

**The Civil War Era  
HIST 388  
T-R, 11:00-12:15  
CCC 231**

**Contact:**

Dr. Lee Willis

477 CCC

346-4478 (o)

[lwillis@uwsp.edu](mailto:lwillis@uwsp.edu)

Office hours: Tuesday, 1:00-2:00 and Wednesday, 11:00- 12:00 noon; and by appointment

**Text Rental:**

James M. McPherson, *Ordeal By Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction* (McGraw-Hill, 3<sup>rd</sup> combined edition).

**For Purchase:**

Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (Knopf, 2008).

(Additional readings on library databases and D2L)

**Course description:**

After more than 150 years, the Civil War still captivates the American public. Each year, Americans commemorate Civil War anniversaries, reenact battles, and more deeply, shape their individual and collective identities based on their perception and understanding of this war. And despite a voluminous body of scholarship, the Civil War remains of keen interest to professional historians who continue to research and ask new questions of this tumultuous era.

This semester we will examine the causes, conduct, and consequences of the bloodiest war in U.S. history. By the end of the course you will be able to describe different interpretations of the war and how it transformed the United States in significant and lasting ways. You will also sharpen your ability to analyze primary and secondary sources on the war and the ability to express your analysis in writing.

**Requirements:**

Our class time will be divided between lecture and discussion. Because class participation is a significant part of the final grade, attendance is critical. In addition to midterm and final exams, you will be required to write two book précis and a 6-8 page historiographical essay on the topic of your choice (with instructor's approval).

## **Desire2Learn:**

Lecture outlines, an online grade book, and important handouts for your historiographical paper and book précis are posted on the class D2L site. You should check the site regularly for updates and announcements.

## **Grading/evaluation:**

Your grade will be based on two book précis, class participation, a midterm blue book exam, a final blue book exam, and a historiographical essay.

Annotated bibliography: 5%  
Two book précis: 15%  
Class discussion: 20%  
Midterm exam: 20%  
Final exam: 20%  
Historiographical paper: 20%

Grading scale: (percentages)

A = 93-100	C+ = 77-79	D- = 60-62
A- = 90-92	C = 73-76	F = 0-59
B+ = 87-89	C- = 70-72	
B = 83-86	D+ = 67-69	
B- = 80-82	D = 63-66	

## **Course outline and weekly reading (you should be prepared to discuss weekly reading at the Thursday class meeting):**

Week of January 23: Antebellum America. Read McPherson, pp. 5-58 and Matthew J. Grow, "The Shadow of the Civil War: A Historiography of Civil War Memory," *American Nineteenth-Century History*, vol. 4, issue 3 (2003): 77-103. Available through America: History and Life.

Week of January 30: The Compromise of 1850. Read McPherson, pp. 59-78. Read William H. Seward, "Freedom in the New Territories" and Daniel Webster, "The Constitution and the Union"

<http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/resources/pdf/SewardNewTerritories.pdf>  
<http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/resources/pdf/Webster7th.pdf>

Week of February 6: Slavery in the 1850s. Read McPherson, pp. 79-94. Read Anthony Burns documents at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p2915.html>. Annotated bibliography due Thursday, February 8.

Week of February 13: The Failure to Compromise. Read McPherson, pp. 95-138.

Week of February 20: The Secession Crisis. Read McPherson, pp. 139-159; "A Declaration of the Immediate Causes Which Induce and Justify the Secession of the State of Mississippi from the Federal Union" (on D2L); and excerpts from Susan Bradford Eppes, *Through Some Eventful Years* (on D2L).

Week of February 27: The War begins. Read McPherson pp. 161-200. Precis on one book from your annotated bibliography due March 1.

Week of March 6: The Balance Sheet of War. Read pp. 201-242 in McPherson.

Week of March 13: **Midterm Exam, Tuesday, March 13.** March 15: A Bloody Affair. Read pp. 243-256 in McPherson.

Week of March 20: 1862. Read pp. 257-343 in McPherson.

Week of March 29: NO CLASS, SPRING BREAK

Week of April 3: 1863. Read pp. 343-372 in McPherson and "Generals, Soldiers, and the Civil War," in *Major Problems in American Military History* (D2L).

Week of April 10: 1864. Read pp. 443-494 in McPherson.

Week of April 17: 1865. Precis on Faust, *This Republic of Suffering* due Thursday, April 17.

Week of April 24: Social consequences of the war. Read pp. 425-442 in McPherson and "Civil War and Emancipation," in *Major Problems in African-American History, Volume I.* (D2L)

Week of May 1: Political and economic implications of war. Read pp. 373-398 in McPherson. Historiographical papers due, Thursday May 3.

Week of May 8: The complications of Reconstruction. Read pp. 533-553 in McPherson and David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*, preface and chapter one. (on D2L)

Final exam: Monday, May 14, 12:30-2:30 PM

