This class provides a historiographic examination of several central threads in nineteenth (and early twentieth) century US history, covering the period from about 1830 to 1915. Although we do not consider all of the central historical problems in the “middle period” of US history, we do tackle some of the critical themes of race, region, disunion, and reunion, with the goal of familiarizing students with a number of historical interpretations of issues such as plantation slavery; abolition; the secession crisis; war and Reconstruction; and southern life and race relations after Reconstruction. Most importantly, our focus will be on scholars’ interpretations and historians’ debates, not on a narrative accounting of the events in this historical era.

ASSIGNMENTS

Students will be required to write two, 4-6 page book reviews in which you will make one book the main focus of your review but include at least two other readings as part of the discussion. YOUR BOOK REVIEW IS DUE IN CLASS ON THE DATE WHEN THE MAIN BOOK BEING REVIEWED IS DISCUSSED. The syllabus indicates the LAST DATE on which the first and second book reviews can be submitted. A final paper, about 15-18 pages in length, will be due at the end of the semester. You will receive further instructions about this paper in class.

In addition to the above, each student will also take 2-3 turns at leading off the class discussion. My guidelines for these presentation are as follows: don’t try to summarize all the reading material but instead highlight two or three interpretative points that seem significant and that serve to link the different readings together. Additionally, as part of your presentation, you may find it useful to identify specific passages in the reading that speak to your points and that merit further discussion. When choosing passages, be as specific as possible, pointing out particular paragraphs and/or sentences that we could all examine together. You will also be responsible for formulating some questions for the general discussion and for posting these questions to the “Discussion Board” no later than 10 pm on the night before the class meets. Students will sign up for these presentations at our first class meeting.

Finally, in light of the seminar style of this class – not to mention our relatively small size - all students are responsible for making timely and thoughtful contributions to the class discussion. Along these lines, you should not only read all the assigned readings, but also
make observations and comments that you can share with the class. Students are also encouraged to make postings to the “Discussion Board” on the course website as a way to signal questions or comments about the readings. Feel free, too, to post useful review articles about any of the books/subjects being discussed.

Course website:
https://learn.bu.edu/webapps/blackboard/execute/modulepage/view?course_id=53600_1&cmp_tab_id=169202_1&editMode=true&mode=cpview

CLASS SCHEDULE:

(*) Denotes book which can (and probably should) be purchased
(#) Denotes article or selection to be found on course website or via Mugar Library’s online catalog

I. Jan. 23: Introduction and Overview

(#) Walter Johnson, “On Agency”
(#) Eugene Genovese, Roll Jordan Roll, 3-7; use the link below:
https://books.google.com/books?id=kCmAy_iBmagC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false

II. Jan. 30: Slavery and the South

(#) Edward Baptist, The Half Has Never Been Told, xiii-xxvii; 39-73; 111-144; 215-259
(You can find this title online at Mugar library.)
(*) Walter Johnson, Soul by Soul, 1-116; 135-161

III. Feb. 6: Slavery and the South

(*) Thavolia Glymph, Out of the House of Bondage, 1-96
(*) James Oakes, The Ruling Race, 3-150

IV. Feb. 13: Anti-Slavery

(#) David Roediger, The Wages of Whiteness, 43-114
(*) Martha Jones, Birthright Citizens, 1-70, 89-145
V. Feb. 20: Secession Crisis

(*) Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*; new intro; old intro; ch. 1-3; ch. 8-9
(*) Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*, pp. 5-129; 208-304

VI. Feb. 27: Civil War: Confederate

(*) Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, 85-309
(#) Gary Gallagher, *The Confederate War*, 17-59, 63-111

VII. March 6: Civil War: Union

(*) Gary Gallagher, *The Union War*, pp. 1-118

**LAST DAY FOR FIRST BOOK REVIEW**

**NO CLASS ON MARCH 13: SPRING BREAK WEEK**

VIII. March 20: Civil War: The Dark War

(*) Drew Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, xi-136, 171-210
(#) Jim Downs, “The Other Side of Freedom: Destitution, Disease, and Dependency among Freedwomen and their Children during and after the Civil War,” in Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber, eds. *Battle Scars: Gender and Sexuality in the American Civil War*, 78-103

IX. March 27: Civil War/Westward Expansion

(*) Ari Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre*, 1-220
X. April 3: Reconstruction

(*) Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage*, 137-203

XI. April 10: Reconciliation and Civil War Memory

(*) David Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 1-5; 140-210; 300-337
(#) Caroline Janney, *Remembering the Civil War*, 3-11; 160-231
(#) Carole Emberton, “The Freedwoman’s Tale”

LAST DAY FOR SECOND BOOK REVIEW

NO CLASS ON APRIL 17: BU ON MONDAY SCHEDULE

XII. April 24: New South/Problem South

(*) Glenda Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 31-175
(#) Natalie Ring, *The Problem South*, 1-59; 135-215

XIII. May 1: Final Thoughts

This week is intentionally left open so that we can explore a topic that is of interest to the class. We’ll also take stock of themes and questions raised over the course of the semester and students will talk briefly about their final papers.

THE FINAL PAPER WILL BE DUE ON THURSDAY MAY 9