



U448-393: The Civil War Era, 1848-1877

Course Format: Online

Course Author/s: Erik Riker-Coleman, PhD; Jesse Gant, PhD candidate

Course credits: 3

Course Level: Intermediate: Appropriate for second-year or higher college students.

Prerequisites: None; There are no prerequisites or corequisites for this course.

Course Description: History 393 is an upper-level undergraduate course exploring the history of the United States during the slavery debate, the Civil War, and the period often called “Reconstruction.” It is designed to help you build a number of important skills, including:

- Understanding and assessing primary sources
- Understanding and assessing historical arguments and debates
- Presenting original and coherent written arguments based on primary and secondary materials
- Applying historical knowledge and skills to contemporary debates and representations

The course readings include book-length and shorter works of history, as well as a variety of primary source documents, including slave narratives, political speeches, and other personal and political writings. Visual materials are presented through the course to provide another perspective on this era. Concluding course units invite students to explore the ongoing contests over the Civil War’s memory and meaning.

Required Course Materials

- Douglas Egerton, *The Wars of Reconstruction: The Brief, Violent History of America’s Most Progressive Era* (Bloomsbury, 2014) ISBN-13: 978-1608195732
- Edward Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (Basic Books, 2016) ISBN-13 978-0465049660
- Stephen Kantrowitz, *More Than Freedom: Fighting for Black Citizenship in a White Republic, 1829- 1889* (Penguin, 2012) ISBN-13: 978-0143123446
- Chandra Manning, *What This Cruel War Was Over: Soldiers, Slavery, and the Civil War* (Vintage, 2007) ISBN-13: 978-0307277329
- Michael Vorenberg, ed. *The Emancipation Proclamation: A Brief History With Documents* (Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2010) ISBN-13: 978-0312435813
- Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom (1855)** ISBN-13: 978-0140439182

*This title has been published in several different editions since 1855. Any unabridged edition will work for this course, as long as you can provide the course facilitator with page number and chapter citations in your papers and assignments. You can find at least one free version online at [Documenting the American South](#). An especially accessible and useful printed edition is the 2003 Modern Library edition, edited, with a Foreword and notes by historian John Stauffer. It includes all three of the major Douglass autobiographies.

Course Learning Objectives

After completing this course, the student will be able to:



- Formulate and defend reasonable claims about the Civil War Era based a wide range of primary and secondary sources.
- Test and appraise how historians analyze, interpret, and write about primary and secondary sources.
- Explore significant and long-standing Civil War Era-based debates and why its legacies remain so complicated and yet essential for understanding life and confronting its realities in the United States today.
- Generate new understandings of the Civil War Era by producing original and formally produced writing samples in a variety of formats based on primary and secondary sources.

Course Overview

Unit #	Unit Topic	Evaluated Topics
1: The “Sleeping Serpent”		
	Slavery and American life to the mid-19th century	Introductory Reflection: Your Own Personal History
	Enslavers and the Enslaved	Assessment: Analyzing Enslaved Narratives
	From “Compromise” to “Irrepressible Conflict”—the politics of American slavery, 1820-1850	Module 1 Reflection: Making Creative Representations of the Past Module 1 Discussion: My Favorite Source
2: Debating Slavery: At Freedom’s Edge		
	Many Points West	Module 2 Discussion: Internet Primary Source Scavenger Hunt
	1848—a Turning Point?	
	The ‘Compromise’ of 1850	Module 2 Discussion: My Favorite Source
3. The Fall and Rise of the United States		
	Fugitives and Outlaws	Reflection: Compromise of 1850
	Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men	Written Assignment: Varieties of Anti-Slavery and Pro-Slavery
	The Slave Power at the Helm	Module 3 Discussion: My Favorite Source
		Exam 1
4: The Civil War: The Long Emancipation		Written Assignment: Who Freed the Slaves? (Part 1) Reflection: Explaining Historical Change



	The Scorpion's Sting	
	The Many Rebellions of 1860-61	Module 4 Assignment: Analyzing Civil War recruiting efforts
	Confederate Reckoning	Module 4 Discussion: My Favorite Source
5: The Civil War: The Short Emancipation		
	Long Remember the Spring of '62	
	Toward Emancipation	Written Assignment: Who Freed the Slaves?
	Emancipation	Module 5 Discussion: My Favorite Source
6: The Civil War: A New Birth of Freedom?		
	Turning Points	Assessment: Research Using Historical Societies and Libraries
	United States Colored Troops	
	The Last Full Measure	Module 6 Discussion: My Favorite Source
7: This Republic of Suffering		
	Killing	
	Burying	Module 7 Assignment: Civil War Digital History
	Remembering and Accounting	Module 7 Discussion: My Favorite Source
		Exam 2
8: The Era Formerly Known as "Reconstruction": The South		
	Presidential Reconstruction	Module 8 Reflection: Final Project Ideas



	"Radical" Reconstruction	
	Occupation and Overthrow	Module 8 Discussion: My Favorite Source
9: The Era Formerly Known as "Reconstruction": Beyond the South		
	The North	Module 9 Assignment: Final Project Proposal
	The West	
	The Midwest	Module 9 Discussion: My Favorite Source
10: The Era Formerly Known as "Reconstruction": The World the Civil War Made		
	The "Long" Civil Rights Struggle	
	Race and Reunion	Module 10 Assignment: Final Project Draft
	Frederick Douglass and Ida B. Wells, 1893	Module 10 Discussion: My Favorite Source
		Exam 3
11: The Era Formerly Known as "Reconstruction": Assessing the Greater Reconstruction		
	Closing Thoughts	Module 11 Reflection: The Civil War in Memory
		Course Self-Assessment
		Written Assignment: Final Project

Evaluation Methods

Your final grade will be based on your performance on the following:

1. Exams (24%)
2. Written Assignments (28%)
3. My Favorite Source discussions (20%)
4. Reflections and discussions (6%)
5. Research skills activities (3%)
6. Final project (18%)
7. Self-assessment (1%)



Exams (24%)

Students will take three exams during this course, one at the end of each major section of the course. The exams will each be worth 8% of the overall course grade, broken down as follows. The Part 1 component of each exam (weighted at 1/3 of the exam grade) will consist of ten questions, formatted in either multiple choice or true/false. In Part 2, students will draft an original essay built from primary and secondary sources (2/3 of the exam grade).

Exam Method: Online without Proctoring

This course requires all students to complete exams online. Students receive two attempts on the written/essay portion of each exam. If you elect to take a second attempt, the highest score of both exams will be recorded.

Written Assignments (28%)

There are also four writing assignments that students will produce throughout the course. As they are intended to help in building several essential skills as the semester progresses. Each of these assignments will each be worth 7 percent of the overall course grade.

My Favorite Source Discussions (20%)

The course also includes ten content-focused discussion assignments intended to help students stay engaged with the material. Completing each satisfactorily will earn students 2% toward their course total, collectively constituting a significant portion of the final grade.

Reflections and discussions (6%)

In a series of general discussions, students will reflect on different aspects of the course and tie their own personal histories into the larger picture of the Civil War Era. Please carefully and thoughtfully respond to the prompts. Each will earn students 1% of the course grade, again collectively making up a significant portion of the total.

Research skills activities (3%)

In order to help you hone the research skills students will need to successfully complete major writing assignments and the final project, the course includes a group of short research skills activities. Each will be worth 1 percent of the course grade.

Final Project (18%)

Students will be asked to draft and craft an original work based on primary and secondary sources. Students have a range of options to explore how that final project might look. This category includes three components: a proposal, worth 1 percent of the course grade; a drafting phase, worth 2 percent of the course grade; and the finished product, worth 15 percent of the course grade.

Course self-assessment (1%)

Students will be asked to submit a self-assessment, discussing their experience with the course. Grading Scale The following grading scale is used to evaluate all course requirements and to determine your final grade:

Exam Method: Online Without Proctoring

This course requires all students to complete exams online. Students receive one attempt on each exam.

Grading Scale

The following grading scale is used to evaluate all course requirements and determine your final grade:

A = 93–100	B = 83–87.9	C = 70–77.9	D = 60–69.9
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AB = 88–92.9	BC = 78–82.9		F = Below 60
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Pass/Fail Option

Students who enroll in an Independent Learning (IL) course under the pass/fail option will receive a final grade of S in place of a final grade equivalent to an A, AB, B, BC, or C and a final grade of U in place of a final grade equivalent to a D or F.