



# HIST 246: The American Civil War Era

Dr. Caleb McDaniel

Spring 2018

Class: Tues & Thurs, 1:00-2:15pm, Herring Hall 129

Professor: [Dr. Caleb McDaniel](#)

## Course Description

Americans recently passed 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 the war's continuing legacies and how the war should be remembered today.

## 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 several 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 Canvas or at Fondren.

- Chandra Manning, *What This Cruel War Was Over: Soldiers, Slavery, and the Civil War* (Vintage, paperback, 2008). ISBN: 978-0307277329, [Amazon](#)
- Adam Rothman, *Beyond Freedom’s Reach: A Kidnapping in the Twilight of Slavery* (Harvard University Press, hardcover, 2015). ISBN: 978-0674368125, [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.

**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.

**Pre-Discussion Reports** As noted below on the Schedule, six (6) 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 replying to the relevant discussion thread on Canvas.

Your report should consist of two fully-developed paragraphs. The first paragraph should answer one of the reading questions that will be provided 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 course topics or materials. 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.

**Post-Discussion Paper** Four of the “Class Discussion” days also have some “Optional Supplementary Materials” listed that pair well with the issues raised by the main reading we will be discussing.

Based on your level of interest in the topic, you should select ONE of those discussion days, and then select ONE of the “bullet points” listed under the supplementary materials. Write an informal 2-3 page response paper that uses the supplementary material you have selected to defend a position on a question raised by the main, required reading or by the discussion of that reading in class.

If you choose, you may also propose a different supplementary reading or resource that you think relates to the reading, but if you decide not to use the list of materials provided, then I must approve your selection before the discussion begins.

This post-discussion paper will be due 48 hours after the discussion ends. More information about this assignment will be distributed in class.

## Grading Policies

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

Assignment	100%	500 pts
Position Paper #1	15%	75 pts
Position Paper #2	20%	100 pts
Position Paper #3	20%	100 pts
Position Paper #4	20%	100 pts
Class Participation	10%	50 pts
Pre-Discussion Reports	5%	25 pts
Post-Discussion Paper	10%	50 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.

You will also have the opportunity to select one paper (either a position paper or your post-discussion paper) and rewrite it at the end of the semester in response to the comments you received. If the paper improves, the new grade *might* replace your first grade. I cannot guarantee that the revised paper will receive a higher grade, but it will not lower your grade on that assignment.

## 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 my 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

**January 9** Course introduction

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

### Part 1: What caused the war?

**January 11, 16 and 18** What Caused the Civil War?

**January 23** Class Discussion:

- James Huston, “Property Rights in Slavery and the Coming of the Civil War,” available on [Canvas](#)
- Gary Kornblith, “Rethinking the Coming of the Civil War: A Counterfactual Exercise,” available on [Canvas](#)
- Scott Hancock, “Crossing Freedom’s Fault Line: The Underground Railroad and Recentring African Americans in Civil War Causality,” available on [Canvas](#)

**January 25** Class debate: What Caused the Civil War?

**January 30** And the War Came . . .

**February 1** Writing a Good Position Paper

**February 6** Class Discussion:

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

Optional Supplementary Materials:

- [Mapping Civil War Narratives](#)
- Alexander Hobbs U.S. Civil War Diary (original available at Woodson Research Center, Fondren)
- John C. Crosby U.S. Civil War Diary (original also at Woodson)
- Gary W. Gallagher, *The Union War* (2011), chapter 3, together with [Mark Grimsley review essay](#)

**February 8** NO CLASS

**February 13** What caused Confederate defeat?

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

Packet for Position Paper #2 distributed

**Part 2: What caused emancipation?**

**February 15, 20, and 22** What caused emancipation?

**February 27** Class Discussion:

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

**March 1** Class debate: What Caused Emancipation?

**March 6** Position Paper #2 **Due by 11:00 a.m.**

**March 8** Class Discussion:

- Bruce Levine, *Confederate Emancipation*, entire

Optional Supplementary Materials:

- *Annual Message of Governor Henry Watkins Allen, to the Legislature of the State of Louisiana* (1865)
- Jay Winik [op-ed on Robert E. Lee](#), together with Andy Hall [blog post](#)
- Kevin Levin, “Searching for Black Confederate Soldiers,” [link](#)
- Jerome S. Handler and Michael L. Tuite, “Retouching History: The Modern Falsification of a Civil War Photograph,” [web archive](#) or [pdf](#)
- [Beyond Face Value: Depictions of Slavery in Confederate Currency](#)

**March 13 and 15** No Class (Spring Break)

### **Part 3: How revolutionary was Reconstruction?**

**March 20, 22, and 27** How Revolutionary was Reconstruction?

**March 29** Class Discussion:

- Rothman, *Beyond Freedom's Reach* (required book)
- Kidada E. Williams, “The Wounds that Cried Out: Reckoning with African Americans’ Testimonies of Trauma and Suffering,” available on [Canvas](#)
- Jim Downs, “The Other Side of Freedom: Destitution, Disease, and Dependency Among Freedwomen and Their Children During and After the Civil War,” available on [Canvas](#)

Optional Supplementary Materials:

- [Last Seen: Finding Family After Slavery](#)
- [Mapping Occupation: Force Freedom and the Army in Reconstruction](#)
- [The Freedmen’s Bureau Online](#)
- Carole Emberton, “Unwriting the Freedom Narrative: A Review Essay,” *Journal of Southern History* 82, no. 2 (May 2016), 377-394, [link](#)
- Ira Berlin and Leslie S. Rowland, eds., *Families and Freedom: A Documentary History of African-American Kinship in the Civil War Era* (1997), chapter 5
- Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations,” *Atlantic*, June 2014, [link](#)

**April 3** Class debate: How Revolutionary was Reconstruction?

**April 5** Was the Civil War a “total” war?

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

Packet for Position Paper #4 distributed.

## **Part 4: How did Civil War memory change?**

**April 10, 12 and 17**

The Contested Memory of the Civil War

**April 19** Class Discussion:

- Horwitz, *Confederates in the Attic*, selections TBD

Optional Supplementary Materials:

- Watch an episode of Ken Burns’ *Civil War*
- [Dick Dowling and Sabine Pass in History and Memory](#)
- [Sherman’s March and America: Mapping Memory](#)
- Ta-Nehisi Coates, “Why Do So Few Blacks Study the Civil War?”, *The Atlantic*, February 2012
- Tony Horwitz, “150 Years of Misunderstanding the Civil War,” *The Atlantic*, June 19, 2013
- An op-ed from this [round-up](#) of responses by historians to recent debates over Confederate monuments
- Kelsey Jukam, John Savage, and Alisa Semiens, “The Hidden Confederate History of the Texas Capitol: An Unofficial Guide,” *Texas Observer*
- [Roundtable](#) on “Reconstruction in Public History and Memory Sesquicentennial,” with [op-ed](#) by Kate Masur and Greg Downs on “Why We Need a National Monument to Reconstruction,” *New York Times*, December 14, 2016

**April 20** Position Paper #4 **Due by 5:00 p.m.**

**May 2** Optional Rewritten Paper **Due by 5:00 p.m.**