HIST 404D/606D: The Civil War in American Culture

Professor Cameron B. Strang

Course Description:

This capstone course investigates the cause, course, and outcomes of the U.S. Civil War. It focuses particularly on the ways the war reflected and shaped American culture, including the regional cultures of the South, North, and West. The course insists that the war must be understood in a context of diversity because the United States was and is a multiethnic empire. Thus we interrogate the experiences and cultural context of white men alongside those of free and enslaved blacks, Native Americans, and women of various ethnic groups. The Civil War lasted from 1861 to 1865 but, in many ways, Americans have continued to fight over its meaning. This course thus concludes by studying the various ways Americans have remembered and memorialized the Civil War—and, more importantly, the ideologies and actions those memories have made possible—up to the twenty-first century.

Core Objectives:

This course satisfies Core Objectives 13 of the Silver Core Curriculum.

- **CO13. Integration and Synthesis.** Students will be able to integrate and synthesize Core knowledge, enabling them to analyze open-ended problems or complex issues.

This course integrates Core Objectives 1 and 3 through critical analysis of readings and argument-based presentations and essays. Moreover, by examining topics such as African-Americans’ and Native Americans’ struggles against oppression; the impact of industrialization on the Civil War; the environmental history of the Civil War; and the rise of scientific understandings of race, this course also integrates Core Objectives 10.

- **CO1. Effective Composition and Communication.** Students will be able to effectively compose written, oral, and multimedia texts for a variety of scholarly, professional, and creative purposes.
- **CO3. Critical Analysis and Use of Information.** Students will be critical consumers of information, able to engage in systematic research processes, frame questions, read critically, and apply observational and experimental approaches to obtain information.
- **CO10. Diversity & Equity.** Students will develop a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate attentiveness to and analysis of diversity and equity.

Skills-Based Curriculum

The history program at UNR helps students to develop proficiency in broadly applicable skills while mastering specific subject areas. In addition to learning about the major developments before, during, and after the Civil War, students will have opportunities to practice and improve the following skills in this course.
• Critically analyze primary sources in depth
• Critically evaluate secondary sources and be aware of the historiographical nature of these sources
• Critically analyze cultural texts
• Engage in historical research which synthesizes, integrates, and analyzes the aforementioned sources
• Write a well-crafted essay
• Formally present research projects
• Effectively utilize major bibliographic and research engines

**Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and Correlation to Core Objectives**

Students successfully completing this course will be able to

1. Explain the cause, course, and outcomes of the Civil War as well as its cultural valences for diverse Americans in different parts of the nation. (CO3, CO10)
2. Analyze and interpret primary and secondary sources relating to the Civil War and its cultural valences through class discussion, written assignments, and oral presentations. (CO1, CO3, CO10, CO13)
3. Identify primary and secondary sources and use them to develop and answer a research question. (CO1, CO3, CO10, CO13)
4. Craft arguments and evince them in a clear and persuasive manner, both in writing and in oral presentations (CO1, CO3, CO13)

You may notice that the abbreviation SLO followed by a series of numbers appears on some course materials. This simply means that the lecture, discussion, assignment, or other activity offers opportunities for students to practice skills related to the learning outcomes listed above.

**Required Readings:**

- Manning, Chandra. *What this Cruel War was Over: Soldiers, Slavery, and the Civil War* (New York, 2007).

**Film:** Gone With the Wind (1939)

**Requirements and Grade Distribution:**

- Class participation and Daily Quizzes about readings: (20% total)
- Three written book reviews: 10% each (30% total)
- Early term exam: 10%
- Most-of-the-term exam: 15%
- Presentation of proposed research: 5%
• Final research presentation: 20%

The Plus/Minus system of grading applies in this course.

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Attendance and Participation: Participation and questions in class are greatly encouraged and expected. Attendance, participation, and completion of the daily quiz on the readings will combine to make up 20% of your final grade. If you miss a class without a good (and documented) reason, you will get a zero for that week’s participation grade. Please bring all assigned reading to class. And please arrive on time! (SLOs 1 & 2)

Daily Quizzes on the readings: These will be at the beginning of class. They will be short (five minutes) and focus mostly on the content of the readings. The final question on each quiz will be for you to pose a question about the reading’s argument, historical context, historical method, or content. These questions will direct much of our in-class discussion: I encourage you to be bold and creative. (SLOs 1 & 2)

Book Reviews: You will write three of these. They can be on any three of our four required books—your choice. Each will be due the same date that we are scheduled to discuss that book in class. They should be 2-3 pages. Although book reviews are short, they are difficult to write: they require you to be clear, concise, and to get to the point right away. Your review should include the following elements: a brief overview of what the book is about, a summary of the book’s main argument, and your evaluation of the book’s overall persuasiveness. (SLOs 2 & 4)

Early Term Quiz: This will be held in class and will be on all materials hitherto covered in this course, including lectures, in-class discussions, and readings. Bring a bluebook and please write in pen. (SLOs 1 & 4)

Most-of-the-term Exam: This will be held in-class and will be on all of the material hitherto covered in this course (from the very beginning), including lectures, in-class discussions, readings, and the film. Bring a bluebook and please write in pen. (SLOs 1 & 4)

Presentation of Proposed Research: You will propose a historical research project on any aspect of the Civil War in American Culture. This can include the years before, during, or after the actual conflict. This will be an in-class presentation. The presentation itself should last about three minutes, and another couple minutes will be reserved for questions from the audience and instructor. Your presentation should include: The main question you are addressing; why it is significant; sources that you will use to answer this question (be specific); and your hypothesis (the argument that you expect to make).

I strongly suggest that you discuss your ideas with me well before the presentation date so I can help you narrow in on a realistic and interesting topic. This proposal is your chance to start thinking about a research topic and receive suggestions before doing the research itself. Be sure to present a feasible project: you’ll actually have to do it! (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4)

Research Presentation: You will present a research project based on your proposal. The presentation itself should be about fifteen minutes, with another five minutes of audience questions. You must make a clear argument and show how your sources—especially primary sources—support it. (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4)
You will also need to submit a bibliography listing the primary and secondary sources you used for this project.

* The research presentation will be graded on: the persuasiveness of your argument; the appropriateness of your sources; your interpretation of the sources; the quality of the presentation; the significance of the research; and responses to audience questions.

** All papers are due in class on paper on the dates stipulated; 10% of the total possible grade will be deducted for each day an assignment is late.

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A Note on Sources: The Internet is a fantastic tool for historians, but it is also a dangerous one. It is a great way to get easy access to some basic information, such as the date a law was passed, who was president in 1805, or how much the United States paid for Louisiana. But Google searches, Wikipedia, and other such sources are not—I REPEAT, NOT—reliable or acceptable sources for historical interpretations. I will not accept most websites as valid sources in your citations. There are some exceptions; if you think that you have identified a valid website on which to base your historical research—most of which will involve primary sources—you must run it by me for approval.

In general, you should use primary sources, scholarly books, or scholarly articles when conducting research. There are many excellent scholarly sources available through UNR’s Knowledge Center and the Knowledge Center’s online options. For example, access JSTOR—a word-searchable archive of scholarly articles—for first-rate scholarship on a huge array of topics. The Knowledge Center also offers access to a wide variety of online primary source databases that can be browsed through its “A-Z Database List.” These sources could contribute to an enormous array of research projects.

Lastly, I strongly encourage you to contact the History Department’s liaisons at the Knowledge Center, Patrick Ragains (ragains@unr.edu) or Donnelly Curtis (dcurtis@unr.edu). They know sources that you can access at UNR for many of the research topics you might choose. Part of the secret of doing good research is avoiding making extra work for yourself—let people who have answers help you!!!

Class Reminders:

Cell-phones and Computers: Please remember to turn off your cell phones during class. You are welcome to use a computer to take notes during lectures; however, it should not be used to check your email, your Facebook account, or play games, etc. while in class. These activities not only distract you, but also distract everyone around you. Please be courteous and wait until our class is over to engage in such activities.

Packing Up: Please refrain from packing books and other items until the instructor formally ends the class.

Email Correspondence: Please make sure that you identify yourself when you send a message to me, as well as use proper salutations (Dear Prof. Strang, ).

Students with Disabilities: The University of Nevada, Reno is committed to equal opportunity in education for all students, including those with documented physical disabilities or documented learning disabilities. If you have a documented disability and will be requiring assistance, please contact me and the Disability Resource Center (Thompson Building Suite 101) as soon as possible to arrange for appropriate accommodations.
Taping Class: Surreptitious or covert video-taping of class or unauthorized audio recording of class is prohibited by law and by Board of Regents policy. This class may be videotaped or audio recorded only with the written permission of the instructor. In order to accommodate students with disabilities, some students may have been given permission to record class lectures and discussions. Therefore, students should understand that their comments during class may be recorded.

Academic Assistance: The Tutoring Center (784-6801 or www.unr.edu/tutoring-center) and University Writing Center (784-6030 or http://www.unr.edu/writing-center) are available to assist you.

Quality Guidelines for All Written Assignments

A is an exceptional grade reserved for work of exceptional quality. This grade is for essays that have all the qualities of the B essay, and in addition are well written and display analytical skills and/or originality. The last two criteria are extremely important. A essays do not merely summarize material from the readings or lectures. In addition, ideas must be expressed clearly, no matter how insightful or interesting they are.

B denotes work that is above average in quality. It demonstrates that the student knows and understands the material covered in class and being analyzed, and that s/he is capable of synthesizing it into a competent essay. It is accurate, detailed, and well organized, with an introduction, an argument, and a conclusion. Usually, either writing problems or a lack of analysis is what prevents a B essay from being an A.

C is given for work that is average. The student shows familiarity with the material, answers the central questions posed, and is mostly accurate, but lacks the sophistication of either the B or A student. The C essay might make general points but fail to support them with specific evidence or details, or it might have problems with organization or writing style. Sometimes a C essay is merely a collection of facts, with no coherent theme or thesis.

D is given for work that is inadequate. It omits important points, contains more than a few inaccuracies, and is badly organized. It is does not answer the central questions posed in the assignment. It suggests one of three things: 1) the student has barely been paying attention to the course, 2) s/he has problems understanding the material, 3) s/he has problems expressing ideas in writing.

Style Requirements for All Written Assignments

1. Utilize 1-inch margins on all sides. Use 12 point type. The print must be dark; print not easily readable will be rejected. Please use normal sized font (like Times New Roman).
2. Assignments should be double spaced (except in the case of a lengthy direct quotation; see #4 below).
3. Direct quotations should be used sparingly to emphasize a particular point. Papers or essays that consist of a string of long quotations from the text without any (or only cursory) analysis will be returned as unsatisfactory.
4. Single space and double indent quotations over 4 lines in length.
5. Remember: do not plagiarize. (See further comments below).
6. Number all pages.
7. Do not add an extra space between paragraphs.
8. Please remember that one or two sentences do not make a paragraph: a paragraph should begin with a topic sentence (a sentence that makes a claim). The rest of the paragraph should be devoted to supporting that claim.
9. Please use spell check and proof for grammatical errors such as sentence fragments and run-on sentences. It is true that this is not an English grammar course; but, sloppy writing distracts from otherwise interesting ideas and intriguing critical analysis.
10. Use Chicago Style footnote citations for primary and secondary sources. For guidelines on proper citation format, see: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org.

**PLAGIARISM**

Plagiarism is a serious form of academic misconduct and it will not be tolerated in this class. Plagiarism, according to the UNR catalog, is defined as “submitting the language, ideas, thoughts or work of another as one's own.” The “work of another” includes any material used in your essays (e.g. books, articles, internet sites, documents, lecture notes, or handouts from this and other courses, etc.) Acknowledge all such material – even if you paraphrase it or summarize certain sections and don't quote it directly.

Please note that Plagiarism in History 404D/604D will result in a grade of F for the course.

*How to Avoid Plagiarism*

**A. Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of somebody else’s words or ideas.**

**B. When does a writer need to document or cite information?**

1. When using or referring to somebody else’s words or ideas from a magazine, book, newspaper, song, TV program, movie, Web page, computer program, letter, advertisement, or any other medium;
2. When using information gained through interviewing another person;
3. When copying the exact words or a “unique phrase” from somewhere;
4. When reprinting any diagrams, illustrations, charts and pictures; and,
5. When using ideas that others have given you in conversations, lectures or email.

- **Quotations** must be identical to the original and must be cited.
- **Paraphrasing** involves putting a passage or information from source material into your own words. Paraphrasing must be cited.
- **Summarizing** involves putting the main idea(s) or points of another author into your own words. Summarizing also must be cited.

[Information taken from owl.english.purdue.edu.]

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**Class Schedule:**

**Part 1: Antebellum**

- **Week 1**
  - Tues: Class Introduction
  - Thurs: Slavery in the United States
    - Excerpts from Solomon Northrup, *Twelve Years a Slave* (1853)

- **Week 2**
  - Tues: Market Revolution, North and South
  - All on JSTOR

- Thurs: Pro-Slavery Ideology and American Culture
  - Excerpts from George Fitzhugh, *Cannibals All* (1857)

- Week 3
  - Tues: Anti-Slavery Ideology and American Culture
    - Excerpts from Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852)
  - Thurs: Expansion, Crises, Secession

Part 2: In Bello

- Week 4
  - Tues: The Civil War: An Overview
  - Thurs: African Americans and the Cause and Results of the Civil War
    - Freehling, *The South vs the South*

- Week 5
  - Tues 9/23: Emancipation
    - The Emancipation Proclamation
      - Both on webcampus
  - Thurs 9/25: Gender and the Civil War

- Week 6
  - Tues 9/30: **Early Term Exam**, in class, bring a bluebook
  - Thurs 10/2: The Environment and the Civil War
    - Gen. Ulysses S. Grant on the Siege of Vicksburg, 1863.
    - William H. Boyle describes pillaging near Gettysburg, 1863
      - Both on gilderlehrman.org

- Week 7
  - Tues: Experiencing War, Making Meaning
    - Manning, *What this Cruel War was Over*
• Thurs: Death and the Dead

• Week 8
  o Tues: The Civil War and its Legacy in the West
  o Thurs 10/16: **Presentations of Research Proposals**

• Week 9
  o Tues 10/21:
    ▪ **Complete Presentations of Research Proposals**
    ▪ **Begin Film**: Gone With the Wind
  o Thurs 10/23: Finish Gone With the Wind and discuss

**Part 3: Postbellum**

• Week 10
  o Tues: Reconstruction in the South
    ▪ Mississippi Black Code, November 1865
  o Thurs: Reconstructing the Rest of the Nation

• Week 11
  o Tues: Legacies of the Indians’ Civil War Era
    ▪ Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre*
  o Thurs: Race, Memory, and Reconstruction
    ▪ David W. Blight, “’What will peace among the Whites Bring?’: Reunion and Race in the Struggle over the Memory of the Civil War in American Culture,” *The Massachusetts Review*, 34, 3 (1993), 393-410. [ON JSTOR](#)

• Week 12
  o Tues: No class, Veterans’ Day
  o Thurs: Uncivil Memories
• Week 13
  o Tues: Reenactment
    ▪ Horowitz, *Confederates in the Attic*
  o Thurs: Civil War and Civil Rights

• Week 14
  o Tues: **Most-of-the-term Exam**, in class. Bring a bluebook
  o Thurs: No class, Thanksgiving

• Week 15
  o Tues: The Civil War and Twenty-First Century American Culture
  o Thurs: **Final Presentations**

• Week 16
  o Tues: **Final Presentations**

(Final Exam Week): **Finish Final Presentations**