



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

Course Format: Online

Course Author/s: Jesse Gant, PhD Candidate

Course credits: 3

Pre/Corequisites: None; There are no prerequisites or corequisites for this course.

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

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
- Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (Cambridge, 2008) ISBN-13: 978-0521703987
- 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 version online at [Documenting the American South \(Links to an external site.\)](#)[Links to an external site.](#). 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: Debating Slavery	The Slave’s Cause	Assessment: Colored Conventions Reflection: Your Own Personal History
	The “White Republic”	Assessment: Assessing Primary Sources
	At Freedom’s Edge	Written Assignment: Varieties of Anti-Slavery and Pro-Slavery (Part 1) Reflection: Making Creative Representations of the Past
	The Fall and Rise of the United States	Written Assignment: Varieties of Anti-Slavery and Pro-Slavery (Part 2) Assessment: Scavenger Hunt
		Exam 1
2: The Civil War	The Fall and Rise of the United States	Assessment: Civil War Time Capsule
	The Short Emancipation	Written Assignment: Who Freed the Slaves? (Part 1) Reflection: Explaining Historical Change
	A New Birth of Freedom	Assessment: Research Using Historical Societies and Libraries Written Assignment: Who Freed the Slaves? (Part 2)
	This Republic of Suffering	Assessment: Civil War Digital History
3: The Era Formerly Known as “Reconstruction”		Exam 2
	The South	Reflection: Final Project Ideas
	Beyond the South	Written Assignment: Final Project Outline and Bibliography Assessment: Course Self-Assessment
	The World the Civil War Made	Written Assignment: Final Project Draft Reflection: “Hometown” Civil War
	Assessing the “Greater Reconstruction”	Assessment: The Civil War Era in Memory Written Assignment: Final Project
		Exam 3



Evaluation Methods

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

1. Exams (45%)
2. Written Assignments (30%)
3. Assessments (15%)
4. Reflections (10%)

Exams (45%)

Students will take three exams during this course, one at the end of each module. The exams will be worth 15% each, which breaks down as follows. The Part 1 component of each exam (5%) will consist of ten questions worth half a point, formatted in either multiple choice or true/false. Then, students will draft an original essay built from primary and secondary sources to fulfill the Part 2 component (10%). Each exam will then be worth 15%; collectively, they will account for 45% of a student's total grade.

Written Assignments (30%)

There are also three written assignments worth a total of 30% that students will produce throughout the course. As they are intended to help in building several essential skills as the semester progresses, each will also take place over the course of several parts of the course. Thus, each assignment is organized into several parts. All will add together to form a single written assignment, making for three overall written assignments. Because the three written assignments vary, they are weighted accordingly. The first two written assignments will each be worth 7.5% and the final project will be worth 15%. They will account for 30% of the total grade collectively.

Important: The third and final written assignment asks students to produce a "final project." 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 in how that final project might look.

Assessments (15%)

The course also includes eight assessments intended to help students stay engaged with the material. Completing each satisfactorily will earn students 15% toward their course total, counting for a significant portion of the final grade.

Reflections (10%)

Finally, 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. Doing so will earn students 10% of their grade, again a significant portion of the final 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.



Grading Scale

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

Grade	Percentage
A	93–100
AB	88–92.9
B	83–87.9
BC	78–82.9
C	70–77.9
D	60–69.9
F	Below 60

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.