HSTA 316.01: The Age of the Civil War, The United States 1846-1877

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THE AGE OF THE CIVIL WAR
The United States, 1846-1877

COURSE SYLLABUS

From the perspective of a century and a half, the Civil War generation is the most disruptive, violent, and significant era in all of American history. The United States is still, in the 21st century, grappling with the consequences of that mighty upheaval. As long as the United States has racial and regional issues, the Civil War has not ended. The War’s long-range consequences help explain contemporary America.

The Civil War resolved two fundamental issues left undecided by the American Revolutionaries – whether the United States of America was indeed a “more perfect union” or merely a league of sovereign states, and whether a country founded on liberty and equality would continue as the world’s largest slaveholding republic. In the end, “slavery was dead, secession was dead, and six hundred thousand men were dead. That was the basic balance sheet of sectional conflict.”

This course, the “Age of the Civil War,” aims at a comprehensive yet analytical examination of the breakup, travail, and reconstruction of the Union. The Civil War is a “Great Event,” which may be treated in terms of Causes, Course, and Consequences. Mediate causes stretch back to the 17th century; long-range consequences reach the present; we focus on the tumultuous years from 1846 to 1877. Although the conflict has important social, economic, political, and diplomatic developments, we must never forget that it was at heart a war – a vast military struggle in which people were killed and lives disrupted. No other activity makes sense outside of “the progress of our arms,” upon which, Abraham Lincoln pointed out, “all else depends.”

The historian Allan Nevins writes that the Civil War was “over slavery and the future position of the Negro race in North America.” He thus captures one major theme of the period 1846-1877 (if not the major theme of the period 1607-2014): race relations, or the status of Blacks in American society. This theme unites the Civil War era, from discussions of slavery in the territories to Dred Scott to emancipation to Reconstruction.

Like all History courses, this one has specific learning objectives, gained through class attention, note-taking, reading, reflection, questioning, writing, quizzes, and exams. Among these learning objectives are 1) Knowledge, or content, 2) Understanding, or comprehension, 3) Application, or relevance, 4) Analysis, 5) Synthesis, and 6) Evaluation, or judgment, comparison, and contrast.

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at http://www.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/index.cfm/page/1321.

Buy These Books


On Reserve in the Mansfield Library

James Kirby Martin, et. al., America and Its People (1989).
A Civil War Folder, containing the following material:

Course Syllabus
Civil War Statistics
Civil War Reading Lists
James Sloan Gibbons, “We Are Coming, Father Abraham.”
Julia Ward Howe, “Battle Hymn of the Republic.”
Carol Reardon, “I Think the Union Army Had Something to Do with It: The Pickett’s Charge Nobody Knows,” in Gabor S. Boritt, ed., The Gettysburg Nobody Knows (1977), 122-43.

Requirements

History 316 has five (5) requirements: Attendance; an in-class quiz on the coming of the War (Feb. 21); a short paper on The Killer Angels; a short paper on Grant and Sherman; and a Final Examination on victory and defeat. Grade proportions are mutable, but roughly:

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<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Coming of War Quiz</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short Paper I</td>
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<td>Short Paper II</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
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Attendance: A sign-up sheet will be circulated each day; it’s your responsibility to autograph it.

The Coming of War: in-class quiz, February 21.


Short Paper 2: "Grant and Sherman," based on Flood, Grant and Sherman, and the electronic reserve articles by McPherson and Neely. Due: Monday, April 21.

Final Examination: Handed out Friday, May 9. Due Tuesday, May 13, 10:10-12:10 PM, in LA 256 (Fritz mailbox, go in the History Office door and make a left u-turn, top right box).

Schedule of Lectures, Assignments, and Deadlines

**M Jan. 27**
Introduction: Slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction

**READ:**
Text, to 1850.

**W Jan 29**
The American South: Agrarian Republicanism and Slavery

**F Jan 31**
The American North: Market Republicanism and Abolition

**M Feb 3**
Destiny Manifested: Texas and the Mexican War

**W Feb 5**
The American Party System and the Compromise of 1850
THE IMPENDING CRISIS

READ: Text, the 1850s.

F Feb 7 The Kansas-Nebraska Act, the Rise of the Republican Party, and the Election of 1856.
M Feb 10 The Dred Scott Decision, the Lecompton Constitution, and the Panic of 1857.
W Feb 12 Lincoln, Douglas, Slavery, and Race.
F Feb 14 John Brown and the Critical Election of 1860
M Feb 17 WASHINGTON-LINCOLN BIRTHDAY HOLIDAY
W Feb 19 The Secession of the Lower South
F Feb 21 Fort Sumter: The Coming and the Causes of the Civil War
IN-CLASS QUIZ ON THE COMING OF WAR

THE CIVIL WAR: THE IMPROVISED WAR, 1861-1862

READ: Text, the Civil War

F Feb 24 Mobilization, Strategy, and First Manassas
W Feb 26 Jefferson Davis and the Confederate Republic
F Feb 22 George B. McClellan and the Peninsular Campaign
M Mar 3 Robert E. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia
W Mar 5 Ulysses S. Grant and the Battle of Shiloh

THE CIVIL WAR: WAR BECOMES REVOLUTION, 1862-1863

READ: Text, the Civil War.

F Mar 7 The Rising Tide of Anti-Slavery, 1861-1862
M Mar 10 The Battle of Antietam
W Mar 12 The Emancipation Proclamation and Its Impact
F Mar 14 Don Carlos Buell, Braxton Bragg, and the Confederate Counter-Offensive in the West in 1862
M Mar 17 The Economics of War: Triumph of the Market
W Mar 19 A People’s Contest

THE CIVIL WAR: THE ORGANIZED WAR, 1863

READ: Text, the Civil War; Shaara, *Killer Angels*; Reardon, “Pickett’s Charge.”
F Mar 21    The "Dare Mark" Campaign: Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville

M Mar 24    The Battle of Gettysburg, July 1-3, 1863
FIRST SHORT PAPER DUE

W Mar 26    The Siege of Vicksburg

F Mar 28    Stone's River, Tullahoma, Chickamauga and Chattanooga

THE CIVIL WAR: THE ORGANIZED WAR TO VICTORY, 1864-1865

READ:       Text, the Civil War
            Flood, Grant and Sherman
            McPherson and Neely, "Was the Civil War Total War?"

M Mar 31    SPRING BREAK

W Apr 2     SPRING BREAK

F Apr 4     SPRING BREAK

M Apr 7     William T. Sherman and the Fall of Atlanta

W Apr 9     The War of Attrition: Wilderness, Spotsylvania, North Anna, Cold Harbor

F Apr 11    Phi Alpha Theta: NO CLASS

M Apr 14    The Re-election of Abraham Lincoln

W Apr 16    Marching through Georgia

F Apr 18    Marching through the Carolinas to Bentonville

M Apr 21    From Petersburg to Appomattox
SECOND SHORT PAPER DUE

W Apr 23    The Civil War: Who Won? Who Lost?

F Apr 25    Aftermath

RECONSTRUCTION AND REDEMPTION

READ:       Text, on Reconstruction
            McPherson, "American Victory, American Defeat"

M Apr 28    The Problems of Peace

W Apr 30    Andrew Johnson: Presidential Reconstruction

F May 2     Andrew Johnson: Radical Reconstruction and Impeachment

M May 5     The Southern Question

W May 7     Social and Economic Reconstruction
It is well that war is so terrible: else we
would grow too fond of it.

–Robert E. Lee