

AMH 4571: Civil War and Reconstruction

Fall 2025

Instructor: Prof. David Silkenat

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Class Meetings: Tuesdays 11:45am – 1:40pm and Thursdays 12:50pm – 1:40pm (KF 105)

Office Hours: Tuesdays: 9am – 11:30am (KF 231)

Course Description

This course offers a critical exploration of the Civil War Era, examining not only the military and political developments but also the social, cultural, and economic transformations that reshaped the United States. Through the analysis of primary sources and historiographical debates, students will investigate the causes of secession and war, the lived experiences of soldiers, civilians, enslaved people, and political leaders, and the contested legacy of the war and emancipation.

Seminar Structure

Each week of the semester is devoted to a particular theme. On Tuesdays, we will examine a few key secondary sources on a particular topic. Tuesday sessions will begin with a brief mini-lecture introducing the topic, after which Discussion Leaders (see below) will lead class discussion on the readings. On Thursdays, we will examine primary sources connected to the theme.

Participation

Students are expected to come to class having done the assigned reading and prepared to engage in a vigorous discussion on their contents. Quality of your contributions is as important as their quantity. Please visit office hours if you feel that your contributions in class do not reflect your engagement with the course materials.

Discussion Leaders

Each student will serve as a discussion leader once during the semester, working in pairs. Discussion leaders will craft a list of 3-5 guiding questions that illustrate the major themes within the readings. This will serve as a jumping off point for the second hour of discussion. Of particular value are questions that draw connections and contrasts between the readings. These questions will be distributed to the class via email prior to class time, preferably by 9pm prior to

class. During class, the discussion leaders will use their guiding questions to begin class discussion. Discussion leaders should be prepared to ask follow-up questions to further class discussion. Discussion leaders will be evaluated by the quality of their submitted questions and the quality of the discussion that they generate. This will be factored into the participation grade.

Essays

Students will write two essays during the semester. Further details about the essays can be found on the Canvas site.

Assessment

Essay 1	30%	Noon 10/3/2025
Essay 2	30%	Noon 11/21/2025
Take Home Exam	20%	Noon 12/12/2025
Participation	20%	

You do not need to purchase any book for this course. All of the readings are available online, on the Canvas site, or via the Library.

Students should refer to the *Chicago Manual of Style* for all questions of style, citations, and formatting: <https://www-chicagomanualofstyle-org.lp.hscl.ufl.edu/book/ed18/frontmatter/toc.html>

This course complies with all UF academic policies. For information on those policies and for resources for students, please see [this link](#).

Reading Schedule

Note that the schedule may change to reflect the needs of the students and the professor, and to reflect the cancellation of classes due to weather and other unforeseen circumstances.

Thursday, August 21: Why the Civil War is Still Relevant

- Ta-Nehisi Coates, “What This Cruel War Was Over,” *The Atlantic* (2015)
<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/06/what-this-cruel-war-was-over/396482/>
- Stephanie McCurry, “Why Do We Love Our Civil War?” *Civil War Times* (2012)
- Andrew Davenport, “A New Civil War Museum Speaks Truths in the Former Capital of the Confederacy,” *Smithsonian* (2019): <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/civil-war-museum-speaks-truths-former-capital-of-confederacy-180972085/>
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Tuesday, August 26: Slavery and Abolition

- Edward Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (Chapter 4: “Left Hand, 1805-1861,” pp. 111-144.)
- Damian Pargas, *Slavery and Forces Migration in the Antebellum South* (Chapter 3: “Changing Places,” 94-131).
- Jesse Olsavsky, “Women, Vigilance Committees and the Rise of Military Abolitionism,” *Slavery & Abolition* 39 (2018): 357-382.
- W. Caleb McDaniel, “The Bonds and Boundaries of Antislavery,” *Journal of the Civil War Era* 4 (2014): 84-105.

Thursday, August 28: Slavery and Abolition documents

- Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave*. The Slave Market:
<https://www.americanyawp.com/reader/the-cotton-revolution/solomon-northrup-describes-a-slave-market-1841/>
- Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave*. Picking Cotton:
https://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=483
- WPA Interviews – On Being Sold:
<https://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai/enslavement/text2/onbeingsoldwpa.pdf>
- WPA Interviews – Plantation Labor:
<https://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai/enslavement/text5/plantationlaborwpa.pdf>

- George Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South* (1854)
<https://www.americanyawp.com/reader/the-cotton-revolution/george-fitzhugh-argues-that-slavery-is-better-than-liberty-and-equality-1854/>
- William Lloyd Garrison, *The Liberator* (1831)
<https://www.americanyawp.com/reader/religion-and-reform/william-lloyd-garrison-introduces-the-liberator-1831/>
- Frederick Douglass, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” (1852)
<https://teachingamericanhistory.org/document/what-to-the-slave-is-the-fourth-of-july-4/>

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Tuesday, September 2: The Impending Crisis

- Jonathan Daniel Wells, *A House Divided* (Chapter 3)
- Richard Blackett, “Dispossessing Massa: Fugitive Slaves and the Politics of Slavery after 1850,” *American Nineteenth Century History* 10 (2009): 119-136.
- Etcheson, Nicole, “John Brown, Terrorist?” *American Nineteenth Century History* 10 (2009): 29 – 48
- Manisha Sinha, “The Caning of Charles Sumner: Slavery, Race, and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 23 (2003): 233-262.
- Stanley Harrold, *Border War: Fighting over Slavery before the Civil War* (Chapter 7)

Thursday, September 4: Impending Crisis documents

- Dred Scott v. Sanford (1857) <https://lostmuseum.cuny.edu/archive/excerpts-from-majority-opinion-of-us-supreme>
- Hinton Rowan Helper, *The Impending Crisis* (1857)
<https://www.ncpedia.org/anchor/primary-source-helpers>
- James Henry Hammond, *Cotton is King* (1858)
<https://teachingamericanhistory.org/document/cotton-is-king/>
- William Seward, *An Irrepressible Conflict* (1858)
<https://teachingamericanhistory.org/document/an-irrepressible-conflict/>
- Abraham Lincoln, *House Divided* (1858)
<https://teachingamericanhistory.org/document/house-divided-speech-3/>
- Aaron D. Stevens to his brother Henry justifying violence in the cause of abolition (1858)
[available at UF Library site]
- Margaraetta Mason and Lydia Maria Child Discuss John Brown (1860)
<https://www.americanyawp.com/reader/the-sectional-crisis/margaraetta-mason-and-lydia-maria-child-discuss-john-brown-1860/>

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Tuesday, September 9: The Election of 1860 and the Secession Crisis

- Manisha Sinha, *The Counterrevolution of Slavery: Politics and Ideology in Antebellum South Carolina* (Chapter 8)
- Edward Ayers, “What Caused the Civil War?”
<https://scholarship.richmond.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1134&context=history-faculty-publications>
- Bill Link, “Secession,” <https://www.essentialcivilwarcurriculum.com/secession.html>
- Enrico Dal Lago, “Writing the US Civil War Era into the Nineteenth-Century World History,” *Journal of the Civil War Era* 11 (2021): 255-271.

Thursday, September 11: Secession documents

- Declarations of Secession (1860-1861): <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/declaration-causes-seceding-states>
- Alexander Stephens, Cornerstone Speech (1861)
<https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/cornerstone-speech>
- Proposed Amendments from Peace Conference (1861)
<https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/amendments-proposed-peace-conference-february-8-27-1861>
- Lincoln’s First Inaugural (1861) <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/lincolns-first-inaugural-address>

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Tuesday, September 16: Civil War in 1861 and 1862

- Susan-Mary Grant, *The War for a Nation: The American Civil War* (chapters 3 & 4).
- “Historians Forum: The First Battle of Bull Run,” *Civil War History* 57 (2011): 106-120.
- Glenn Brasher, *The Peninsula Campaign and the Necessity of Emancipation: African Americans and the Fight for Freedom* (Chapter 4)
- Judkin Browning and Tim Silver, “Nature and Human Nature: Environmental Influences on the Union’s Failed Peninsula Campaign, 1862,” *Journal of the Civil War Era* 8 (2018): 388-415.
- John M. Harris, “‘Truthful as the Record of Heaven’: The Battle of Antietam and the Birth of Photojournalism,” *Southern Cultures* 19 (2013): 79-94.

Thursday, September 18: 1861 & 1862 documents

- Sullivan Ballou Letter, <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/sullivan-ballou-letter>
- George McClellan to Abraham Lincoln, 7 July 1862
<https://faculty.etsu.edu/history/documents/mcclellan.htm>
- Abraham Lincoln to Horace Greeley, 22 August 1862
<https://teachingamericanhistory.org/document/to-horace-greeley/>
- Robert E. Lee's Maryland Proclamation, 8 September 1862
<https://encyclopediavirginia.org/primary-documents/proclamation-to-the-people-of-maryland-by-robert-e-lee-1862/>

Tuesday, September 23: Emancipation

- Ira Berlin, “Who Freed the Slaves?”
<https://irbe.library.vanderbilt.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/e138a559-c19e-4d38-8743-32e99febc317/content>
- James M. McPherson, “Who Freed the Slaves?” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 139 (1995): 1-10.
- Chandra Manning, “The Shifting Terrain of Attitudes Towards Abraham Lincoln and Emancipation,” *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 34 (2013): 18-39.
- Louis P. Masur, “Liberty Is a Slow Fruit: Lincoln the Deliberate Emancipator,” *American Scholar* 81 (2012): 44-53.
- “Historians' Forum: The Emancipation Proclamation,” *Civil War History* 59 (2013): 7-31.
- Abigail Cooper, “‘Away I Goin’ to Find My Mamma’: Self-Emancipation, Migration, and Kinship in Refugee Camps in the Civil War Era,” *Journal of African American History* 102 (2017): 444-467.

Thursday, September 25: Emancipation documents

- Benjamin Butler to Winfield Scott, 27 May 1861.
<https://www.freedmen.umd.edu/Butler.html>
- Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, 22 September 1862
https://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=433
- Emancipation Proclamation, 1 January 1863 <https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured-documents/emancipation-proclamation>
- Testimony by the Superintendent of Contrabands at Fortress Monroe, Virginia, 9 May 1863. <https://www.freedmen.umd.edu/wilder.htm>
- Testimony of Octave Johnson, 1864. <https://www.freedmen.umd.edu/OJohnson.html>

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Tuesday, September 30: Why Soldiers Fought

- Peter Carmichael, *The War for the Common Soldier* (Introduction)
- Gary Gallagher, *The Union War* (Introduction & Chapter 2)
- Joseph T. Glatthaar, "Everyman's War," *Civil War History* 54 (2008): 229 – 24
- Ira Berlin, *Slaves No More* (Chapter 3)
- Marcy S. Sacks, "'They Are Truly Marvelous Cats': The Importance of Companion Animals to US Soldiers during the Civil War," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 11 (2021): 224-254.

Thursday, October 2: Soldiers documents

- Pvt. Jasper Barney to Capt. John Dinsmore, 24 October 1862
<https://teachinghistory.org/sites/default/files/2018-08/barney-letter-1.pdf>
- John White letter, 30 November 1862 <https://teachinghistory.org/sites/default/files/2018-08/ps-white-letter-2.pdf>
- Chaplain of an Arkansas Black Regiment to the Adjutant General of the Army.
<https://www.freedmen.umd.edu/Randall.html>
- Joseph Miller affidavit, 26 November 1864 <https://www.freedmen.umd.edu/JMiller.html>
- Two Years with Colored Troops <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/reminiscences-two-years-colored-troops>
- Henry Singleton on Fighting for the Union (1922):
<https://www.americanyawp.com/reader/the-civil-war/william-henry-singleton-a-formerly-enslaved-man-recalls-fighting-for-the-union-1922/>

Tuesday, October 7: Turning Points

- Jonathan Daniel Wells, *A House Divided* (Chapter 7)
- Elizabeth Varon, *Armies of Deliverance* (Chapter 8)
- Louis P. Masur, "'A New Birth of Freedom': Emancipation and the Gettysburg Address," in Sean Conant and Howard Holzer, *The Gettysburg Address: Perspectives on Lincoln's Greatest Speech*, 175-190.

Thursday, October 9: 1863 documents

- Vicksburg Citizen https://acwm.org/wp-content/uploads/the_daily_citizen.pdf
- Vicksburg caves. <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/vicksburg-cave-we-inhabited>
- George Franklin Robinson letter: <https://dp.la/primary-source-sets/battle-of-gettysburg/sources/1471>

- Samuel Hodgmen letter: <https://dp.la/primary-source-sets/battle-of-gettysburg/sources/1468>
- Grant recalls Vicksburg: <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/grant-remembers-surrender-and-victory-vicksburg>
- Excerpts from the diary of Union soldier Nathaniel Rollins about being taken prisoner during the Battle of Gettysburg, 30 June–6 July 1863 <https://dp.la/primary-source-sets/battle-of-gettysburg/sources/1470>
- Confederate soldier on Gettysburg: <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/gettysburg-whole-ground-miles-around-covered-wounded>
- Robert E. Lee to Jefferson Davis, 8 July 1863 <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/letter-gen-robert-e-lee-confederate-president-jefferson-davis>
- Abraham Lincoln to James C. Conkling, 26 August 1863 <https://www.loc.gov/resource/mal.2584600/?sp=1&st=text&r=-0.283,-0.052,1.675,1.388,0>
- Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg Address. 19 November 1863 <https://teachingamericanhistory.org/document/gettysburg-address/>

Tuesday, October 14: The Home Front

- Robert Colby, "Negroes Will Bear Fabulous Prices": The Economics of Wartime Slave Commerce and Visions of the Confederate Future, *Journal of the Civil War Era* 10 (2020): 439 – 598.
- Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South*, (Chapter 5)
- Lorien Foote, "Rethinking the Confederate Home Front," *Journal of Civil War Era* 7(2017): 446-465.
- Drew Gilpin Faust, "Altars of Sacrifice: Confederate Women and the Narratives of War," *Journal of American History* 76 (1990): 1200 – 1228.
- Crystal Feimster, "General Benjamin Butler & the Threat of the Sexual Violence during the American Civil War," *Daedalus* 138 (2009): 126-134.
- Iver Bernstein, *The New York Draft Riots* (chapter 1)

Thursday, October 16: Home Front documents

- Confederate reaction to Benjamin Butler's orders, 1862.
- Mary Boykin Chesnut diary, https://learninglink.oup.com/access/content/schaller-3e-dashboard-resources/sc3e_ch-14_document-6_mary-boykin-chesnut
- Sarah Dawson diary, <https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3-euw1-ap-pe-ws4-cws-documents.ri-prod/9780415896009/Document3-1.pdf>

- Geographical Reader for the Dixie Children, 1863
<https://docsouth.unc.edu/impls/moore1/menu.html>
- William Lloyd Garrison to Oliver Johnson, 14 July 1863: <https://dp.la/primary-source-sets/northern-draft-riots-during-the-civil-war/sources/728>

Tuesday, October 21: The Hard War

- Lorien Foote, "Civilization and Savagery in the American Civil War," *South Central Review* 33 (2016): 21-36.
- Bennett Parten, "The Refugee Crisis of Sherman's March: Savannah, Port Royal, and the Transformation of the Sea Islands," *Civil War History* 70 (2024): 9-26.
- Lauren Thompson, "Escaping the Mechanism: Soldier Fraternization during the Siege at Petersburg," *Civil War History* 63 (2017): 349-376.
- Clay Mountcastle, "Guerrilla Warfare in the Civil War," in *Routledge Handbook of American Military and Diplomatic History*
- Stacey L. Smith, "Beyond North and South: Putting the West in the Civil War and Reconstruction," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 6 (2016): 566-591.

Thursday, October 23: 1864 documents

- Diary entries – Cold Harbor to Petersburg: <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/diary-entries-cold-harbor-petersburg>
- Soldiers and the 1864 Election: <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/lincoln-must-and-will-be-elected-again>
- Frederick Douglass on the "Mission of the War"
<https://www.proquest.com/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/91805988?sourcetype=Historical%20Newspapers>
- Freedmen Tell Sherman What They Need.
<https://www.americanyawp.com/reader/reconstruction/freedmen-discuss-post-emancipation-life-with-general-sherman-1865/>
- Special Field Orders, No. 15, 16 January 1865. <https://freedmen.umd.edu/sfo15.htm>
- Account of Andersonville. <https://www.humanitiestexas.org/news/articles/firsthand-account-private-prescott-tracy-civil-war-pow>

Tuesday, October 28: Appomattox and Beyond

- Elizabeth Varon, *Appomattox* (chapters 6 & 7)

- Caroline E. Janney, “Free to Go Where We Liked: The Army of Northern Virginia after Appomattox” *The Journal of the Civil War Era* 9 (2019): 4 – 28.
- Cecily N. Zander, “Victory’s Long Review”: The Grand Review of Union Armies and the Meaning of the Civil War,” *Civil War History* 66 (2020): 45 – 77.
- David Silkenat, *Raising the White Flag* (chapters 8 & 9) [on Canvas]

Thursday, October 30: 1865 documents

- Surrender Terms between Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee, 9-10 April 1865
<https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/lt-gen-ulysses-s-grants-terms-agreement-entered-gen-robert-e-lee-appomattox>
- Gen. Robert E. Lee Farewell Address, <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/gen-robert-e-lee-farewell-address>
- Abraham Lincoln's Last Public Address, 11 April 1865
<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/the-presidents-last-public-address>
- General Order No. 3, issued by Union General Gordon Granger, 19 June 1865
<https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/general-order-no-3>

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Thursday, November 4: Reconstruction

- Robert Cook, Kenneth W. Noe, Dana B. Shoaf, Jennifer L. Weber, Daniel E. Sutherland, “Historians’ Forum: Reconstruction” *Civil War History* 61(2015): 281 – 301.
- Hannah Rosen, “Words of Resistance: African American Women’s Testimony about Sexual Violence during the Memphis Massacre,” in *Remembering the Memphis Massacre*
- Hilary Green, “Erasing Dred Scott’s Shadow,”
<https://www.journalofthecivilwarera.org/2018/07/erasing-dred-scotts-shadow/>
- Richard Rubin, “The Colfax Riot: Stumbling on a Forgotten Reconstruction Tragedy, in a forgotten corner of Louisiana” *The Atlantic Monthly* (1993)
- Kidada E. Williams, *I Saw Death Coming* (Chapter 8)

Thursday, November 6: Reconstruction documents

- Jourdon Anderson letter, 7 August 1865
<https://www.americanyawp.com/reader/reconstruction/jourdon-anderson-writes-his-former-master-1865/>
- Mississippi Black Code, 1865
<https://www.americanyawp.com/reader/reconstruction/mississippi-black-code-1865/>

- South Carolina Black Code, 1865
https://ldhi.library.cofc.edu/exhibits/show/after_slavery_educator/unit_three_documents/document_eight
- Ex-Confederate Soldiers Terrorizing Union Men and Freedpeople in North Carolina
https://ldhi.library.cofc.edu/exhibits/show/after_slavery_educator/unit_nine_documents/document_one
- Civil Rights Act of 1866 <https://constitutioncenter.org/the-constitution/historic-document-library/detail/civil-rights-act-of-1866-april-9-1866-an-act-to-protect-all-persons-in-the-united-states-in-their-civil-rights-and-furnish-the-means-of-their-vindication>
- 14th Amendment <https://constitutioncenter.org/the-constitution/amendments/amendment-xiv>
- Bayley Wyatt's speech <https://www.freedmen.umd.edu/Wyat.html>
- Freedpeople's Testimony on the Effects of Klan Violence
https://ldhi.library.cofc.edu/exhibits/show/after_slavery_educator/unit_nine_documents/document_9
- Frederick Douglass, "The Color Question,"
<https://frederickdouglasspapersproject.com/s/digitaledition/item/18187>

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Tuesday, November 11 – Veteran's Day NO CLASS

Thursday, November 13: Visit to Special Collections Library

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Tuesday, November 18: Civil War Memory

- Caroline Janney, "The Lost Cause," <https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/lost-cause-the/>
- David Blight, "For Something beyond the Battlefield": Frederick Douglass and the Struggle for the Memory of the Civil War," *Journal of American History* 75 (1989): 1156-1178.
- Alyssa D. Warrick, "Mississippi's Greatest Hour," *Southern Cultures* 19 (2013): 95-112.
- Adam Domby, *The False Cause*, Chapter 1.

Thursday, November 20:

- UDC Catechism for Children (1904): <https://encyclopediavirginia.org/primary-documents/u-d-c-catechism-for-children-1904/>
- Dedication Speech for Silent Sam (1913) <https://www.hngreenphd.com/silent-sam-dedication-speech.html>
- WEB DuBois on Robert E. Lee:
<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=wu.89058603317&seq=485>
- *National Geographic* (1961): <https://www.cuttersguide.com/pdf/National-Geographic/1961-04.pdf>

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NO CLASS -- THANKSGIVING

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Tuesday, December 2: The Civil War Today

- Gary W. Gallagher, “The Civil War at the Sesquicentennial: How Well Do Americans Their Great National Crisis?” *Journal of the Civil War Era*, 3(2013): 295 – 303.
- Karen Cox, *No Common Ground*, chapter 6
- Fitzhugh Brundage, “Exclusion, Inclusion, and the Politics of Confederate Commemoration in the South,” *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 6 (2018): 324-330.
- David Blight, “Was the Civil War Inevitable?” *New York Times*, 21 December 2022.

Take Home Exam due noon 12/12/2025.