

CIVIL WAR ERA STUDIES

CWES 205 – INTRODUCTION TO THE CIVIL WAR ERA

Tuesdays & Thursdays 10.00 am - 11.20 am
Weidensall 302

DR. ALLEN C. GUELZO
HENRY R. LUCE PROFESSOR OF THE CIVIL WAR ERA
WEIDENSALL 405
O: 717-337-6569

INTRODUCTION

This is a course of study in the most tragic conflict in the history of our nation, the Civil War. Not only does the Civil War contain all the elements of a national epic -- the war of brother against brother, the idealism of the anti-slavery movement, the dramatic intensity of battles, surrenders, and even assassination -- but its long-term legacies are still very much with us. That can certainly be seen in the ongoing popularity of battlefield re-enactments, the appearance of a history of the Civil War, James McPherson's *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*, for weeks on the New York Times best-seller list in 1988, and a wildly popular PBS documentary series in 1990. But in a more serious way, the political and social struggles over which the Civil War was fought still await final resolution in our national life. The bullet that slew Martin Luther King, Jr., in 1968 was said, at the time, to demonstrate that the last shot of the Civil War had not yet been fired.





Understanding the Civil War, however, can be very tricky. Despite the attractive displays and neatly-trimmed lawns at places like Gettysburg National Military Park, there is no easy transition between the world of the 1860s and the world of 2005. The re-enactors and their mock battles often convey more of the mythology than the reality of a war that claimed over 600,000 lives, amounting to more war-related deaths than all other American wars combined before Vietnam. Making a careful transition is what we will try to do here, so that afterwards we will not only understand the ideas and actions of that long-gone age, but also be able to see how they inter-connect with ideas and actions that we are a part of today.

In particular, I will return again and again to three themes which will act as bridges of concern, linking the Civil War past with today. One is the paradox of unity and disunity: the Civil War began to be fought to prevent secession from the Federal Union and ended up being a crusade to end slavery -- despite the fact that the Federal Constitution had guaranteed the integrity of the slave system to the very people who were attempting to disrupt the Federal Union. Another paradox is one which concerns the idea of freedom: the war guaranteed the end of slavery in America, but did it guarantee freedom? And in what sense? Lastly, I will want to emphasize that the Civil War was a struggle which occurred in places other than the battlefield, especially since the public policies of the Lincoln administration spelled the repeal of six decades of dominance of public affairs by Jeffersonian and Jacksonian political ideology. These are, of course, questions we as Americans continue to grapple with, and they underscore the continuing importance of our understanding the roots of the American experience.

TEXTS

- James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988. **ISBN:** 019516895X
- Don Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic: An Account of the United States Government's Relations to Slavery*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002 **ISBN:** 0195158059
- Reid Mitchell, *The Vacant Chair: The Northern Soldier Leaves Home*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995 **ISBN:** 0195096436
- David W. Blight, *Frederick Douglass' Civil War: Keeping Faith in Jubilee*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989. **ISBN:** 0807117242
- J. Tracy Power, *Lee's Miserables: Life in the Army of Northern Virginia from the Wilderness to Appomattox*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998. **ISBN:** 080785414X

REQUIREMENTS

-  As befits a 200-level course, the requirements and expectations involve consistent class attendance, participation, written work, and examinations.
-  Of the five books assigned for this course, the first – James McPherson's *Battle Cry of Freedom* – will be the flagship text, accompanying and illuminating the in-class lectures. You will be expected to read all the assignments as made below, and a question will be posed to you on the mid-term and the final exams, based on the Honor Code, concerning your completion of these assignments. The other four books should be read in their entirety during the semester, and for each of them, I will ask you to turn in a detailed reading outline in class, on the following schedule:
 - Fehrenbacher: *February 1*
 - Mitchell: *March 1*
 - Blight: *April 5*
 - Powers: *April 19*
-  The exams will be composed of both short answer and essay questions, and based on both the in-class lecture material, and your readings of McPherson.
-  There will be an in-class map quiz on February 17

GRADING

Mid-Term Examination.....	35%
Final Examination.....	35%
Reading Outlines (each outline will receive a ✓, ✓+, or ✓-)...	20%
Map Quiz.....	10%

CLASS SCHEDULE

- 1- January 18/20 – A Nation Announcing Itself
Read: McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, Chs. 1-5
- 2- January 25/27 – The Disillusion of Compromise
Read: Don Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic: An Account of the United States Government's Relations to Slavery* (2002)
- 3- February 1/3 – From Debate to Civil War
Read: McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, Chs. 6-9
- 4- February 8/10 – Sullen Hymns of Defeat (The East: 1861-62)
Read: McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, Chs. 10-11, 15-16
- 5- FEBRUARY 15 – NO CLASS
February 17 – Elusive Victories (East and West: 1862-63) *Map Quiz in-class*
Read: McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, Chs. 17, 19
- 6- February 22/24 – The Soldier's Tale
Read: Reid Mitchell, *The Vacant Chair: The Northern Soldier Leaves Home* (1993)
- 7- March 1/3 – The Manufacture of War

March 8 – Mid-Term Examination

- 8- March 10/15 - Year That Trembled (East and West 1863)
Read: McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 21-22
- 9- March 17 – By Their Own Strong Arms

March 18-March 28 Spring Recess

- 10- March 29 – Union Always Swarming with Blatherers
Read: David W. Blight, *Frederick Douglass' Civil War: Keeping Faith in Jubilee* (1989)
APRIL 1 – NO CLASS
- 11- April 5/7 – Stalemate and Triumph
Read: McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, Chs. 23-24
- 12- April 12/14 – A Dim Shore Ahead
Read: McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, Chs. 26-28
- 13- APRIL 19/21 – NO CLASS – *I will be participating in the opening ceremonies for the new Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, Springfield, Illinois, and in the Lincoln Prize ceremonies in Richmond*

Read: J. Tracy Power, *Lee's Miserables: Life in the Army of Northern Virginia from the Wilderness to Appomattox* (1998)

14- April 26/28 – The Long Farewell

April 29 – Last Day of Classes

April 30-May 1 Reading Days

May 2-4 Final Examinations

May 5 – Reading Day

May 6-7 Final Examinations

ATTENDANCE EXPECTATIONS

Being a natural-born classroom leader is not a requirement for this course, but being able to speak to a particular question in an informed and balanced fashion is part of what makes for any liberally-educated person. I encourage people to volunteer questions, comments, evaluations, &c.; similarly, I have no reluctance in calling upon individuals. Hence, attendance is a matter of the highest priority. Absences for any but legitimate excuses are a gesture of contempt for your fellow students, and each un-excused absence will drop your final grade by one letter.

GETTYSBURG COLLEGE HONOR CODE

The Gettysburg College Honor Code specifies that the student “has neither given nor received unauthorized aid and that he or she has witnessed no such violation.” This is understood to include incidents of plagiarism in written work; consequently, it is assumed that all written work turned in for this course is the product of your own labor, that materials it cites from other sources are competently identified as such.

