



HIST 246: The American Civil War Era

Drs. Caleb McDaniel and Fay Yarbrough

Fall 2013

Class: MWF, 11-11:50am, Humanities 119
Professors: [Dr. Caleb McDaniel](#) and [Dr. Fay Yarbrough](#)

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Course Description

Americans are currently living through the sesquicentennial anniversary of the Civil War, which resulted in the emancipation of 4 million slaves and the deaths of approximately 720,000 Americans. In this course, we will explore some of the major questions that historians ask about this era and learn how to take well-informed, persuasive positions on scholarly debates. Through class discussions and debates, we will also challenge one another to think about how the war should be remembered today.

Learning Objectives

- To evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of different historical arguments about the Civil War Era.

- To take your own positions on debatable historical questions and support these positions with sound reasoning and evidence.
- To communicate effectively by writing clear, well-supported position papers and participating in class discussions.
- To identify and think critically about the social, cultural, and political factors that influence the way the past is remembered.

What to Expect

Expect to attend class. Active attendance in every class is **mandatory** and crucial to your success in the course. Participation in class discussions and debates forms a significant part of your final grade.

Do not expect this course to be a “blow by blow” history of battles, events, and major figures in the Civil War. (If you would like a detailed but accessible history of the War that amply covers the military narrative, we suggest you consult James McPherson’s *Battle Cry of Freedom*, which is widely available at bookstores.) We will have occasion to talk and read some about military history, but we will also range far beyond the battlefield.

Expect to do a lot of reading and writing for this course. You will be writing four papers during this semester, and there will be weeks when you have over 100 pages of historical scholarship to read. This load will be unmanageable *unless* you set aside time outside of class every day and start much earlier on assignments than you think you need to. We will devote some class time to discussing how to manage the reading load and how to write strong papers in a relatively short amount of time, but keeping up with the reading and writing is primarily your responsibility.

Expect to succeed. Our only reason for covering topics in class or assigning reading outside of class will be to assist you in meeting the learning objectives for the course. That means that if you apply yourself to doing the work in this class, you can expect to learn. On the other hand, if you decide you can’t commit to doing all the work or to attending class, then don’t expect to learn what the course is designed to teach.

Required Books

There are four required books for this course. All other readings will be made available to you electronically on OWL-Space.

- Chandra Manning, *What This Cruel War Was Over: Soldiers, Slavery, and the Civil War* (Vintage, paperback, 2008). ISBN: 978-0307277329, [Amazon](#)
- Eric Foner, *Nothing But Freedom: Emancipation and its Legacy* (Louisiana State University Press, paperback, new edition, 2007). ISBN: 978-0807132890, [Amazon](#)
- Bruce Levine, *Confederate Emancipation: Southern Plans to Free and Arm Slaves during the Civil War* (Oxford, paperback, 2007). ISBN: 978-0195315868, [Amazon](#)

- Tony Horwitz, *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War* (Vintage, paperback, 1999). ISBN: 978-0679758334, [Amazon](#)

Please purchase the books at the beginning of the semester so that you will have them when it is time to read them. The Rice bookstore does not keep the books in stock all semester long, so if you wait you will need to acquire one of the books from another store.

Assignments

Four Position Papers In these four- to six-page double-spaced papers, you will defend your position on four debatable historical questions about the Civil War era. We will distribute the prompt for each paper, along with specific guidelines and criteria for grading, at least one week before each is due. Two of the prompts (the first and the third) will ask you to take positions on issues we have discussed extensively in class. The other two prompts (the second and the fourth) will ask you to apply reasoning skills honed in class to a previously unconsidered issue or debate, using a packet of additional readings distributed with the prompt.

Pre-Discussion Reports As noted below on the Schedule, approximately eleven (11) sessions this semester will be devoted to “Class Discussion” of assigned readings. On each of these dates, you should submit a brief, informal “pre-discussion report” by email to both professors and the TA. **The email must include “HIST 246” somewhere in the subject line in order to be considered for credit.**

The report should be put in the body of the email itself and should consist of two fully-developed paragraphs. The first paragraph should answer a question that will be emailed to you in advance, using specific evidence and examples from the reading to support your answer. The second paragraph can discuss anything about the reading; you could use this part, for example, to talk about something that interested, confused, or impressed you, or something that reminded you of other topics in the class. Paragraph Two is up to you!

You can earn up to 5 points on each report, and the report with the lowest point total will be dropped at the end of the semester.

Class Participation There will be ample opportunities to participate in class by making comments during class discussions, participating in class debates, and working with other students on in-class presentations. For each class meeting, the instructors will note your participation. At the midpoint of the semester, you will receive information about your participation grade thus far, but you may ask about your participation grade at any point during the semester.

You should read any assigned materials before class and be prepared to participate in class discussions. If it becomes apparent that students are not doing the assigned readings, quizzes may be administered, and those quiz scores will be incorporated into the participation grade. Finally, you cannot earn participation points if you are not in class; thus, regular attendance is strongly encouraged.

Grading Policies

Your final grade in the course will be determined as follows:

Assignment	100%	500 pts
Paper #1	10%	50 pts
Paper #2	20%	100 pts
Paper #3	20%	100 pts
Paper #4	25%	125 pts
Pre-Discussion Reports	10%	50 pts
Class Participation	15%	75 pts

We will also use the following key to determine your letter grade:

Grade	Points	Percent
A	460+	92-100%
A-	450-459	90-91%
B+	440-449	88-89%
B	415-439	83-87%
B-	400-414	80-82%
C+	385-399	77-79%
C	365-384	73-76%
C-	350-364	70-72%
D+	335-349	67-69%
D	315-334	63-66%
D-	300-314	60-62%
F	0-300	0-59%

If your performance shows significant improvement over the course of the semester, we reserve the right (but assume no obligation) to raise your final grade.

General Policies

Late Work Pre-discussion reports and position papers will not be accepted late.

Exceptions to the deadline policies may (very rarely) be made at the instructors' discretion, but only when there are extenuating circumstances such as a personal emergency or an illness requiring professional medical attention. These circumstances must be documented to our satisfaction and brought to our attention before the deadline for a paper arrives.

You are also advised to start assignments early so that if an issue arises which cannot be documented to our satisfaction but which still prevents you from finishing on time, you will still have at least some work to turn in by the deadline and thus avoid receiving no credit at all.

Honor Code Plagiarism and intellectual dishonesty are violations of the Rice Honor Code and will be reported to the Honor Council. [Plagiarism is defined by the Honor Council](#) as “quoting, paraphrasing, or otherwise using another’s words or ideas as one’s own without properly crediting the source. . . . The Honor Council assumes that, unless otherwise credited, all work submitted by the student is intended to be considered as his or her own work. Any time a student draws particularly or generally from another’s work, the source should be properly credited.”

Disability Services If you have a documented disability that will impact your work in this class, please contact one of the instructors during the first two weeks of the semester to discuss accommodations confidentially. You will also need to contact and register with the [Disability Support Services Office](#) in the Allen Center.

Schedule

Part 1: The meaning of the war

August 26 Course introduction; Wounded Warriors (CM)

For Wednesday: Read over the syllabus and come with questions.

August 28 Why They Fought: Contemporary Perspectives (FY)

August 30 Class Discussion:

- Ta-Nehisi Coates, “Why Do So Few Blacks Study the Civil War?”, *The Atlantic*, February 2012: <http://bit.ly/PGQsmR>
- Tony Horwitz, “150 Years of Misunderstanding the Civil War,” *The Atlantic*, June 2013: <http://bit.ly/120zN5Y>

September 2 No class (Labor Day)

September 4

Houston's Civil War (CM)

September 6 Class Discussion:

- Rice website on [Dick Dowling and Sabine Pass in History and Memory](http://exhibits.library.rice.edu/exhibits), available at <http://exhibits.library.rice.edu/exhibits>

Part 2: What caused the war?

September 9, 11 & 13 What Caused the Civil War? (CM)

September 16 Class Discussion:

- James Huston, "Property Rights in Slavery and the Coming of the Civil War," available on [Owl-Space](#)
- Gary Kornblith, "Rethinking the Coming of the Civil War: A Counterfactual Exercise," available on [Owl-Space](#)
- Edward Rugemer, "Slave Rebels and Abolitionists: The Black Atlantic and the Coming of the Civil War," available on [Owl-Space](#)

September 18 Debate Preparation in Groups: Fundamentalists vs. Neo-Revisionists

September 20 Class debate: What Caused the Civil War?

September 23 Class Discussion:

- Chandra Manning, *What This Cruel War Was Over*

September 25 Writing a Good Position Paper

September 30 Position Paper #1 Due by 11:00 a.m.

Part 3: What caused emancipation?

September 27 & 30, October 2 & 4 What caused emancipation? (FY)

October 7 Class Discussion:

- James McPherson, “Who Freed the Slaves?”, available on [Owl-Space](#)
- Ira Berlin, “Who Freed the Slaves?”, available on [Owl-Space](#)
- James Oakes, “The War of Northern Aggression,” *Jacobin*, August 2012, <http://bit.ly/PP2rPj>; and interview about *Freedom National*, <http://bit.ly/V6Qmd3>

October 9 Debate Preparation in Groups: Top-down and bottom-up emancipation

October 11 Class debate: What caused emancipation?

October 14 No Class (Midterm Recess)

October 16 Class Discussion:

- Bruce Levine, *Confederate Emancipation*, entire

October 18 What caused Confederate defeat? (CM)

October 21 & 23 Women and the War (FY)

October 25 Position Paper #2 **Due by 11:00 a.m.**

Part 4: How revolutionary was Reconstruction?

October 25, 28, 30, & November 1 How Revolutionary was Reconstruction? (CM)

November 4 Class Discussion:

- Foner, *Nothing But Freedom* (required book)
- Jim Downs, “The Other Side of Freedom: Destitution, Disease, and Dependency Among Freedwomen and Their Children During and After the Civil War,” available on [Owl-Space](#)

November 6 Debate Preparation in Groups: Radical Change versus Fundamental Continuity

November 8 Class debate: How Revolutionary was Reconstruction?

Part 5: How did Civil War memory change?

November 11 Position Paper #3 **Due by 11:00 a.m.**; Civil War Memory Traditions (FY)

November 13 Class discussion:

- David Blight, “What Will Peace Among the Whites Bring?”, available on [OWL-Space](#)
- Caroline Janney, “I Yield to No Man an Iota of My Convictions”, available on [OWL-Space](#)

November 15 No class meeting

November 18 Class Discussion:

- Horwitz, *Confederates in the Attic*, chapters 1 through 5

November 20 Class Discussion (no report due):

- Horwitz, *Confederates in the Attic*, chapters 6 through 10

November 22 Class Discussion:

- Horwitz, *Confederates in the Attic*, chapters 11-15
- Reiko Hillyer, “Relics of Reconciliation,” available on [Owl-Space](#)

November 25 Was the Civil War a “total” war? (CM)

November 27 & 29 No Class (Thanksgiving)

December 2 Class discussion:

- Abel, “The Indians in the Civil War,” available on [OWL-Space](#)
- Nichols, “The Other Civil War,” available on [OWL-Space](#)

December 4 & 6 Work in groups on historic marker rewrites.

December 18 Position Paper #4 **due by 5 p.m.**