

American Civil War Era History 316

Fall Term, 2012
Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:15-1:30 PM
Roberts Hall 210

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Office hours: Tues. 1:45-3 PM, Thurs. 1:45-3 PM; or by appointment.

Course overview and goals:

In 1861 after decades of turmoil and struggle the southern states seceded from the union. Across the next five Aprils Americans fought each other in a bloody test of wills. This brutal conflict has been called the Second American Revolution. And indeed the war's end inaugurated a new era for the reunited nation and for the millions of freed slaves. Why did the war come as it did? This course will consider the Civil War over a sweep of time broader than just the military engagements of the conflict itself. The first third of this lecture course will pay particular attention to the place of slavery within the process of nation-building. We will highlight the competing definitions of the legacy of the American Revolution that divided the two sections prior to the war. The middle of the course will dwell on the nature and consequences of the war itself. The experience of this war would stain the American imagination indelibly. The dreams of full reconciliation and reconstruction were fleeting. The final weeks of the semester we will consider the prospect and ultimate failure of Reconstruction ending with the Compromise of 1877.

Required reading:

James McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction*

Bruce Levine, *Half Slave and Half Free: The Roots of the Civil War*

Michael Shaara, *The Killer Angels*

James McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War*

Nicholas Lemann, *Redemption: The Last Battle of the Civil War*

Reserve Readings noted below and available on the library's electronic reserve

All books are available at the MSU Bookstore or on-reserve in the library. Note well: I've placed several copies of the main text, *Ordeal by Fire* on-reserve in the library. These copies are on two-hour reserve for in-library use. You can save yourself some money by taking advantage of the reserve reading in the library.

Your completion of the readings in a timely fashion will be essential to your success in this course. The reading assignments for each week are outlined on the following pages. Some weeks will require considerably more reading than others, so you should plan your reading load accordingly. In addition to the above-mentioned books, there are a number of separate readings on electronic reserve. There may be several scheduled films and in-class videos shown during the semester.

Course requirements and Evaluation:

- Class attendance, participation, completion of assigned readings, and in-class quizzes: 25%
- First essay: 15%
- Second essay: 15%
- Third Essay: 20%
- Final Examination 25%

Lecture schedule and reading assignments:

Week One: Introduction—Why Study the Civil War Era?

August 28: Introduction

August 30: Read Levine, *Half Slave and Half Free*, pp. 3--45.

Week Two: The Capitalist World System: From a Society with Slaves to a Slave Society

Sept. 4: Read Levine, pp. 95-120. Read Roediger, "The Prehistory of the White Working Class," pp. 19-36, available on library electronic reserve.

Sept. 6: Read essays by Higginbotham, "How did American Slavery Enter American Law" and Morgan "Did American Freedom Rest on American Slavery," on library electronic reserve; *Essay assignments handed out in class.*

Week Three: The Market Revolution and American Modernization

Sept. 11: Read McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire*, pp. 5-42; Levine, pp. 46-94

Sept. 13: Read Introduction to David Walker's *Appeal*, pp. xi – li, on library electronic reserve.

Week Four: Slavery, Free Labor, and the Abolition Movement

Sept. 18: Read *Ordeal*, pp. 43-94; Levine, pp. 121-159; Read David Walker's *Appeal*, available on-line through library electronic reserve.

Sept. 20: Complete Walker's *Appeal*. Read Roediger, "Neither a Servant Nor a Master Am I," pp. 43-60, available on library electronic reserve.

Week Five: The Question of Race and the African-American Struggle for Freedom

Sept. 25: Levine, pp. 160-224, read Roediger "White Slaves, Wage Slaves and Free White Labor," pp. 65-87, on library electronic reserve.

Sept. 27: *Ordeal*, pp. 95-138; *Essay assignment due in class*

Week Six: Sectionalism Politicized: Territorial Expansion, Compromise, and a House Dividing

October 2: Levine, pp. 177-224

Oct. 4: *Ordeal*, pp. 139-158; *Essay assignments handed out in class.*

Week Seven: The Failure of Politics, Secession, and the First Battles: Mobilizing North and South

Oct. 9: Levine, pp. 225-242

Oct. 11: Read *Ordeal*, pp. 163-256

Week Eight: Civil War Unfolding, Politics, and the Problems of the Home Fronts: The Civilians'

War

Oct. 16: Levine, pp. 243-255

Oct. 18: Read *Ordeal*, pp. 257-302.

Week Nine: Turning Points—Antietam and Emancipation

Oct. 23: Read *Ordeal*, pp. 303-346; *Essay assignments due in class*

Oct. 25: Begin reading *For Cause and Comrades*; *Essay assignments handed out in class.*

Week Ten: “War is all Hell” – The Soldiers’ War

October 30: Read *Ordeal*, pp. 349-424

Nov. 1: Finish McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*

Week Eleven: The Election of 1864

Nov. 6: Election Day, no classes. Go Vote!

Nov. 8: No class. Read Shaara, *The Killer Angels*

Week Twelve: Gettysburg, Total War and Unconditional Surrender

Nov. 13: Read *Ordeal*, pp. 425-526.

Nov. 15: Finish reading Shaara. *Essay assignments due in class.*

Week Thirteen: A Civil War Holiday--Thanksgiving

Nov. 20: No class; Read *Ordeal*, pp. 533-584l; begin reading Lemann, *Redemption.*

Nov. 22: Thanksgiving, no class

Week Fourteen: From Wartime Reconstruction to peace at Appomattox: The Challenge of Reconstruction

Nov. 27: Read *Ordeal*, pp. 585-621;

Nov. 29: Complete reading Lemann, *Redemption*

Week Fifteen: Retreat from Reconstruction and the Compromise of 1877

Dec. 4: Read *Ordeal*, pp. 623-671.

Dec. 6: Read C. Vann Woodward, “The Irony of Southern History,” available on library electronic reserve.

Final Examination: December 14, 2-3:50 PM