

**HIST 5373: The American Civil War and Reconstruction  
Graduate Reading and Research Seminar**

**Sam Houston State University Online  
Spring Semester 2018**



Figure 1: A Burial Party at Cold Harbor in 1865

**Professor:** Dr. Brian Matthew Jordan  
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**Catalog Description:**

Studies intended to cover selected topics in the political, military, economic, and social institutions of the United States during the Civil War Era. Students will explore major recent historical interpretations and/or conduct research in primary sources. Credit 3.

This graduate seminar will introduce students to the sprawling literature on the Civil War era—and to the various sources and methodologies that historians have used to illuminate this pivotal period in American history. Readings will include a mix of classic works and cutting edge scholarship. In the reading portion of our course, the focus will be on wrestling with the major interpretive questions and debates that have driven Civil War history. The reading list will likewise afford us the opportunity to discuss a range of historical methods. Students may opt to address one of these debates or deploy one of these methodologies in a final research paper of article-length, based on significant work in primary sources.

## **REQUIRED READINGS:**

Don Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic*  
 Rachel Sheldon, *Washington Brotherhood*  
 James McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*  
 Kathryn Shively Meier, *Nature's Civil War*  
 Glenn Brasher, *The Peninsula Campaign*  
 Drew Faust, *Mothers of Invention*  
 Megan Kate Nelson, *Ruin Nation*  
 Martha Hodes, *Mourning Lincoln*  
 David Blight, *Race and Reunion*

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

- Gain factual knowledge about history and historical methods
- Learn to analyze and critically evaluate ideas and arguments
- Hone your historical research skills by preparing an article-length essay
- Develop skills in expressing yourself through writing

## **EXPECTATIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS:**

**Discussion Forums:** There will be **eleven discussion forums** (including the introductory post in week one) in which active student participation is required. Each student will make one initial post (of approx. 300 words) as well as respond to two additional postings (of approx. 150 words each). The forum week begins on Sunday morning at 12:00am of the assigned weeks and ends the following Saturday at 11:59pm. **The initial posts are due by Wednesday of each forum week at 11:59pm, and the two responses are due by Saturday at 11:59pm.** In some weeks, I will provide a list of discussion questions, but in other weeks you will select the topics for discussion, based on your questions, comments, or insights on the given week's readings. The purpose of the forum is to create a discussion about the week's readings and to facilitate professor and student interaction. Forum assessment will be based upon the quality of the student's engagement with the week's assigned reading. Students **MUST complete all** of the discussion forums in order to pass the course.

**Review Essays:** Students will prepare a **500 word critical review** of Don Fehrenbacher's *The Slaveholding Republic*. Critical book review essays are not book "reports"; while it is important to address the book's contents, the purpose of the exercise is to analyze the author's evidence, methods, conclusion, and contribution to the historiography. The review should take the form of academic reviews published in the field's professional journals—e.g. *Civil War History*, *The Journal of the Civil War Era*, and *The Journal of American History*. This is intended as a diagnostic assignment—an opportunity for us to begin a dialogue about your writing early in the semester. Reviews are due **via the TurnItIn link** by the end of week three (**Saturday, February 3 at 11:59pm**).

Students will prepare **two additional 500 word critical reviews** during the term. Students may select **any** of the assigned books to review. In other words, there will be **eight opportunities to write two reviews**. On the course schedule and in the learning modules, you will note review opportunities listed beginning in week four. Remember that you are **only completing two reviews**—and that a review is most certainly **NOT** required each week. When you do elect to review a book, the reviews are **due via the TurnItIn link** by the end of that forum week (**Saturday at 11:59pm**). **NOTE:** reviews will not be accepted after the forum week for that book has ended.

**Research Paper:** Students will produce **an article-length essay (25-30 pages in length)** based on original primary source research. Students may select any Civil War era topic (social, political, cultural, environmental, or military history), but must secure the approval of the professor **before beginning formal research**. It may be a good strategy for students (especially those away from SHSU) to select a topic that depends on archival materials housed at a local library or historical society. Perhaps you will write about a local regiment, a local Civil War monument, or the efforts of local civilians to support the war effort. Of course, these case studies will necessarily intervene in and address larger historiographical debates. All the same, it is not necessary to take the local route, and it is perfectly fine to conceive of a project on a larger scale. Papers must be documented with Chicago style footnotes.

Though there will be several weeks at the end of the term devoted to student research and writing, it is highly recommended that this project be considered a term paper. Begin to think about potential topics immediately. **The research paper is due on April 29 by noon (central) via the TurnItIn link. Late papers will not be accepted.**

The research paper will involve **three Skype meetings**. The **first** must be held **by the end of the week ending February 24**. (To schedule a Skype meeting, please e-mail [bmj018@shsu.edu](mailto:bmj018@shsu.edu) with your preferred appointment time, keeping in mind that I operate on Central Time. Please do so at least 1 week in advance). In this brief Skype call, you will formally propose a research topic. **At least twenty-four hours prior to the call**, you will e-mail me a statement of your topic and its significance (including the debates you hope to engage), as well as a preliminary bibliography of primary and scholarly secondary sources. We will discuss these documents (and the topic) during our call. **The second Skype call** must be scheduled **between April 8 and April 21**. It will consist of a formal update on the progress of your research, and will give me the opportunity to comment on your work thus far. No written work is required before this meeting, though I am always happy to review material at any point throughout the semester. **The final call** is the most important. This formal research defense will involve a formal, fifteen-minute presentation of your findings, as well as fifteen-minutes of Q and A. **It must be scheduled during the last week of classes or during finals week.**

**GRADING:**

	Individual Point Value	Total Points
Discussion Forum Postings	35 points	350 points
Fehrenbacher Review	50 points	50 points
Book Reviews	50 points	100 points
Research Proposal	50 points	50 points
Research Update	25 points	25 points
Research Defense	150 points	150 points
Research Paper	275 points	275 points
		<b>1,000 points</b>

**A= 900-1,000 points****B= 800-899 points****C= 700-799 points****D= 600-699 points****F= fewer than 600 points****UNIVERSITY POLICIES:****ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:**

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials. A copy of the University policy is available on the Sam Houston State University website. If you need clarification about what constitutes plagiarism, do not hesitate to ask or see me during office hours.

**STUDENT ABSENCES ON RELIGIOUS HOLY DAYS POLICY:**

Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Section 51.911 (a) (2) defines a religious holy day as: “a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20....” A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence. University policy 861001 provides the procedures to be followed by the student and instructor. A student desiring to absent himself/herself from a scheduled class in order to observe (a) religious holy day(s) shall present to each instructor involved a written

statement concerning the religious holy day(s). The instructor will complete a form notifying the student of a reasonable timeframe in which the missed assignments and/or examinations are to be completed.

### **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES POLICY:**

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance are expected to visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired. SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect adversely your work in this class, then I encourage you to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. **NOTE:** No accommodation can be made until you register with the Counseling Center.

### **VISITORS IN THE CLASSROOM:**

Only registered students may attend class. Exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis by the professor. In all cases, visitors must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. Students wishing to audit a class must apply to do so through the Registrar's Office. (In the online format, this means that you will not share/view the course materials with others.)

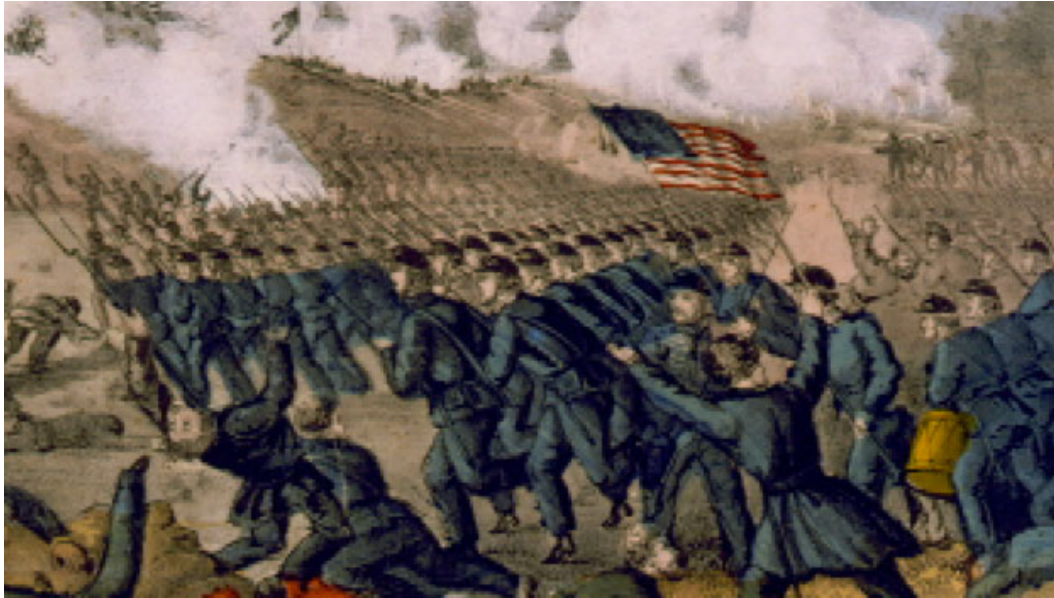


Figure 2: Common Union Soldiers

## COURSE SCHEDULE:

### UNIT I: INTRODUCTION

#### Unit Intro Video Lecture: Welcome to the Course and Civil War History

#### **WEEK ONE: Introduction to the Course (January 17-January 20)**

**NOTE:** Those who would like to review an efficient and accessible summary of the Civil War era before beginning the course should consult Louis P. Masur, *The Civil War: A Concise History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

#### **WEEK TWO: The Contours of Civil War History (January 21-January 27)**

**Read:** “What Caused the Civil War?” in Edward L. Ayers, *What Caused the Civil War?: Reflections on the South and Southern History* (2005); William Pencak, “The American Civil War Did Not Take Place—With Apologies to Baudrillard,” *Rethinking History* 6 (2002): 217-221; Drew Gilpin Faust, “‘We Should Grow Too Fond’: Why We Love the Civil War,” *Civil War History* 50, no. 4 (2004): 368-383; Gary W. Gallagher and Kathryn Shively Meier, “Coming to Terms with Civil War Military History,” *The Journal of the Civil War Era* 4, no. 4 (December 2014): 487-508.

## UNIT II: THE CAUSES OF THE WAR

**Unit Intro Video Lecture: Was the War Repressible?**

<b>WEEK THREE: The Slaveholding Republic (January 28-February 3)</b>
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**Read:** Don Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic*

<b>WEEK FOUR: Antebellum Politics (February 4-February 10)</b>
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**Read:** Rachel Sheldon, *Washington Brotherhood*; J.G. Randall, "The Blundering Generation," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 27 (1940): 3-28.

## UNIT III: THE CONDUCT OF THE WAR

**Unit Intro Video Lecture: Why Did Men Fight in the Civil War?**

<b>WEEK FIVE: Common Soldiers &amp; Combat Motivation (February 11-February 17)</b>
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**Read:** James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War*, and Jason Phillips, "Battling Stereotypes: A Taxonomy of Civil War Soldiers," *History Compass* 6 (2008).

<b>WEEK SIX: Environmental History (February 18-February 24)</b>
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**Read:** Kathryn Shively Meier, *Nature's Civil War*; Lisa Brady, "From Battlefield to Fertile Ground: The Development of Civil War Environmental History," *Civil War History* 58, no. 3 (September 2012).

**NOTE:** Students must have had initial Skype conversation with the professor by the end of this forum week, formally proposing and gaining approval for the research paper.

## UNIT IV: THE COURSE OF THE WAR

### Unit Intro Video Lecture: Did the Confederacy Collapse from Within?

#### WEEK SEVEN: Emancipation (February 25-March 3)

**Read:** Glenn Brasher, *The Peninsula Campaign and the Necessity of Emancipation* (2012); James McPherson, "Who Freed the Slaves?" *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 139, no. 1 (March 1995): 1-10.

#### WEEK EIGHT: The Confederacy (March 4-March 10)

**Read:** Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War*

#### WEEK NINE: SPRING BREAK (March 11-March 17)

## UNIT V: THE LEGACY OF THE WAR

### Unit Intro Video Lecture: Was Reconciliation Possible?

#### WEEK TEN: The Consequences (March 18-March 24)

**Read:** Megan Kate Nelson, *Ruin Nation: Destruction and the American Civil War*; Yael Sternhell, "Revisionism Reinvented? The Antiwar Turn in Civil War Scholarship," *The Journal of the Civil War Era* 3, no. 2 (June 2013).

#### WEEK ELEVEN: Emotional History & The Immediate Postwar (March 25-March 31)

**Read:** Martha Hodes, *Mourning Lincoln*; Brian Matthew Jordan, "'Our Work is Not Yet Finished': Union Veterans and Their Unending Civil War," *The Journal of the Civil War Era* 5, no. 4 (December 2015).

#### WEEK TWELVE: Civil War Memory (April 1-April 7)

**Read:** Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*; M. Keith Harris, "Slavery, Emancipation, and Veterans of the Union Cause: Commemorating Freedom in the Era of Reconciliation, 1885-1915," *Civil War History* 53, no. 3 (2007): 264-290.



**UNIT VI: RESEARCH AND DEFENSE****WEEK THIRTEEN: Research and Writing (April 8-April 14)**

Students may make one of the required Skype appointments this week to discuss research progress.

**WEEK FOURTEEN: Research and Writing (April 15-April 21)**

Students may make one of the required Skype appointments this week to discuss research progress.

**WEEK FIFTEEN: Research and Writing (April 22-April 28)****WEEK SIXTEEN: Research Defense (April 29-May 5)**

Formal research defenses (by appointment) begin this week via Skype.

**PAPER DUE** on April 29!

**WEEK SEVENTEEN: Research Defense (May 6-May 10)**

Formal research defenses (by appointment) conclude this week via Skype.