

**WILLIAM RAINEY HARPER COLLEGE**  
**BUSINESS AND SOCIAL SCIENCE DIVISION**  
**GENERAL COURSE OUTLINE**

HST Course Prefix	261 Course Number	The American Civil War 1848-1865 Course Title	3-0 Lec-Lab	3 Credit Hours
-------------------------	-------------------------	--	----------------	----------------------

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Focuses on the causes, events, and immediate outcomes of the American Civil War during the period of 1848-1865. Political, military, and social history is presented so that students receive a comprehensive understanding of this seminal event in American history.

**TOPICAL OUTLINE**

- I. Causes and Events Leading to the Civil War
  - A. Why are Americans so Fascinated with the Civil War?
    1. How does the Civil War live today?
  - B. Causes of the Civil War
    1. The political school of interpretation
    2. The economic school of interpretation
    3. The “irrepressible conflict” theory
    4. The “repressible conflict” theory
  - C. Events Leading to the Civil War
    1. Differing interpretations of the Declaration of Independence
    2. Differing views on the Constitution
    3. The growth of slavery in the nineteenth century
    4. The Missouri Compromise
    5. The nullification crisis
    6. The rise of the abolitionist movement
    7. The increase in the proslavery movement
    8. The Mexican War
    9. The Wilmot Proviso
    10. The Compromise of 1850
    11. The 1850s: domestic conflict and violence over slavery
    12. The publication of Uncle Tom’s Cabin
    13. Bleeding Kansas
    14. The Dred Scott decision
    15. John Brown’s raid
    16. Abraham Lincoln and the election of 1860
    17. The Confederate attack on Fort Sumter
- II. On the Road to Total War, 1861-1862
  - A. Advantages and Disadvantages in the Resources of War
    1. Political resources
    2. Economic resources
    3. Demographic factors
    4. Social factors
  - B. Why Did So Many Americans Die in the Civil War?
    1. The invention of the rifled musket
    2. The invention of deadly new artillery
    3. Poor medical care
    4. Old strategies combined with new weaponry
  - C. 1861 – Farewell to the Ninety-Days War
    1. Views from the homefront
    2. The First Battle of Bull Run
    3. The Anaconda Plan
    4. The South’s Response to the Anaconda Plan

5. The theory of limited war
6. The Confederate draft and problems of internal conflict
- D. 1862 – Total War Arrives
  1. The Battles of Fort Henry and Fort Donelson
  2. How the Union won the war by winning the West
  3. The Battle of Shiloh
  4. The Peninsula Campaign and the Seven Days
  5. Did the South have a chance to win the Civil War?
  6. Did the Union blow a chance to win the war in 1862?
  7. The Second Battle of Bull Run
  8. The Battle of Antietam
  9. The role of women
  10. Lincoln as leader in 1862-1863
  11. The Battle of Fredericksburg
  12. The roll of working class Americans
- III. “such terrible sights as these...” – 1863-1865
  - A. Abraham Lincoln and the Emancipation Proclamation
    1. Immediate reactions
    2. Long range impacts
  - B. 1863 – Harvests of Death
    1. The Battle of Chancellorsville
    2. The Siege at Vicksburg
    3. The Battle of Gettysburg
    4. The role of African Americans
    5. The New York draft riots
    6. Reviewing the performance of generals
    7. Reviewing the performance of political science
  - C. 1864 – “If it takes all summer...”
    1. Grant comes East
    2. Grant vs. Lee
    3. Back to the West
    4. The Battle of the Wilderness
    5. The Battle of Spotsylvania
    6. The Battle of Cold Harbor
    7. The Battle of Eastern Tennessee
    8. Sherman marches to the sea
    9. The Battle of the Crater
    10. The Presidential Election of 1864
    11. “with malice toward none...”
  - D. 1865 – Nearing the End
    1. The Union reaches the Atlantic
    2. The Siege at Petersburg
    3. The Road to Appomattox
    4. Meeting and Surrender at Appomattox
  - E. The End – The Meaning of the Civil War in America
    1. The assassination of President Lincoln
    2. The amendments to the Constitution
    3. A look back at the Gettysburg Address
    4. “a new birth of freedom...”
    5. “from ‘are’ to ‘is’” – Preserving the Union

### **METHODS OF PRESENTATION**

1. Class lectures
2. Class lecture-discussion
3. Class discussions
4. Film presentations and discussions

## **STUDENT OUTCOMES** (The student should . . .)

1. comprehend the various theories regarding the causes on the Civil War.
2. analyze the schools of thought within the “irrepressible” and the “repressible” conflict theories.
3. develop an individual interpretation regarding the causes of the Civil War.
4. understand the vital series of events that led to the Civil War.
5. evaluate the magnitude of each of the events that led to the Civil War.
6. comprehend the resources that the Union and Confederacy possessed during the Civil War.
7. analyze the strengths and weaknesses that the Union and Confederacy possessed.
8. comprehend and apply the establishment and implementation of the Anaconda Plan.
9. comprehend and analyze the leadership styles of Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis.
10. comprehend and analyze the performance of generals and common soldiers in the Union and Confederate armies.
11. understand and apply the concepts of limited and total war.
12. evaluate the possibility that the Confederacy had a chance to win the Civil War.
13. evaluate the theory that the Union blew a chance to win the Civil War in 1862.
14. analyze and synthesize the reasons why the Union won the Civil War.
15. comprehend and analyze the role of the common soldier in the Civil War.
16. comprehend and analyze the role of women in the Civil War.
17. comprehend and analyze the role of African Americans in the Civil War.
18. understand the importance of personal biography in the study of the Civil War.
19. comprehend and evaluate the significance and long range effects of military campaigns in the Civil War.
20. understand and apply the reasons why so many men died in the Civil War.
21. analyze, evaluate, and synthesize an individual interpretation of the significance of the causes, events, and outcomes of the Civil War.

## **METHODS OF EVALUATION**

1. Two (2) documented interpretive essays, 5-6 pages in length each
2. Three (3) in-class written exams
3. Ten (10) to fifteen (15) objective reading quizzes

## **TEXTBOOKS/INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS**

McPherson, James, Battle Cry of Freedom – The Civil War Era, Oxford, 1988.  
McPherson, James, Drawn with the Sword: Reflections on the Civil War, Oxford 1996.  
Douglass, Narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., St. Martins, 2003.  
FILMS: *The Civil War: A Documentary by Ken Burns; Gettysburg; Glory*

Prepared by: Thomas DePalma  
Fall, 2008