

**Introduction to the Civil War Era**  
Civil War Era Studies 205  
Gettysburg College  
Fall 2014

Monday and Wednesday – 6:30-7:45pm  
Weidensall 302

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Office hours: M & W 7:45-9:00pm

## Course Objectives

The mystery and raw power of the American Civil War captured the American imagination even before the first shots were fired upon Fort Sumter. But why has it held Americans captive for so long? What were its impacts? Why did it happen and what were its causes? Most importantly, why should this seemingly ancient war matter to us today?

History allows us to see the past. Through it we can begin to understand not only an event, but the world in which it happened. This course sets out to help understand the antebellum American landscape. Using the destructive Civil War as a lens, we will investigate the social, political, military and long-lasting impacts of the Civil War.

The course is intended not only as an introduction into the Civil War Era, but also as an opportunity to develop students' ability to think and read critically, to write persuasively, and to formulate their own interpretations of the past through primary source research.

## Readings

The primary text for the course will be:

Allen Guelzo, *Fateful Lightning: A New History of the Civil War and Reconstruction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

The following books are also required reading for the course and are available for purchase at the college bookstore:

Mark Twain, *Mississippi Writings*, (New York: Library of America, 1982).

Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2008).

Joseph Glatthaar, *General Lee's Army: From Victory to Collapse*, (New York: Free Press, 2008).

Additional short reading assignments will be distributed to the class via e-mail throughout the semester.

## Requirements & Assignments:

- **Attendance/Participation:** The course will be conducted in a hybrid lecture and seminar format. It is therefore imperative that you attend all class meetings and are fully prepared to discuss the day's reading assignment. Tested material will be based off of both readings and lecture material, so attendance will prove imperative to success in this course. I will keep track of your contributions to class discussion. Participation constitutes a significant portion of the final course grade. Quizzes may be given in order to encourage preparation. As a courtesy to your instructor and fellow classmates make sure your cell phone is silenced when you attend class. If you intend to miss a class due to illness or emergency circumstances, please alert the instructor *in advance* if possible.

Excessive absence will affect final grade. **ALL class activities**, unless otherwise noted, **are considered required**, including lectures and tours which may fall outside of normal class hours. Notice of these events will be given well in advance.

- **Research Paper:** At the end of the term students will turn in a primary source research paper on a topic selected in consultation with the instructor. The paper should be a minimum of eleven double spaced pages in length, not including footnotes and bibliography (12-point, Times New Roman, 1-inch margins). The paper should be an original work on a particular aspect of the Civil War era. Use your imagination. Anything is on the table with proper instructor approval.

The paper must be based largely on primary sources (letters, diaries, official reports, newspapers, etc.) and not simply a report on readings of secondary material. The paper should require you to spend some time within a local archive or with archival material obtained through ILL from a partner institution. Typically students utilize resources from archives including the College's own Special Collections, USAHEC in Carlisle, Adams County Historical Society in Gettysburg, the National Archives or Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. or other local institutions. The grade will be determined by the clarity of prose, depth of research, documentation of sources, and the originality and persuasiveness of the essay. Everyone must discuss potential topics with me and receive my approval of your topic. **A brief and rough prospectus / proposal and list of potential sources should be submitted by September 29<sup>th</sup>.**

**October 22<sup>nd</sup>** will be a discussion of research progress with the entire class. All students are expected to bring one *primary* source along to class to present in a "show-and-tell" style environment. You should answer two questions for your document: what does it

say and why does it matter to our class. Please bring an extra copy of your source to hand in at this time.

**The final paper is due December 1<sup>st</sup>. Please plan accordingly. The paper *cannot* be adequately completed in the final days before it is due.**

- **Field Trips:** Given our proximity to the Gettysburg Battlefield, I hope to schedule an opportunity for the class to visit the field at some point.
- **Technology:** The use of technology is encouraged in class but not required. Students are not required to purchase physical copies of required texts, and my use digital or e-book editions if desired. Laptops or tablets may be used to take notes during class. *However*, students should not abuse technology and those electing to use computers during class time should be present and “in the classroom” at all times.
- **Review Papers:** There are two review papers due during the course of the semester. These should be of at least two pages double spaced in length. They should be scholarly, critical analyses of the event/book. They are not intended to be a summary of the content, but rather a reflection on the content and its validity/effectiveness/broader historical meaning.
- **Honor Code:** It should go without saying that the college’s honor code is in effect both for all written assignments and all in-class activity during the semester. Please do your best to keep the classroom a fair and level playing field for both yourself and your peers. In the end, cheating hurts the cheater.
- **Personal Effort:** You get out of any educational experiences precisely the amount of effort you put in. This semester should offer an exciting opportunity to test your boundaries, try new ideas and build new skills. Remember, learning can be an enjoyable experience and not simply a slog through rusty dates and names. History is about who we are as a people, how we got here and where we’re going. If you try hard, then you can come out at the end of the semester knowing that the work you did mattered.

## Grade Distribution

Participation: 20%

Quizzes, In-class Assessments and Other Assignments: 10%

Midterm Exam: 10%

Final Exam: 10%

Paper Topic and Prelim. Bibliography: 5%

Final Research Paper: 45%

**Semester Schedule**

		Lecture / Discussion	Topic	Reading Due			Assignment Due
				Guelzo	Glatthaar	Others	
Sept	1	D	What is "History?"				
	3	L	The American Experiment	3-53			
	8	L	The Antebellum North			Begin Twain	
	10	D	Irrepressible Conflict?				
	15	L	The Antebellum South			Finish Twain	
	17	D	Slavery: Right or Wrong?				Preliminary Research Topic
	22	L	America On the Brink: 1850-1855	54-93			
	24	D	Who Caused this War?				
	29	L	Bubbling Over: 1855-1860	94-137			Final Research Topic and Bibliography
October	1	D	Could It Still Be Stopped?		1-16	Documents TBA	
	6	L	1861: "And The War Came."	138-185	17-88		
	8	L	1862: Firsts and Lasts	185-277			
	13	Reading Day					
	15	Midterm Examination					
	20	D	Why McClellan? Why Not?	278-324	104-173, 200-207		
	22	D	Research Updates				Primary Document
	27	L	Pennsylvania College & the War	Walking Tour – Wear Comfortable Shoes & Dress for Weather – Rain or Shine			
	29	L	1863: Hell on Earth		268-288		

Nov	3	Paper Research and Writing Time				
	5	Paper Research and Writing Time				
	10	D	A Political War?	325-372		
	12	D	A Social War?		228-241	Faust Preface, Chapt. 1-5, Epilogue
	17	L	1864: War Changes Forever	373-464		
	19	Dedication Day – Attend EITHER Cemetery Ceremony OR Fortenbaugh Lecture				
	24	D/L	1865: Peace of Victory		364-387	Documents TBA
	26	Thanksgiving Break				
Dec	1	L	Reconstruction: The Dream Deferred			Documents TBA
	3	D	Birth Pangs of Freedom	465-513	457-472	
	8	L	The 100-Year Civil War	514-536		Blight (PDF to be Emailed)
	10	D	A War in Our Imaginations?			
	19	Final Exam				