



# HIST 246: The American Civil War Era

Dr. Caleb McDaniel

Fall 2014

Class: MWF, 11-11:50am, Humanities 119  
Professor: [Dr. Caleb McDaniel](#)

## Course Description

Americans are currently living through the sesquicentennial anniversary of the Civil War, which resulted in the emancipation of 4 million enslaved people 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. We will also think about how the war should be remembered today, especially here at Rice University.

## Contact Information

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## Learning Objectives

- To identify the strengths and weaknesses of 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 debates.
- 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 primarily 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, I suggest you consult James McPherson’s *Battle Cry of Freedom*, which is widely available at bookstores.) We will read and talk 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, which you should purchase at the beginning of the semester. 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](#)

## 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. The prompt for each paper, along with specific guidelines and criteria for grading, will be distributed 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 scholarly articles distributed with the prompt.

**Pre-Discussion Reports** As noted below on the Schedule, approximately eight (8) 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 the professor 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, which are due *by 11:00 am* on the day of the discussion. Late reports will not be accepted, but your lowest report grade 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. You should read any assigned materials before class and be prepared to participate in class discussions.

For each class meeting specifically marked as a “Class Discussion,” the teaching assistant will note your participation for assessment purposes, and your participation grade will be based on these scores. I reserve the right, but am under no obligation, to raise your participation grade in cases where you have also been an active participant on other class days.

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.

**Final Project** A final group project will relate to the way that the Civil War is remembered locally at Rice University. This project will include an oral presentation as well as a brief two- or three-page memo, but you group will be responsible for dividing up which part of the project you work on. More details forthcoming in class.

## 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	20%	100 pts
Class Participation	8%	40 pts
Pre-Discussion Reports	7%	35 pts
Final Project	15%	75 pts

The following key will 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, I 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 Professor McDaniel's 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 my satisfaction and, when possible, brought to my 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 my 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 Professor McDaniel 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: Introduction

**August 25** Course introduction

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

**August 27** Readings:

- “Washington and Lee to Remove Confederate flags following protests,” *Washington Post*, July 8, 2014, <http://wapo.st/11REuVK>
- “Emory Declares Its Regret for Historic Involvement with Slavery,” *Emory Report*, January 17, 2011, <http://bit.ly/1mdB5lp>
- “Class Begins to Paint Picture of Princeton’s Ties to Slavery,” *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, May 15, 2013, <http://bit.ly/1n2ZHNQ>
- Scott Jaschik, “Removing an Honor,” *Inside Higher Ed*, July 12, 2010, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2010/07/12/klan>
- Craig Wilder, “Shackles and Ivy,” *The Chronicle Review*, September 23, 2013, <http://chronicle.com/article/ShacklesIvy/141691/>

### Part 2: What caused the war?

**August 29** What Make Historical Explanations Good?

**September 1** No class (Labor Day)

**September 3, 5, & 8**

What Caused the Civil War?

**September 10** 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](#)
- Scott Hancock, “Crossing Freedom’s Fault Line: The Underground Railroad and Recentring African Americans in Civil War Causality,” available on [Owl-Space](#)

**September 12** Debate Preparation in Groups

**September 15** Class debate: What Caused the Civil War?

**September 17** Class Discussion:

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

**September 19** Writing a Good Position Paper

**September 22** Position Paper #1 **Due by 11:00 a.m.**

**September 24** What caused Confederate defeat?

**Part 3: What caused emancipation?**

**September 26 & 29, October 1** What caused emancipation?

**October 3** Class Discussion:

- James McPherson, “Who Freed the Slaves?”, available on [Owl-Space](#)
- Ira Berlin, “Who Freed the Slaves?”, available on [Owl-Space](#)
- Thavolia Glymph, “Rose’s War and the Gendered Politics of a Slave Insurgency in the Civil War,” available on [Owl-Space](#)
- James Oakes, “Reluctant to Emancipate? Another Look at the First Confiscation Act,” available on [Owl-Space](#)

**October 6** Preparation for debate in groups

**October 8** Class debate: What Caused Emancipation?

**October 10** Position Paper #2 **Due by 11:00 a.m.**

No Class (Professor McDaniel speaking at LSU)

**October 13** No Class (Midterm Recess)

**October 15** Class Discussion:

- Bruce Levine, *Confederate Emancipation*, entire

**October 17** No Class (Professor McDaniel at conference)

#### **Part 4: How revolutionary was Reconstruction?**

**October 20, 22 & 24** How Revolutionary was Reconstruction?

**October 27** 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](#)
- Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations,” *The Atlantic*, May 21, 2014, <http://theatl.in.tc/1ha12z0>

**October 29** Preparation for class debate

**October 31** Class debate: How Revolutionary was Reconstruction?

**November 3**

Visit by Ed Baptist

**November 5** Position Paper #3 **Due by 11:00 a.m.**

Was the Civil War a “total” war?

## Part 5: How did Civil War memory change?

**November 7, 10, 12, & 14** Has Civil War memory become more conciliatory?

**November 17** Position Paper #4 **Due by 11:00 a.m.**

**November 19** Class Discussion:

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

**November 21** Research Day on Final Projects

**November 24** Class Discussion:

- Horwitz, *Confederates in the Attic*

**November 26** Work Day on Final Projects

**November 28** THANKSGIVING

**December 1 & 3** Group Presentations

**December 5** Class Discussion: Final Projects