

The Civil War and Contemporary Society
Fall Quarter, 2003
Oak Forest Campus
(A revised syllabus will be distributed at first class meeting)

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Alternate Saturdays
9/20, 10/4, 10/18, 11/1, 11/15

Syllabus

Course Description

Both in obvious and subtle ways, the Civil War has shaped the America that we live in today. Our images of “north” and “south,” our race relationships, and our sense of a national identity have their roots in the Civil War and its aftermath. This course is designed to explore the historical and social dimensions of the War through readings, discussion, videos, and conversations with guest speakers. We will delve beneath the conventional beliefs and superficial information about the War to appreciate its complexity and its presence in our lives.

One of the key issues we will address is how the Civil War created a “separate country” of the American South by forcing Americans to confront questions of nationalism and states’ rights. Other questions address the aftermath: Was the South welcomed back into the union? What were the effects of the Civil War on the region and its relationship with the nation as a whole? To what extent does the South still exist as a separate country within a country? What seems to be the future of the South and its role within the United States?

The Learning Experience

The course is roughly organized into three sections. For the first third of the course or so, we will learn about the history of the South, focussing particularly on the Civil War and Reconstruction, relying on readings and Ken Burns’ video series *The Civil War* as the primary text. Next, we will examine the impact of the Civil War on southern identity. During this time, we will rely heavily on *Confederates in the Attic* to stimulate discussion and further inquiry. The last section of the course will address the relationship between the South and the nation as whole and will forecast the future of this relationship. Readings drawn from *Dixie Rising*, will serve as the central resource for this section of the course.

In general, class sessions will include discussions of the readings, group exercises, and observing video. There will be occasional “minute papers” or similar brief assessments

addressing group readings to help assess learning throughout the course.

Competences

H4 **Can analyze power relations among racial, social, cultural, or economic groups in the United States.**

We will focus primarily on racial and economic groups and how their relationships were shaped by the Civil War.

H-1-E **Can explain the concept, function and expression of culture and**
(HC1) **illustrate this with one or more cultures.**

We will use a central definition of “culture” as the basis for examining the customs, and attributes of the South and their links to the Civil War.

H-1-F **Can describe and explain the roles of individuals, groups, societies,**
(HC2) **or states in history.**

History provides the foundation for deriving a profile of the South. We will focus primarily on the years preceding the Civil War (1750-1860), the War years (1861-65), and Reconstruction (1865-85) to characterize the experience of South as a region within the country, as a separate country, and as redefined region of the United States. To a large extent, our exploration of H1E will involve understanding the role of history in shaping the identity of the South and its nature as a region or culture unto itself.

H2A **Can understand a social problem and can analyze the effectiveness**
of social institutions in addressing it.

We will examine the social problem of reconstruction and the role of the government in addressing the social and economic challenges it presented.

Evidence of Competence

Grades and narrative evaluation of competence will be based on the following experiences and products:

50%	Major Project: Take-home exam (H4, H1F, H2A); Project (H1E) The exam and project guidelines will be distributed in class on 10/7
20%	“Minute” Papers on readings and assignments (3 of 4; drop the lowest grade)
20%	Internet Exercise (to be distributed in class)
10%	Participation in class sessions and exercises (example: film clip for last class session)

Learning Resources

Texts: Confederates in the Attic, Tony Horwitz (complete by session 4)
Vintage Books, 1998 ISBN: 0 679 75833 X
Dixie Rising, Peter Applebome
Harvest Books, 1997 ISBN: 0 15600 5506 (see assignment list)

Additional readings will be distributed in class drawn from:

Slaves in the Family
Whirlwind of War
Burden of Southern History
Reconstruction

Films viewed in class: Segments of The Civil War (Ken Burns, PBS)
will include: Goin' to Chicago

Ground Rules

Academic Seriousness – The value of this course depends to a great extent on the commitment of students to engage with the material and with each other thoughtfully and respectfully. Any idea or point of view relevant to the course is appropriate for inclusion in academic discourse and will be treated seriously. Ideas are not synonymous with people; people generate, examine and then either adopt or reject ideas in the process of learning. Good academic citizenship requires that we create room for the expression of all questions and ideas as we together pursue the course objectives.

Students are expected to participate in all dimensions of the course with thoughtfulness and to devote the effort to pursuing course objectives completely. Students who submit work that is of poor quality will be asked to revise and may be given an “Incomplete” in the course to allow time for the revision.

Academic Integrity – Students are expected to submit their own work and to appropriately document other material. The DePaul Academic Integrity Policy will be strictly enforced to address all forms of academic dishonesty.

Attendance – Students who **must** miss a session should contact me as soon as possible and if the absence is planned, must discuss in advance. Students who miss more than two sessions (including partial sessions) may be asked to take an Incomplete or repeat the course, depending on the which sessions and material were missed. Similarly, students are expected to attend all of each session – arrive on time and stay until the session is over. If there is a true need to depart from this, please make sure you speak with me in advance.

Housekeeping – We need to leave the room in condition for another class, so please help return furniture to its original position and put trash in the container.

Course Schedule
Class Sessions

Date	Topics	(Assignment list distributed at first session)
9/20	Introductions and Preconceptions Video: Episode 1, <i>The Cause</i> The early war years Video: Episode 4, <i>Simply Murder</i> Discussion: War, nationalism and the arts	
10/4	Discussion of readings Video: Episode 5, <i>The Universe of Battle</i> Lincoln and completion of the War Video: Episode 9: <i>The Better Angels of Our Nature</i> Discussion: The foundation for Reconstruction	
10/18	Reconstruction Video: Segment from <i>Birth of a Nation</i> Discussion: Postwar America 1900- 1950 Guest: Civil War Reenactor	
11/1	Postwar America 1950- present Video: <i>Goin' to Chicago</i> Discussion: Civil Rights and the new millennium	
11/15	Current political climate in the U.S. The South and the U.S. Counterparts: South Africa and the U.S.	