

The American Civil War: In History & Memory

HIST 3054 (Virtual) Spring 2025

Instructor: Mr. Seabrook

Office Hours: Virtual by appointment

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(Note: I answer most non-emergency emails during normal business hours (9-5) in the order in which they are received)

About the Course:

The Civil War occupies a unique space in American history. For many, America's most violent conflict provides endless historical curiosities, inspiring countless hobbyists and defining careers in tourism, popular culture, and academia. For others, the war is sacred, considered so deeply important to the nation that it affects our very identity. Despite how one relates to the Civil War, the historical reality is often more fascinating and complex than is imagined, and its many legacies continue to impact the world in which we live. This class will explore this dynamic history in an online academic format.

Many thanks to Dr. Taulby H. Edmondson.

Learning Objectives:

Upon completing this course, students will be able to:

- Identify and understand the timeline and major events of the Civil War era
- Identify and understand the Civil War's legacies in the present day
- Identify how historians use primary and secondary sources to construct historical arguments

This course covers Pathways concepts 1A (Advanced/Applied Discourse) and 2 (Critical Thinking in the Humanities).

Content Warning:

The American Civil War can be a controversial and painful topic. Some of what you read, listen to, or watch for this course may make you uncomfortable. Engagement with a diversity of viewpoints is an essential part of the historian's craft. In this class, we welcome open, honest debate and we won't shy away from "the hard stuff." I look forward to hearing your valuable and unique perspectives.

Required Materials:

All required materials are posted on Canvas, or links have been provided. No books are required to be purchased for this class. However, all materials listed in the syllabus, including podcasts, videos, films, and graphics, are required. Some of the films may require rental (usually less than \$5.00 to watch).

Questions about the course material (or anything else related to the Civil War)? Things you want to learn about that are not covered in the course? Don't hesitate to reach out! It is impossible to gain a thorough understanding of the countless aspects of the Civil War in one semester. This course is designed as a jumping off point for your own continuing exploration of the war and its legacies. That being said, I am happy to answer questions and address topics that you find interesting as much as possible given our limited time together. Just shoot me an email!

Assignments and Grading:

Reading Quizzes (40%)

One reading quiz is due at the end of almost every week of the course. You'll take these timed quizzes directly on Canvas. More information will be posted on Canvas. Your lowest quiz grade will be dropped at the end of the semester. **Quiz due dates are bolded in our class schedule.**

Film Responses (30%)

Throughout the semester, you will be responsible for watching seven films about the Civil War era. You are required to write 3-5 page responses for **THREE** of them (bolded titles below). More information will be posted on Canvas.

All should be streaming on one site or app or another, but please let me know if you have any problems/concerns about watching/acquiring them. **Film response due dates are bolded in our class schedule.**

Films:

- *The Age of Slavery*. Director: Sabin Streeter, 2013.
- ***Harriet***. Director: Kasi Lemmons, 2019.
- *Slavery and the Making of America*. Episode III: "Seeds of Destruction." Director: Chana Gazit, 2005.
- ***Glory***. Director: Edward Zwick, 1989.
- *Lincoln*. Director: Steven Spielberg, 2012.
- *Slavery and the Making of America*. Episode IV: "The Challenge of Freedom." Director: Leslie D. Farrell, 2005.
- ***Gone with the Wind***. Director: Victor Fleming, 1939.

Discussion Posts (10%)

Each week, you will be responsible for posting either a reflection or a response to someone else's reflection on Canvas. I will assign everyone in the class a group number so that it

is always clear which discussion post you are responsible for. Details about reflection and response rules, plus your group assignments and posting schedule, will be posted on Canvas.

Event/Site Visit and Review (20%)

You are required to attend one extracurricular event or visit a Civil War site before the end of the semester, then write a critical review. This is an open-ended assignment, and you can attend anything that you like as long as it pertains to the Civil War era, broadly defined.

Local opportunities will be shared on Canvas via Announcements and on your weekly pages, but you can attend a battlefield, lecture, or museum anywhere you find them. HOWEVER, if you are going to do an event or site visit that I have not advertised on Canvas, you will need to run it by me first so that I can approve the event/site visit as an appropriate opportunity for this assignment.

The **Civil War Driving Tour of Southwest Virginia** (<https://civilwar.vt.edu/driving-tour/>) is a fun way to explore the Civil War's legacy in Southwest Virginia. To count for the event/site visit assignment, you must visit at least three of the four sites in Blacksburg:

<https://civilwar.vt.edu/historic-smithfield/>

<https://civilwar.vt.edu/kentland-plantation/>

<https://civilwar.vt.edu/solitude-2/>

<https://civilwar.vt.edu/westview-cemetery/>

Extra Credit Opportunities:

In addition to the one event/site visit that is required, you can engage with as many other opportunities as you wish. The same rules apply. If you do, write another 3-5 page critical review of each event or site you visit to receive extra credit.

You will not be able to earn extra credit after April 25 unless you inform me of an event that was already scheduled and I approve the event as an appropriate opportunity for extra credit.

Grading Policy:

Late work will be subject to a penalty. The later you submit a required assignment, the lower your grade will be.

Course Schedule:

This is an online, entirely virtual course, meaning that we will not meet face-to-face. You will notice that there is more reading in this course than would typically be assigned for a course where you would also have lectures. The course schedule is one suggestion about how to plan and complete your readings. Be aware that the due dates for quizzes and film reviews are final, so you will need to get each relevant assignment completed before that due date passes. You do have a lot of freedom to complete this course on your own time. The course schedule is also a strong recommendation for the order in which you should complete the readings. Getting out of order could be confusing.

WEEK 1 (JANUARY 21-24)

Why the Civil War Still Matters

Watch:

- Welcome video (Canvas)
- “Professor helping Clemson uncover its legacy of slavery collaborates with similar efforts at Virginia Tech”: https://news.vt.edu/videos/k/2024/04/1_ae57jkuc.html

Read:

- Waugh, “The Civil War (1861-1865)”
- Blight, “The Civil War isn’t Over”
- Coates, “Why Do So Few Blacks Study the Civil War?”
- Coughlan, “Why the King can't say 'sorry' for slavery” (*just one very recent example of the global debates happening over the legacies of slavery*)

No quiz this week

WEEK 2 (JANUARY 27-31)

The Peculiar Institution

Watch:

- Week 2 recap video (Canvas)
- *The Age of Slavery*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gj47wDxiU08>

Read:

- Faust, “Slavery in the American Experience”
- Rael, “A Compact for the Good of America?”
- Zinn, “Slavery Without Submission, Emancipation Without Freedom”
- Holzer, “Weapon of Last Resort”

Week 2 Quiz due by end of day 1/31

WEEK 3 (FEBRUARY 3-7)

Frederick Douglass

Watch:

- Week 3 recap video (Canvas)

Read:

- Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*
- Scroll through the entire graphics of *USA Today*'s "growth of slavery graphic":
<https://www.usatoday.com/pages/interactives/1619-african-slavery-history-maps-routes-interactive-graphic/>

Southern Politics

Read:

- Matt Karp interview, "When the South Held the Keys"

Week 3 Quiz due by end of day 2/7

WEEK 4 (FEBRUARY 10-14)

The Abolition Movement

Watch:

- Week 4 recap video (Canvas)
- *Harriet* (available on Amazon Prime Video for \$2.79:
https://www.amazon.com/gp/video/detail/amzn1.dv.gti.e0b6ed2b-a513-416f-7176-165c73468695?autoplay=0&ref=atv_cf_strg_wb. It may also be currently streaming on your favorite service, so feel free to check.)

Read:

- Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?"
- Rael, "The Distinction Between Slavery and Race in U.S. History"
- Rael, "How the Alliance between Slaves and Abolitionists Ended Slavery"

Road to Secession

Read:

- Bain-Conkin et al., "The Sectional Crisis"
- Meyers, "The Election of 1860"

Week 4 Quiz due by end of day 2/14

WEEK 5 (FEBRUARY 17-21)

Secession

Watch:

- Week 5 recap video (Canvas)

Read:

- Link, “Secession”
- South Carolina Declaration of Secession, 1860
- Lankford, “Virginia Convention of 1861”
- Davis, “Ratification of the Confederate Constitution”
- Detzer, “Fort Sumter”

Harriet Response and Week 5 Quiz due by end of day 2/21

WEEK 6 (FEBRUARY 24-28)

What caused the Civil War?

Watch:

- Week 6 recap video (Canvas)
- *Slavery and the Making of America*, Ep. III, Seeds of Destruction:
<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x166hi5>

Read:

- Woods, “Causes of the Civil War”
- Coates, “What This Cruel War Was Over”

Mobilizations & Motivations

Read:

- Balcerski et al., “The Civil War,” sections I – III
- Rodgers, “Billy Yank”
- Rhea, “Why Non-Slaveholding Southerners Fought”

Week 6 Quiz due by end of day 2/28

WEEK 7 (MARCH 3-7)

The War Begins

Watch:

- Week 7 recap video (Canvas)

Read:

- Detzer, “The War Begins”
- Detzer, “Bull Run”

1861-1862: Confederate Ascendancy

Read:

- Quarstein, “The Peninsula Campaign”
- Groom, “Why Shiloh Matters”

Lincoln & Emancipation

Read:

- Balcerski et al., “The Civil War,” sections IV – V
- Masur, “The Emancipation Proclamation”

Week 7 Quiz due by end of day 3/7

WEEK 8 (MARCH 10-14)

Spring Break – No Assigned Readings

WEEK 9 (MARCH 17-21)

Watch:

- Week 9 recap video (Canvas)
- *Glory* (Available on Amazon Prime Video for \$2.49:
https://www.amazon.com/gp/video/detail/B00170GYDE/ref=atv_dl_rdr. It may also be currently streaming on your favorite service, so feel free to check.)

African American Soldiers

Read:

- Gannon, “African American Soldiers”
- Cimprich, “Fort Pillow”
- “Saltville Battle and Massacre”
- Blatt, “Glory: Hollywood History, Popular Culture, and the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts Regiment”
- William Henry Singleton, a formerly enslaved man, recalls fighting for the Union

Week 9 Quiz due by end of day 3/21

WEEK 10 (MARCH 24-28)

Overlooked Histories of the Civil War: Women, Children & Native Americans

Watch:

- Week 10 recap video (Canvas)

Read:

- Campbell, “Gender and the Civil War”
- Moore, “Boys of the Civil War”
- Haas and Talley, “A Refugee at Hanover Tavern” (*excerpt from a contextualization of a Civil War diary*)

- Stremlau et al, “Native Americans in the Civil War”
- Kelman, “The Sand Creek Massacre”

1863: The Nation Might Live

Read:

- Bryant, “Chancellorsville”
- Adelman and Taub, “Gettysburg”
- Peatman, “The Gettysburg Address”

Glory Response and Week 10 Quiz due by end of day 3/28

WEEK 11 (MARCH 31-APRIL 4)

Watch:

- Week 11 recap video (Canvas)

1864: The Hard Hand of War

Read:

- Waugh, “I Only Knew What Was in My Mind,”” part 1
- Waugh, “Ulysses Simpson Grant”
- Ashdown and Caudill, “Sherman’s March to the Sea”
- Noyalas, “An Omen of the Final Sunset for the Confederacy”
- Whisonant, “Geology and the War in Southwestern Virginia: Union Raiders in the New River Valley, May 1864”

Week 11 Quiz due by end of day 4/4

WEEK 12 (APRIL 7-11)

Death and Dying in the Civil War

Watch:

- Week 12 recap video (Canvas)

Read:

- Faust, “Death and Dying”
- Slotkin, “The Battle of the Crater”

1865: Jubilation in Victory; Despair in Defeat

Watch:

- *Lincoln* (Available on Youtube for \$3.99: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4KXG_RQ3seQ. It may also be currently streaming on your favorite service, so feel free to check.)

Read:

- Lincoln, “Second Inaugural Address”

- Calkins, “On the Road to Appomattox”
- Waugh, ““I Only Knew What Was in My Mind,”” part 2

Week 12 Quiz due by end of day 4/11

WEEK 13 (APRIL 14-18)

The Second American Revolution

Watch:

- Week 13 recap video (Canvas)
- *Slavery and the Making of America*, Ep. IV:
<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x166h0e>

Read:

- Abernathy et al., “Reconstruction”
- Levine, “The Second American Revolution”
- Dailey, “The Confederate General Who Was Erased”
- Boissoneault, “The Deadliest Massacre of Reconstruction”

Listen:

- Backstory, “A More Perfect Union”: <https://www.backstoryradio.org/shows/a-more-perfect-union>

Week 13 Quiz due by end of day 4/18

WEEK 14 (APRIL 21-25)

Confederate Detractors

Watch:

- Week 14 recap video (Canvas)

Read:

- Merritt, “War Happens in Dark Places, Too”
- Williams, “Southern Unionism”

The Lost Cause and Civil War Memory

Read:

- Nolan, “The Anatomy of the Myth”
- Blight, “Forgetting Why We Remember”
- Coski, “The Second American Flag”
- Landrieu, “Speech upon the Removal of Confederate Statues from New Orleans”

Week 14 Quiz due by end of day 4/25

WEEK 15 (APRIL 28-MAY 2)

The Cinematic Lost Cause

Watch:

- Week 15 recap video (Canvas)
- *Gone with the Wind* (Available on Youtube for \$3.99: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gNcs-rMjvw4>). *If you've never watched GWTW before, know that it is problematic for its racist stereotypes and its Lost Cause version of history. However, it is one of the most popular films of all time and has done more than anything else to impact how we imagine the Civil War and Reconstruction in popular memory. It is also very long, so split up your viewing if you need to. There's an intermission!*

Read:

- Jones, "The Cinematic Lost Cause"
- Edmondson, "Protesting a Bigger and Better *Birth of a Nation*"
- Hill, "Slavery on Film: Why Now?"
- Gorman, "The Ku Klux Klan"

Week 15 Quiz due by end of day 5/2

WEEK 16 (MAY 5-7)

Enduring Legacies

Watch:

- Week 16 recap video (Canvas)

Read:

- Doyle, "How the Civil War Changed the World"
- Peterson, "Apotheosis"
- Sawchuk, "How is Slavery Taught in U.S. Schools?"
- Groce, "History, Memory, and the Struggle for the Future"

***Gone with the Wind* Response and Final quiz due by end of day 5/7**

May 7 – Last Day of Classes

May 9 – Deadline to make up late work

Honor Code:

The Undergraduate Honor Code pledge that each member of the university community agrees to abide by states:

“As a Hokie, I will conduct myself with honor and integrity at all times. I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I accept the actions of those who do.”

Students enrolled in this course are responsible for abiding by the Honor Code. A student who has doubts about how the Honor Code applies to any assignment is responsible for obtaining specific guidance from the course instructor before submitting the assignment for evaluation. Students are strongly discouraged from misusing sites such as Chegg and CourseHero, as well as misusing ChatGPT and other Generative Artificial Intelligence. Students are strongly encouraged to consult their faculty members regarding the use of such outside materials as the misuse of these sources may constitute a violation of the Honor Code. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the University community from the requirements and expectations of the Honor Code.

The Academic Integrity expectations for Hokies are the same in an online class as they are in an in-person class. Hokies are expected to meet the academic integrity standards at Virginia Tech at all times.

Please familiarize yourself with the honor code and matters of academic dishonesty. It is your responsibility: <http://honorsystem.vt.edu>.

AI Policy:

You are **required to disclose** any use of generative AI tools, including (but not limited to) ChatGPT, for all work submitted. In addition to **citing** the specific tool used, please add an **appendix** that includes the prompts you used to get the desired results. Be aware that generative AI tools can produce incorrect or biased outputs. It is your responsibility to ensure that any content you use from AI tools is correct, unbiased, and not harmful.

Writing and Additional Resources:

For a good website that includes instructions and links on how to correctly cite in multiple formats, go to <https://guides.lib.berkeley.edu/publichealth/style>.

You are also encouraged to utilize the Virginia Tech Writing Center, a free service located in Newman Library. Students are strongly encouraged to make an appointment: <https://vt.mywconline.com/>

If you have questions about improving your writing or desire extra feedback to grow as a writer, please let me know and I will assist as time allows.

ADA Compliant Dis/ability Statement

If you need adaptations or accommodations because of a disability (learning disability, attention deficit disorder, psychological, physical, etc.); if you have emergency medical information to share with me; or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible.

<http://www.hr.vt.edu/index.html>

VT Principles of Community

Virginia Tech is a public land-grant university committed to teaching and learning, research, and outreach to the Commonwealth of Virginia, the nation, and the world community. Learning from the experiences that shape Virginia Tech as an institution, we acknowledge those aspects of our legacy that reflected bias and exclusion. Therefore, we adopt and practice the following principles as fundamental to our on-going efforts to increase access and inclusion and to create a community that nurtures learning and growth for all of its members:

- We affirm the inherent dignity and value of every person and strive to maintain a climate for work and learning based on mutual respect and understanding.
- We affirm the right of each person to express thoughts and opinions freely. We encourage open expression within a climate of civility, sensitivity, and mutual respect.
- We affirm the value of human diversity because it enriches our lives and the University. We acknowledge and respect our differences while affirming our common humanity.
- We reject all forms of prejudice and discrimination, including those based on age, color, disability, gender, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, and veteran status. We take individual and collective responsibility for helping to eliminate bias and discrimination and for increasing our own understanding of these issues through education, training, and interaction with others.
- We pledge our collective commitment to these principles in the spirit of the Virginia Tech motto of Ut Prosim (That I May Serve). <http://www.hr.vt.edu/employment/>

This syllabus is my contract with you during our time together this semester. While I reserve the right to change parts of the syllabus or schedule at any time, I will always communicate these changes with you and provide an updated copy of the syllabus on Canvas.