

Course Outline: The U.S. Civil War in American History and Public Memory

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

Note for students: This short course outline is provided for planning purposes only. Course information is tentative and subject to change; the final course syllabus will be available by the first day of classes.

Course Code

AP/HIST 3622 3.0 The U.S. Civil War in American History and Public Memory

Course Description

If any event in U.S. History can be called pivotal, surely it would be the Civil War. It transformed American society and the relationship of every American citizen to their state and federal governments. The war resulted in over 1 million casualties with nearly 1 in 5 white males between the age of 13 and 43 dying in the South. It dramatically reshaped the nation's economic and political structures. And by war's end, some 3.5 million enslaved African Americans had been freed. In the one hundred fifty years since, the Civil War has emerged as a significant touchstone for historical memory and cultural identity in the United States. "The Civil War is our felt history—history lived in the national imagination," wrote Robert Penn Warren in 1961.

In exploring the history and memory of the Civil War, this single term course will use the conflict as a lens through which to view the evolving American zeitgeist. It will introduce students to the history of the U.S. Civil War and explore its continuing legacy in American culture. We will investigate how historians have debated the causes of the Civil War and why, at various times, they have emphasized political, economic, social or cultural motivations. We will consider the experience of the war and explore its effect on notions of death and dying in the United States. And we will investigate history of Reconstruction, its aftermath, and the enduring memory of the Civil War in American culture.

Course Delivery

Delivery Mode: LECT

Lectures will be held Wednesdays 2:30 – 5:20pm in person on the Keele Campus. Lectures will explore the causes of the American Civil War, military strategy, the aftermath of this conflict,

and its enduring legacy. Topics examined include slavery, politics, military history, the era of Reconstruction, and contemporary public memory. Attendance is mandatory.

Course Materials

Course texts include excerpts from Louis P. Masur, *The Civil War: A Concise History*, Tony Horwitz's *Confederates in the Attic*, and primary sources from the nineteenth century.

An example of assigned weekly readings: Masur, *The Civil War*, 21-30; John C. Calhoun, "The Fourth of March Speech" (1850); Daniel Webster, "The Seventh of March Speech" (1850); Abraham Lincoln Address the Issue of Sectionalism (Feb. 1860)

Tentative Grade Breakdown and Deadlines

Assessment	Weight	Mode	Tentative Deadline
Mid-term	30%	In-person	October 21, 2026
Public Memory Assignment	10%	Take-home	November 18, 2026
Attendance/Participation	10%	In-person	Weekly
Final Exam	50%	In-person	Exam Period
	100%		