

The Civil War and Visual Culture

Studies in 18th- and 19th-Century Art of the United States/Topics in U.S. History
ARTH 372 sec 001/HIST 389 sec 006

MW 10:30 – 11:45 am • Art & Design L008

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Office Hours: Tuesday 1:00 – 2:00 pm or by appt.
Office: Robinson-B 377-D

Description: This course will explore the impact of the Civil War in the art and culture of the United States. We will trace several key themes from the 1850s through the present and will cover a wide variety of media, including painting, photography, illustration, political cartoons, and film. We will cover the war from several angles, including images of battlefields and casualties, representations of the home front, and visual treatment of slavery and emancipation. The course will also cover the aftermath of the war, including how the war resonates in 20th- and 21st-century visual and material culture through cinema, advertising, reenactment, heritage tourism, and contemporary art. Throughout this course, we will consider key themes of national, regional, and racial identity; the politics of memory; and the ethics and aesthetics of representing violence and destruction.

Trigger Warning: Unfortunately, due to the nature of the historical material, this course will contain explicit images and texts dealing with slavery and brutality against people of color, violent death, and bodily dismemberment. Please be aware that these images may be disturbing.

Course Policies and Procedures

Goals: By participating in this course, students should meet the following goals:

- synthesize information to articulate critical responses to objects and texts
- analyze and evaluate visual images and material culture objects
- develop skills of academic communication, both written and oral
- engage in high-level critical evaluation of secondary scholarly texts

Reading: All readings will be made available as PDF files or links on Blackboard. Please complete the reading prior to the class meeting for which it is listed. For ease of reference and depth of discussion, I recommend that you bring either a printout or a tablet/device with the reading to class.

For some discussion days, students will be divided into reading groups and will be responsible for conveying the content of their reading to the rest of the class. This means that you only need to complete the reading listed for your group.

Class Communication: The best way to reach me is by email at vschulma@gmu.edu. Please allow up to 48 hours for a response. I will send important reminders to your GMU email, so be sure you check that account or have your mail forwarded to an account you check regularly.

Evaluation of Student Work: I use the following measurements of student performance. All assignments will be graded using a 100-point scale.

A+ (98-100)	A (93-97)	A- (90-92)	Clearly stands out as excellent performance
B+ (87-89)	B (83-86)	B- (80-82)	Level of work is good to very good
C+ (77-79)	C (73-76)	C- (70-72)	Level of work is satisfactory to average
D (60-69)			Work is below average and marginally acceptable
F (below 60)			Quality and/or quantity of work is unacceptable

Course Grading and Assignments

The grade for this course will be weighted in the following way:

Participation	10%
Reading questions	15%
In-class group work	15%
In-class reflections	20%
Two essays	40%

Participation (10%): Your contributions are expected to be thoughtful, relevant, and respectful. Students start with an 80 for participation; this will be raised if you participate and decreased if you act disruptive, disrespect class members, or engage in clearly unrelated texting/streaming/gaming.

Reading questions (15%): For each day marked “Discussion” on the calendar, bring 3-4 substantive questions about that day’s reading. The questions should address issues you want to discuss in more detail or things you disagreed with or were not sure about. You will turn them in at the beginning of class. Questions are graded on a completion basis except in cases of egregious lack of effort.

In-class group work (15%): Yes, I hate group work, too. But the ability to discuss and work in groups is an essential academic and life skill. For certain discussion days listed on the calendar, you will work with members of an assigned group to complete a task and turn in documentation of it at the end of class. All members of the group will receive the same grade.

In-class reflections (20%): Studies show that when students reflect on their learning, they retain it better and are more able to relate it to their everyday life. You will complete 4 short in-class writing assignments responding to prompts. These are designed to help you think more broadly about the course material. Days when reflections will occur are noted in the calendar.

Two essays (40%): You will write two 5-6 page papers. One will deal with a visit to an art exhibit, museum, or Civil War site and the other will discuss a film of your choice. A list of sites and films is attached. If you have another idea, get approval ahead of time. You can submit the papers at any time during the semester and in any order; however, one paper must be submitted no later than Friday, March 9 (day before spring break) and the other no later than Friday, May 4 (last day of classes). Full instructions are on Blackboard.

Policies for Submitting Written Work: Use Blackboard “Assignments” to submit written work and to receive feedback and grades. Please format your files according to the following:

- Double-spaced with standard margins and 12-point font
- Papers should be in .doc, .docx, or .pdf format and will not be read in any other format
- Images, cover sheets, and bibliographies do not count toward the page count.

Late work will be penalized 5 points for each day past the due date. All assignments are due at 11:59 pm on the due date, after which they are considered one day late. Extensions will be granted *if deemed appropriate* when students submit a request in writing at least one week before the due date.

A Note on Attendance: You presumably juggle many responsibilities in your life. Sometimes class conflicts with those responsibilities. Attendance in this class is not required. That said, there is a hefty component of participation that contributes to the course grade. Any work you miss due to absence can only be made up *at the discretion of the instructor* with appropriate documentation. I will take attendance daily with the goal of reaching out to students who may be struggling.

Academic Honesty: Academic dishonesty constitutes a serious violation of your learning process and your social contract with other students. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to:

- failure to cite sources for quotations and ideas
- cutting and pasting text from other sources
- passing off another's work as your own
- purchasing or copying a paper found online
- reusing a paper you wrote for another course

I have a **zero tolerance** policy for academic dishonesty, whether intentional or not. Students who violate standards of academic honesty will earn a **zero** for the assignment and may risk failing the course or being subject to disciplinary action at the University level.

The George Mason Honor Code reads as follows: "Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, and/or lie in matters related to academic work." More information about the Honor Code, including definitions of cheating, lying, and plagiarism, can be found at the Office of Academic Integrity website at oai.gmu.edu.

Support Resources for Students

Students with Disabilities: Students with disabilities are entitled to request appropriate accommodations. Students should first register with Disability Services and then bring me the provided letter to receive the necessary accommodations. ds.gmu.edu, or call (703) 993-2474.

Help with Writing: If you have struggled with writing in the past, or if English is not your first language, you may want to seek help from the Writing Center. They offer one-on-one tutoring and workshops throughout the semester. Robinson-A, Room 114, or writingcenter.gmu.edu

Emotional and Mental Support: College life is complicated. Students may find it helpful to talk with a professional. Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) can help address both personal and academic concerns. Services are free and confidential. SUB I, Room 3129, or caps.gmu.edu

LGBTQ Resources: LGBTQ Resources "works to promote the academic success, health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer students and their allies." SUB I, Room 2200, or lgbtq.gmu.edu

Diversity: The Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Multicultural Education provides support for an inclusive campus, including first-generation and undocumented students. odime.gmu.edu

Bereavement: Students dealing with loss are encouraged to speak with the Dean of Student Academic Life for their College. The Dean's office can help you contact your professors and deal with academic challenges of bereavement. CHSS students contact chssdean@gmu.edu. Contacts for other Colleges are at: registrar.gmu.edu/students/academic-standing/deans-and-directors/

Academic Advisement: For History and Art History students, Carrie Grabo (cgrab01@gmu.edu) is the undergraduate coordinator. If you do not know who your advisor is, consult the University advising webpage at: advising.gmu.edu/current-student/advisor-locator/

Course Calendar

Week 1

Mon. 1/22 Introduction to Course
Student Introductions and Civil War Knowledge Activity

Wed. 1/24 Lecture: American Art and Visual Culture to 1860

Week 2

Mon. 1/29 Lecture: Representing African Americans and Slavery to 1860

Wed. 1/31 Discussion: Art and Race Before the War

- Last Name A-M, read: John Davis, "Eastman Johnson's 'Negro Life at the South' and Urban Slavery in Washington, D.C.," *Art Bulletin* 80.1 (March 1998): 67-92.
- Last Name N-Z, read: Brian Wallis, "Black Bodies, White Science: Louis Agassiz's Slave Daguerreotypes," *American Art* 9.2 (Summer 1995): 38-61.

Bring discussion questions

In-class group work 1

Week 3

Mon. 2/5 Discussion: The Failure of History Painting

- Steven Conn, "Narrative Trauma and Civil War History Painting, or Why Are These Pictures So Terrible?" *History and Theory* 41 (Dec. 2002): 17-42.

Bring discussion questions

Wed. 2/7 Lecture: Alternatives to History Painting I: Genre Painting

Week 4

Mon. 2/12 Lecture: Alternatives to History Painting II: Landscape

In-class reflection 1

Wed. 2/14 Enrichment Activity: Special Artists Report on the War
Meet at Fenwick Library Special Collections (second floor)

Week 5

Mon. 2/19 Lecture: Southern Perspectives

- Drew Gilpin Faust, "Race, Gender, and Confederate Nationalism: William D. Washington's *Burial of Latane*," *Southern Review* 25 (1989): 297-307.

Wed. 2/21 Enrichment Activity: Photos and Works on Paper
Meet at Fenwick Library Special Collections (second floor)

Week 6

Mon. 2/26 Lecture: Photography and the Civil War

Wed. 2/28 Discussion: Photography of the Battlefield

- "Brady's Photographs: Pictures of the Dead at Antietam," *New York Times*, Oct. 20, 1862.
- Emily Godbey, "'Terrible Fascination': Civil War Stereographs of the Dead," *History of Photography* 36.3 (2012): 265-274.

Bring discussion questions

In-class reflection 2

Week 7

Mon. 3/5 Lecture: Other Perspectives: Female and African American Soldiers
Watch in class: Ken Burns, "Bottom Rail on Top"; Smithsonian, "The Secret Lives of Some Civil War Soldiers"
• Lauren Cook Burgess, "Introduction," in *An Uncommon Soldier: The Civil War Letters of Sarah Rosetta Wakeman* (Oxford, 1994), 1-13.
• Maurice Wallace, "How a Man Was Made a Slave," *English Language Notes* 44.2 (Fall/Winter 2006): 175-179.

Wed. 3/7 Discussion: The (Character) Assassination of Abraham Lincoln
• *skim* Barry Schwartz, "Picturing Lincoln," in *Picturing History* (Rizzoli, 1993).
• Harold Holzer, "Confederate Caricature of Abraham Lincoln," *Illinois Historical Journal* 80.1 (Spring 1987): 23-36.
Bring discussion questions

DUE by Friday 3/9 at 11:59 PM: first paper (film or exhibit/site review)

Week 8 Spring Break

Week 9

Mon. 3/19 Lecture: Picking Up the Pieces: Broken Bodies and Shattered Lives
• Teresa Barnett, "The Battlefield's Remains," from *Pieces of the Past* (U. Chicago, 2013), 79-105.

Wed. 3/21 Discussion: Picking up the Pieces and the Ruins of War
• If you like nature, read: Maura Lyons, "An Embodied Landscape: Wounded Trees at Gettysburg," *American Art* 26.3 (Fall 2012): 44-65.
• If you prefer air conditioning, read: Cécile Whiting, "Trompe-l'oeil Painting and the Counterfeit Civil War," *Art Bulletin* 79.2 (June 1997): 251-268.
In-class reflection 3
Bring discussion questions

Week 10

Mon. 3/26 Lecture: The Politics and Promises of Reconstruction
• Amy Louise Wood, "Lynching Photography and the Visual Reproduction of White Supremacy," *American Nineteenth Century History* 6.3 (Sept. 2005): 373-399.

Wed. 3/28 Lecture: Monuments and Memorialization

Week 11

Mon. 4/2 Monuments in Detail and the Contemporary Monuments Debate
Watch in class: C-SPAN, "Emancipation Memorial"; C-SPAN, "Robert Gould Shaw Memorial"; ABC News, "Erasing History?"; Vice News, "Last Confederate Statues"

Wed. 4/4 Discussion: Monuments and Memorialization
• Maurie D. McInnis, "'To Strike Terror': Equestrian Monuments and Southern Power," in *The Civil War in Art and Memory* (National Gallery, 2016), 127-146.
• Jack and Warren Christian, "The Monuments Must Go," Aug. 16, 2017, slate.com
Bring discussion questions
In-class group work 2

Week 12

- Mon. 4/9 Lecture: Lived Experiences, Reenactment, Tourism, and Film
- Rory Turner, "Bloodless Battles: The Civil War Reenacted," *TDR* 34.4 (Winter 1990): 123-136.
- Wed. 4/11 Discussion: Humor, Games, and Popular Entertainment
- Watch in class: *Mr. Show* segment; Conan O'Brien segment
- Harold Holzer, "Saving the 'IMAX of its Day,'" *American Heritage* 56.4 (Sept. 2005): 38-45.
 - James Marten, "History in a Box: Milton Bradley's *Myriopticon*," *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 2.1 (Winter 2009): 3-7.
- Bring discussion questions**

Week 13

- Mon. 4/16 Alternate History as Lived Experience
- Watch in class: *CSA: The Confederate States of America* (Kevin Wilmott, 2004).
- Wed. 4/18 Discussion: Tourism as Lived Experience
- Watch in class: Conner Prairie Interactive History Park, "Fugitive Slave Experience Forces Participants out of Comfort Zones"
- Enrolled as ARTH, read: Scott Magelssen, "This Is a Drama. You Are Characters: The Tourist as Fugitive Slave in Conner Prairie's 'Follow the North Star,'" *Theatre Topics* 16.1 (March 2006): 19-34.
 - Enrolled as HIST, read: E. Arnold Modlin Jr., Derek H. Alderman, and Glenn W. Gentry, "Tour Guides as Creators of Empathy: The Role of Affective Inequality in Marginalizing the Enslaved at Plantation House Museums," *Tourist Studies* 11.1 (2011): 3-19.
- Bring discussion questions**
- In-class group work 3**

Week 14

- Mon. 4/23 Lecture: Contemporary Art and the Civil War's Legacy
- Gerard Brown, "Reenactment and Relic: The Civil War in Contemporary Art," in *Remixing the Civil War* (Johns Hopkins, 2011), 137-155.
- Wed. 4/25 The War's Legacy for Artists of Color and Queer Artists
- Watch in class: Terry Adkins, "Why the Civil War Still Matters to Artists"; Kara Walker ART21 segment; Allison Smith, "The Muster"

Week 15

- Mon. 4/30 Discussion: Contemporary Art
- Shawn Michelle Smith, "Photographic Remains: Sally Mann at Antietam," in *The Civil War in Art and Memory* (National Gallery, 2016), 103-124.
 - James Gibbons, "Mark Bradford's Gettysburg Address," Nov. 18, 2017, hyperallergic.com
- Bring discussion questions**
- Wed. 5/2 Course evaluations
- In-class reflection 4**

DUE by Friday 5/4 at 11:59 PM: second paper (film or exhibit/site review)

Paper suggestions: If you have another idea, please let me know and get permission ahead of time.

Exhibit/Site Review

Check opening times and admissions policies before visiting. Some sites require a car, but many of the downtown sites are free and accessible by public transport. Later in the spring some sites may offer reenactments or other immersive experiences. Check online schedules of events.

Downtown DC:

Smithsonian American Art Museum contemporary art exhibit: *Kara Walker, Harper's Pictorial History of the Civil War (Annotated)*, **ends March 11**

Smithsonian American Art Museum nineteenth century galleries

Hirshhorn Museum contemporary art installation: *Pickett's Charge* by Mark Bradford

National Portrait Gallery exhibits: *Antebellum Portraits by Mathew Brady* and *Lincoln's Contemporaries*

National Museum of African American History and Culture (entrance restrictions apply, see website)

African American Civil War Museum

National Museum of American History *America at War* exhibit

Maryland

National Museum of Health and Medicine, Silver Spring

National Museum of Civil War Medicine, Frederick

Antietam National Battlefield, Sharpsburg

Virginia

Manassas National Battlefield, Manassas

Historic Tredegar Civil War Visitor Center, Richmond

Fort Ward Museum, Alexandria

Arlington House, home of R.E. Lee, Arlington National Cemetery

Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond

Historic Blenheim Interpretive Center, Fairfax

Film Review

Please read the Blackboard assignment fully before watching, as there are specific things you should be looking for. Also note that some of these films cover pre-war issues such as life during slavery.

Demme, Jonathan. *Beloved*. 1998.

Fleming, Victor. *Gone with the Wind*. 1939.

Ford, John. *Young Mr. Lincoln*. 1939.

Griffith, D.W. *The Birth of a Nation*. 1915.

Keaton, Buster. *The General*. 1927.

Lee, Ang. *Ride with the Devil*. 1999.

Maxwell, Ron. *Gettysburg*. 1993.

Maxwell, Ron. *Gods and Generals*. 2003.

McLaglen, Andrew V. *Shenandoah*. 1965.

McQueen, Steve. *12 Years a Slave*. 2013.

Minghella, Anthony. *Cold Mountain*. 2003.

Parker, Nate. *Birth of a Nation*. 2016.

Ross, Gary. *Free State of Jones*. 2016.

Scorsese, Martin. *Gangs of New York*. 2002.

Spielberg, Steven. *Lincoln*. 2012.

Tarantino, Quentin. *Django Unchained*. 2012.

Zwick, Edward. *Glory*. 1989.