog*, post by David Hacker on the recounting of Civil War deaths
How did Americans comprehend the mass scale of death in the CW? Did it provoke a religious or theological crisis?
- March 10 McPherson, *War on the Waters*
How decisive was naval conflict during the War? Did it change the nature of the war?
- March 17 Hess, *The Civil War in the West*
Was the Civil War in "The West" central, or peripheral, to the outcome of the conflict?
How important should we see guerilla war to the overall course of the war?
- March 31 "Take a Deep Breath" Week: Watch lectures by Foner, Gallagher, McCurry. Read ahead for the rest of the semester.
- April 7 Giesberg, *An Army at Home*; chapter from McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*
Is "women's history" central to the study of the Civil War era? If so, how or why?
T or F: "It may well have been because of its women that the South lost the CW."
- April 14 Springer and Robbins, *Transforming Civil War Prisons*
What does the POW experience tell us about the nature of the Civil War, and developments in the concept of human rights during the war?
- April 21 Articles on subject "Who Freed the Slaves"
Who freed the slaves?
- April 28 Egerton, *The Wars of Reconstruction*
Was Reconstruction "America's Most Progressive Era"
- May 4 More discussion of *Wars of Reconstruction* along with article and lecture by Blight
What was involved in the "reforging of the White Republic"?
- May 11 individual meetings about next semester (or make-up day in case of snow)
May 18 drop-dead due date for final papers

Discussion Leadership and Writing Assignments

- 1) Each student should be prepared *each week* to provide a cogent, 2 or 3 minute oral answer to the question posed for the week in the syllabus. Every *other* week, you will bring and turn in a 1 page single-spaced response to the question, which employs the reading and uses quotations from the reading in answer to the question. We will begin this on January 27th with Baptist.

- 2) In tandem with one other student, should be prepared to take the role of discussion leader for one week of the semester. When your week comes to be a discussion leader, I would expect your student team to come prepared with the following:
 - a) a short (1 p.) summary of the book's major thesis, arguments, and evidence (and/or articles, where appropriate)
 - b) a short (1 p.) critique of the book/article(s), including questions, concerns, and counter-arguments
 - c) a short (1 p.) list of discussion questions which you will use to guide the class as a whole through the discussion of the work.

- 3) I will ask each student to "lead" a sample undergraduate class for 15-20 minutes once during the semester, showing us how you would lead a group of less advanced students through the material we are discussing. This could involve a mini-lecture, some kind of presentation, a special "group exercise" kind of thing, or whatever other pedagogical tools that come to mind. You will do this on some evening *other than* the one where you are the class discussion leader. Early in the semester you will "sign up" for your week to lead us in your teaching exercise. (This is an oral exercise – nothing written required).

- 4) Each student will also prepare one short (750 word) informal blog post review of either *The Half Has Never Been Told* OR *In the Presence of Mine Enemies*. This will be due for all students on either January 27 or February 10. For your model, use the blog post responses to Walter Johnson's *River of Dark Dreams*, which may be found at The Junto blog: <http://earlyamericanists.com/category/special-features/roundtables/river-of-dark-dreams/>. Each student will do the same for *The Wars of Reconstruction*, for April 28th.

- 5) Finally, each student will be asked to do a primary source analysis assignment twice this semester, and to report on that assignment at least once to the class as a whole.
 - a) One of your two primary source analyses should be on two (or more) of the primary sources that are part of our reading assignments; prepare a 2-3 pp. document analysis of one of the primary sources that you are asked to read on any given week.
 - b) The other should involve finding one (or more) of the primary sources used by one of our authors in her/his footnotes, reading over that source, and then comparing that source to the analysis the author gives to the source. Note: your "source" can be not just written documents, but also audio or visual material. Again, 2-3 pages, and focus here on how the author *employs* the source in his/her analysis; what choices the author makes in using that source; and how *else* that source might be interpreted.

We will try to divide these up as much as possible so that we have at least one person "reporting in" each week on their analysis of how the historian for the week has used his/her primary source.

Final Papers

The final paper will be an essay-answer to one of several questions posed by me based on this semester's reading. To the degree possible, the final paper will also be a kind of "prospectus" for a research project to be taken up next semester. More information on the final as the semester progresses.