

HISTORY 461: THE CIVIL WAR IN AMERICAN MEMORY
Fall 2017

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Office hours: Tuesdays, 10-11; Thursdays, 1:45-3:45, and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION: “All wars,” argues the novelist Viet Thahn Nguyen, “are fought twice, the first time on the battlefield, the second time in memory.” Few wars make this insight more apparent than the American Civil War, a war that even now is prominently in our headlines. From the time of Robert E. Lee’s surrender in 1865, Americans have repeatedly found ways to memorialize the US Civil War: through monuments to the dead, through political speeches, even in the form of blockbuster motion pictures. Look no further than Charlottesville, Virginia in August 2017 to see how, even today, the memory of the Civil War can prompt heated controversy and violent confrontation. These various forms of memorialization, and the battles over them, tell us less about the actual war, and more about the kinds of memories that people, living after the war, needed to create. This course examines the long and varied process of memory-making whereby Americans have thought about, invoked, and depicted, the experience of the Civil War, from the immediate post-war period up to the present. Paying attention to recent scholarship devoted to the study of historical memory, we will consider what it means to shape and construct memories about a pivotal historical event, trying to understand why different people remembered the war in so many different ways, and why certain memories held sway at certain moments.

In order to provide a common foundation for understanding the Civil War in memory, we begin with a very brief overview of the war and its significance. We will then look more carefully at memory: the theoretical framework for studying memory; how historical memory has been invoked to address issues other than the Civil War; the Civil War memories created by southern and northern whites as well as by African Americans; and the powerful stories that were constructed about the war in the twentieth century.

Aside from the various assignments indicated below, students in HI 461 are required to complete a 16-18 page research paper that will be drawn

mostly from primary source material and that advances an original interpretation of a specific historical problem connected with remembering the Civil War. More precisely, your assignment is to focus on *one specific expression of Civil War memory*: a novel; a set of short stories; a public monument (including controversy over it); a memoir; the speeches of a politician; a film; or perhaps a very specific moment (like the Atlanta premiere of *Gone with the Wind*). Your goal is to do some deep research on the topic so that you learn as much as you can about the period when the material was produced or when the event happened; who produced it; how was it received; etc., and then analyze a particular aspect of the book or film or monument (or other) you have studied.

GRADING: Your grade will be based on: three short reading responses, answering specific questions about a reading assignment (these will count, collectively, for 15% of the grade); one in-class midterm exam (25%); class participation, including your in-class report on your paper (15%); topic statement (due November 14) and thesis statement (due November 21) (together worth 10%); and the final research paper (30%). On November 7, you will also turn in a 1-2 page synopsis of a Civil War film you watched prior to class (5%).

Because the class meets only once a week, students are allowed only one unexcused absence. A greater number of absences could result in a lower grade.

ACADEMIC CONDUCT: Students will be required to complete all the readings assigned as well as the required papers. Papers must be turned in on the dates specified in the class schedule; late papers will be accepted but penalized. The instructor will let you know if work can be turned in via email or blackboard but **it is always up to you to make sure your hardware or software or internet connections are working**. If they are not, you must provide a hard copy.

Within your written work, references to all secondary and primary sources quoted or consulted (including paraphrasing) must be acknowledged and cited fully. Failure to do so is plagiarism. For more information on plagiarism see the Boston University Department of History Writing Guide (http://www.bu.edu/history/writing_guide.html). You should also consult this Writing Guide for assistance in shaping and crafting your papers for this class.

REQUIRED READINGS:

The books listed below can be purchased at the bookstore.

David Blight, *Race and Reunion*
Louis Masur, *The Civil War: A Concise History*
Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*
Michael Shaara, *Killer Angels*
Tony Horwitz, *Confederates in the Attic*

All other readings can be found by following the links indicated on the syllabus or by looking on the Blackboard Learn course website. (Copy and paste the link below.)

https://learn.bu.edu/webapps/blackboard/execute/modulepage/view?course_id=_40939_1&cmp_tab_id=_122365_1&editMode=true&mode=cpi
[ew](#)

CLASS SCHEDULE:

September 5: The Memory Problem and the Civil War

Reading:

Roxanne Gay, "I Don't Want to Watch Slavery Fan Fiction", *New York Times*, July 25 2017

https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/25/opinion/hbo-confederate-slavery-civil-war.html?ref=opinion&_r=0

Sophie Abramowitz, Eva Lattner, and Gillet Rosenblith, "Tools of Displacement: How Charlottesville, Virginia's Confederate Statues Helped Decimate the City's Historically Successful Black Communities", *Slate*, June 23, 2017
http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/history/2017/06/how_charlottesville_s_confederate_statues_helped_decimate_the_city_s_historically.html

Yoni Appelbaum, "Take the Statues Down", *The Atlantic* August 13, 2017

<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/08/take-the-statues-down/536727/>

Troy Duster, "What to Do With a Man on Horseback" *Chronicle of Higher Education*, August 14, 2017

<http://www.chronicle.com/article/What-to-Do-With-a-Man->

[on/240923?cid=at&utm_source=at&utm_medium=en
&elqTrackId=9a1795e6f0fc4b348e04054764af978f&elq=acb6614a9ba343a8ba672769027b8a95&elqaid=15149&elqat=1&elqCampaignId=6455](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/375/375-h/375h.htm)

September 12: An Incredibly Quick Review of Civil War History

Reading: Louis Masur, *Concise History of the Civil War*, all
Ambrose Bierce, “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge”
<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/375/375-h/375h.htm>
Drew Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 61-101

September 19: History & Memory

Reading: David Thelen, “Memory and American History”, *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 75, No. 4. (March 1989), pp. 1117-1129.
W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past*, 1-11
David Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 1-5
Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 37-40, 46-53, 167-189
Viet Thahn Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies*, 4-19

For this class, you should prepare a 500-word reading response on a memory, or memory site, that you are familiar with - a story (can be personal and not necessarily “historical”) passed down in family lore, or a historical marker or memorial in your local community - and offer some thoughts on the “constructed” nature of that memory. For example: how has the memory changed over time? Who has participated in shaping that memory and what type of agenda might they have had in doing so? If you don’t know answers to these kinds of questions, you might also explain the types of questions you would ask about this memory and why asking those questions would yield insight about how the memory was constructed. We will discuss these reflections in class.

September 26: The Holocaust in American Memory

Reading: Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, 1-263

For this class, you should prepare a 500-word reading response on Novick's book that summarizes the author's central thesis and raises some criticisms and/or questions for further consideration.

October 3: Lost Cause, Bloody Shirt, and other Memories

Reading: Drew Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 211-249

“Introduction” and “Anatomy of the Myth” in Gary Gallagher and Alan Nolan, eds. *The Myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War History* (Bloomington, IN, 2000), 1-59

Use this link for the above title:

<http://site.ebrary.com.ezproxy.bu.edu/lib/bostonuniv/docDetail.action?docID=10565324>

David Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 140-170; 255-299

Caroline Janney, *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation*, 126-132

Mildred Rutherford, “Wrongs of History Righted” (An Address Delivered to the United Daughters of the Confederacy in 1914) (Read at least up to page 22; more if you can stand it!)

<https://archive.org/details/wrongsofhistoryr00ruth>

October 10: NO CLASS/BU ON MONDAY SCHEDULE

October 17: Reunion and Reconciliation

Readings: Joel Chandler Harris, “A Story of the War” (1877)

David Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 171-210

Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion*, chapters 3 & 4

Oliver Wendell Holmes, “The Soldier’s Faith” (1895)

For this class, you should prepare a 750-word reading response that looks closely at either Joel Chandler Harris' short story or Oliver Wendell Holmes' speech and then reflect on that reading in light of the historical scholarship we have read. How does the author present the Civil War in this account? Is there evidence of the "Lost Cause" or the "Bloody Shirt"? In what way does the author demonstrate a longing for reconciliation between the two sections and what, in this account, stands as the basis for bringing sections together? How do you think this reading – in terms of the memory and message it conveys – reflects the period when it was written?

October 24: The Shaw/Massachusetts 54th Memorial

We will meet at 3:30 in front of Augustus St. Gaudens' Robert Gould Shaw Memorial, located on Beacon Street (near the intersection with Park Street), across from the Massachusetts State House. We'll spend about 50 minutes at the site, discussing the monument and the setting. Then we'll head back to class to continue the discussion.

Readings: Kirk Savage, "Race, Art, and the Shaw Memorial" in *Hope & Glory: Essays on the Legacy of the 54th Massachusetts Regiment*

Thomas J. Brown, *The Public Art of Civil War Commemoration*, 109-138.

October 31: Black Memory of the Civil War

Readings: David Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 300-337

W. Fitzhugh Brundage, "Black Remembrance in the Age of Jim Crow" from Brundage, *The Southern Past*

Booker T. Washington, excerpt from *Up From Slavery*

Charles Chesnutt, "Cicely's Dream"

Excerpts from the WPA Slave Narratives:

http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mesn&fileName=030/mesn030.db&recNum=231&itemLink=D?mesnbib:1./temp/~ammem_Bu9j

http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mesn&fileName=042/mesn042.db&recNum=254&itemLink=D?mesnbib:2:/temp/~ammem_nJDu

Carole Emberton, "The Freedwoman's Tale" in Carole Emberton and Bruce Baker, eds., *Remembering Reconstruction*, 109-135.

November 7: The Civil War at the Movies

Readings: Melvyn Stokes, "The Civil War in the Movies" from Susan-Mary Grant and Peter Parish, *Legacy of Disunion: the Enduring Significance of the American Civil War*

Michael Rogin, "The Sword Became a Flashing Vision': D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*" *Representations* 9 (Winter, 1985), 150-195

Gary Gallagher, "Hollywood Has it Both Ways: The Rise, Fall, and Reappearance of the Lost Cause in American Film" in Waugh and Gallagher, eds. *Wars within a war: Controversy and Conflict Over the American Civil War*

In preparation for this class, students will watch a Civil War film, choosing from the list provided, and then write up a 1-2 page synopsis considering whether (and how) it addresses themes we've considered (reconciliation; lost cause; etc.). Be prepared to talk about the film in class.

November 14: In-Class Exam (about 1 hour)

The remainder of the class will focus on:
The Civil War in the 1960s & 70s

Readings: Michael Shaara, *Killer Angels*

Jon Wiener, "Civil War, Cold War, Civil Rights: the Civil War Centennial in Context, 1960-1965" in Alice Fahs and Joan Waugh, eds., *The Memory of the Civil War in American Culture*

1-PAGE TOPIC STATEMENT IS DUE IN CLASS

November 21: The Civil War in American Culture Today/Writing Workshop

Readings: Tony Horwitz, *Confederates in the Attic*, 3-88, 125-189, 282-335, 352-378

Tiya Miles, *Tales from the Haunted South: Dark Tourism and Memories of Slavery from the Civil War Era*, 1-8, 12-47.

Depending on current events, we might read some new material or return to something we read earlier.

Review the Boston University History Department Writing Guide (http://www.bu.edu/history/writing_guide.html) for class discussion on preparing the final paper

A 2-3 PAGE INTRODUCTION/THESIS STATEMENT IS DUE IN CLASS

**November 28
& December 5: REPORTS ON FINAL PAPERS**

At these two class meetings, each student will make a brief presentation on their research topic, including a discussion of a short primary source document that will be used in your research and that will have been posted on the course website (after 10 am on November 26) for everyone to read before the class meeting.

December 12: No Class Meeting/Instructor Out of Town

FINAL PAPER DUE: SATURDAY DECEMBER 16, 8 AM