The Civil War transformed social, political, and cultural life in the United States so profoundly that historians have termed it the “Second American Revolution.” The conflict was the first instance of modern warfare in the United States, with firing so intense that, at one point, an oak tree behind southern lines was cut down by minié balls. Over two percent of the population perished, forcing a shift in how Americans buried and mourned their dead. The departure of brothers, fathers, and husbands changed women’s roles. The Emancipation Proclamation promised freedom to three million slaves in the rebellious states. After the war ended, three amendments were added to the Constitution; the “United States” became a singular rather than a plural noun; the process of reconstructing the war-torn Union represented, in the words of historian Eric Foner, “a massive experiment in interracial democracy without precedent”—an experiment that unleashed a counterrevolution whose consequences continue to shape the United States.

By discussing the causes, course, and consequences of the U.S. Civil War, this class examines the multiple meanings of what was among the most transformative events in American history. The course is divided into three sections: “The Impending Crisis” discusses the economic, political, cultural, social, and constitutional issues that set the stage for war, as well as the specific events that led to an outbreak of hostilities; “The War” bridges high politics and lived experience by examining the experience of modern, total warfare on both individuals and society. “Reconstruction” deals with the political and social challenges of rebuilding the war-torn United States.
Objectives

- To learn about the major events and trends of the Civil War era
- To examine the importance of history, in general, and this history, in particular
- To develop an understanding of history as a practiced discipline
- To become a stronger writer

Required Reading:
(All books are at the Yale-Barnes & Noble Bookstore)


The course packet (CP) will be available for download from Canvass.

OUR SOCIAL CONTRACT

Requirements

Participation (20%)

Examining what are arguably the three most important decades in U.S. history in only five weeks is an enormous task. The course must move at a brisk pace, which means that if you miss a class, you are unlikely to have another opportunity to learn that material. Attendance is mandatory—and participation is crucial.

2 Papers (25% each, 50% total)

Using the primary and secondary sources assigned in this course, you will write two 5-7-page papers—the first about the causes of the Civil War (due Sunday, July 16), the second about its course and consequences (due Sunday, July 30). We will spend time in class discussing elements of good writing, from writing a thesis statement to crafting a strong conclusion. To help you improve your writing in this course and beyond, you will receive extensive comments on each paper.

Exam (30%)
The exam will ask you to identify key figures, places, and concepts from throughout the course, as well as to write two short essays on Reconstruction. You will be provided with a list of possible terms and essay questions in advance of the exam.

**Collegiality:** History is a collaborative process. The paper trail of the past is too long and wide for a single historian to synthesize alone. And so we rely on one another to introduce us to ideas that might contradict our own. Don’t be afraid to say what you think—and don’t hold back if you respectfully disagree!

**Plagiarism:** If you copy more than three consecutive words from another author, put those words in quotes and cite the author. If you fail to do this, you are plagiarizing, and your paper will automatically receive a zero.

THE IMPENDING CRISIS

**July 3: A Southern Worldview**
- William Harper, “The Cause of Civilization” (Gienapp)
- Cobb, *An Inquiry into the Law of Negro Slavery* (CP)
- Douglass, *Narrative*

**July 5: “Mexico Will Poison Us”: The Mexican War and the Compromise of 1850**
- Calhoun, Speech on Mexico, January 4, 1848 (CP)

**July 7: The Birth of the Republican Party and the Impending Crisis of Union, 1854-58**
- McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, Chapters 4-6
- Lincoln, Letter to Joshua F. Speed, August 24, 1855 (CP)
- Mobile Register, The South Asks Only for Equal Rights in the Territories (Gienapp)
- Chief Justice Roger B. Taney Rules against Dred Scott (Gienapp)
- Associate Justice Benjamin R. Curtis Dissents (Gienapp)

**July 10: A “Revolution”? The Election of 1860 and the Secession Crisis**
- Blight, “African-Americans and the Coming of the Civil War” (CP)
- Robert Toombs, “The South Must Strike while There is Yet Time” (Gienapp)

**July 12: What caused the Civil War?**
- Beard, “The Clash of Rival Economies” (CP)
- Dew, *Apostles of Disunion*

“AND THE WAR CAME”

**July 14: The Fort Sumter Crisis and the Right to Secession**
- McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, Chapter 8
July 17: The Road to Emancipation
  • Blight, *A Slave No More*

July 19: The Unintended Consequences of War
  • Faust, “Altars of Sacrifice” (CP)
  • Ash, “Poor Whites in the Occupied South” (CP)

July 21: Homefronts and Battlefronts
  • Gallagher, *Confederate War*

July 24: A Stillness at Appomattox
  • Doctorow, *The March*

RECONSTRUCTION

July 26: Radical Reconstruction
  • Foner, *Reconstruction*, Chapters 1-4
  • Virginia Blacks Petition for Suffrage (Gienapp)
  • Andrew Johnson Accuses Congress of Seeking to Africanize the South (Gienapp)

July 28: Southern “Redemption”
  • Foner, *Reconstruction*, Chapters 5-10

July 31: The End of Reconstruction
  • Foner, *Reconstruction*, Chapters 11-Epilogue
  • Selections from the KKK Hearings (CP)

August 2: Civil War in Historical Memory
  • McCurry, Why do we love our Civil War? (CP)
  • Coates, Why do so few blacks study the Civil War? (CP)

August 4: Exam