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# THE CIVIL WAR

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## IN LITERATURE AND FILM

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### COURSE DESCRIPTION

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America is observing the 150th anniversary of the Civil War in 2011. The Civil War continues to hold a powerful grip upon the American imagination. This course examines the Civil War as it has been portrayed in the fiction of Stephen Crane, Ambrose Bierce, Michael Shaara, and Margaret Walker, among others; in the poetry of Walt Whitman, Herman Melville, and other poets of the Civil War era; and in movies such as *Birth of a Nation*, *Gone with the Wind*, *The Red Badge of Courage*, *Gettysburg*, and *Glory*.

### COURSE GOALS

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Students who commit themselves to completing the work in this course will

1. Become broadly acquainted with the literature and films treating the American Civil War.
2. Attain a broad acquaintance with the history of the Civil War, its roots in slavery, and its legacy of racial violence and segregation.
3. Understand why the Civil War has come to be known as “the crossroads of [Americans’] being.”
4. Think more deliberately about how artists structure works to shape their audience’s reactions to, and understanding of, their subjects.
5. Appreciate how literature and films have reflected and shaped Americans’ public memory and understanding of the Civil War.
6. Understand literary Realism and Naturalism and their relationship to the war and late 19th-century American culture.
7. Read carefully and critically.
8. Write effectively and purposefully.

### COURSE INFORMATION

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G-EN 235 Topics in Literature  
Mohler 212  
9-11:50 a.m M-F  
3 credit hours

### INSTRUCTOR

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Bruce Clary, Ph.D.  
Mohler 201  
Office Hr: 1-2 M-Th  
Office: 242.0530  
Cell: 755.2501

### REQUIREMENTS MET

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General education credit for  
Humanities: Literature.

### REQUIRED TEXTS

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Bierce. *Civil War Stories*. Dover, 1994.

Crane. *The Red Badge of Courage*. Dover, 2004.

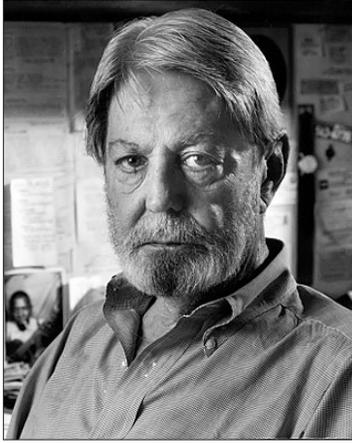
---. *The Little Regiment and Other Civil War Stories*. Dover, 1997.

Dixon. *The Clansman: An Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan*. NuVision,

Negri, ed. *Civil War Poetry: An Anthology*. Dover, 1997.

Shaara. *The Killer Angels*. Ballantine, 2003

Walker. *Jubilee*. Houghton Mifflin, 1966.



**Shelby Foote**

“Any understanding of this nation has to be based, and I mean really based, on an understanding of the Civil War. I believe that firmly. It defined us. The Revolution did what it did. Our involvement in European wars, beginning with the First World War, did what it did. But the Civil War defined us as what we are and it opened us to being what we became, good and bad things. And it is very necessary, if you’re going to understand the American character in the twentieth century, to learn about this enormous catastrophe of the nineteenth century. It was the crossroads of our being, and it was a hell of a crossroads....”

—in Ken Burns’ documentary,  
The Civil War

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## COURSE STRUCTURE

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The course divides roughly into two parts:

1. Study of literature and films that focus on capturing the experience of the war, especially the physical trauma and psychological drama of soldiers engaged in combat, but also the strain upon those left on the homefront; and
2. Study of literature and films focused on shaping the meaning and/or controlling the memory of the war.

Reading in three-and-a-half weeks the near-equivalent of what normally would be spread over a normal 14-week semester can feel like a heavy load indeed. However, it’s important to remind yourself that this is the only class you are taking, which allows you to devote all your study time to reading and thinking about the works assigned. This allows longer, more concentrated reading sessions, which can improve your enjoyment and comprehension. I want to encourage you to think of this class as what may be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for you: the chance to immerse yourself in some of the most entertaining literature ever written about the most important and interesting event in American history.

### *Methods*

It goes without saying that lecture will be necessary, but I hope discussion and student writing about the literature and films will anchor the course. We will write regularly—on a near-daily basis—in class. I not only welcome but encourage questions at any point.

### *Required Learning Activities*

*Reading checks* (50 percent). The most important learning activity in this course is the assigned reading. You will not have completed the course without reading the assigned works. To reward those who keep up with the assigned reading, most morning class sessions will begin with an eight-minute, five-point reading check. The questions on these reading checks will be complete-the-statement or fill-in-the-blank type questions. Those who attentively read the work(s) assigned will answer the questions readily; those who scan the readings may answer some of the questions correctly; those who do not crack the book will not likely guess any correct answers.

Reading checks may not be made up. If you arrive to class a minute or two late, you will have a chance to complete as much of the check as remaining time allows. Students who arrive five minutes late will not have a check distributed to them.

*In-class writing* (20 percent). Several times a week, I will solicit

short pieces of writing during class. These will ask you to comment upon some topic of discussion during class, to compare a character or scene from a movie with its counterpart in a text, or simply to explain what you learned or found most interesting in the class session or questions that remain for you. Most often I will ask for these at the end of a class meeting so that you may leave as you are finished and may take more time as needed without keeping others waiting.

These in-class writing will be evaluated on a 10-point scale:

- 9-10 *Demonstrates* adequate, thoughtful engagement with the assigned topic
- 8 *Suggests* adequate, thoughtful engagement with the topic
- 6-7 *Suggests* less than adequate, thoughtful engagement with the topic
- 1-5 *Demonstrates* less than adequate, thoughtful engagement with the topic

Missed in-class writing assignments may be made up, but only for half credit.

*Reaction papers* (15 percent each). You will submit two brief reaction papers of 600-750 words, one on Jan. 18 and the other at the end of the term (Jan. 27). A variety of topics for these papers, along with guidelines for writing them, will be distributed several days in advance of the due dates.

Late reaction papers cannot receive a grade higher than a C.

## GRADES

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Your final grade for the course will be determined as follows:

- 50% Reading checks
- 20% In-class writing
- 15% Reaction paper #1
- 15% Reaction paper #2

I award grades on the traditional scale:

- 91-100 = A
- 81-90 = B
- 71-80 = C
- 61-70 = D
- 60-below = F.

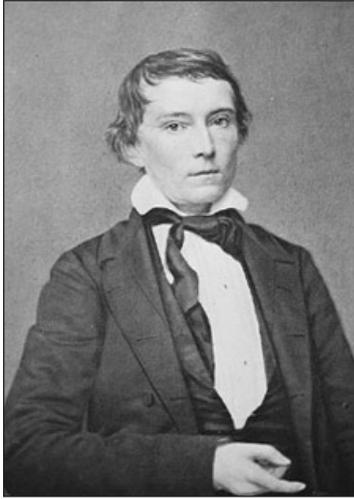
*Optional final.* If you choose, you may take a comprehensive exam on Jan. 27 in order to improve your course grade. Students who score a letter grade or more above their course average will improve their final grade one letter; that is, students with a B at the end of course can earn an A by earning an A on the optional final;



**Abraham Lincoln**

“‘A house divided against itself cannot stand.’ I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half *slave* and half *free*. I do not expect the Union to be *dissolved*—I do not expect the house to *fall*—but I *do* expect it will cease to be divided. It will become *all* one thing, or *all* the other. Either the *opponents* of slavery, will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the believe that it is in course of ultimate extinction; or its *advocates* will push it forward, till it shall become alike lawful in *all* the states, *old* as well as *new*—*North* as well as *South*.”

—Speech Delivered at  
the Close of the Republican  
State Convention  
June 16, 1858  
Springfield, Illinois



**Alexander Stephens**

“The prevailing ideas entertained by [Thomas Jefferson] and most of the leading statesmen at the time of the formation of the old constitution, were that the enslavement of the African was in violation of the laws of nature; that it was wrong in principle, socially, morally, and politically.... Those ideas, however, were fundamentally wrong. They rested upon the assumption of the equality of races. This was an error.... Our new government is founded upon exactly the opposite idea; its foundations are laid, its cornerstone rests, upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery subordination to the superior race is his natural and normal condition. This, our new government, is the first, in the history of the world, based upon this great physical, philosophical, and moral truth.”

—*Speech delivered in Savannah, Georgia*  
21 March 1861

students with a C at the end of the course can earn a B by making a B or better on the optional final; and so on. Students with an A average at the end of the course are automatically exempted from taking the final. You cannot lower your course grade by taking the optional final. If your test score is lower than your course average, it is simply discarded.

*Attendance Policy.* Reading checks may not be made up. In-class writings can be made up for half-credit. I do not distinguish “excused” from “unexcused” absences (making such a distinction puts me in a role I do not care to play), and I will not give those ahead of time, so there are no exceptions to those policies.

The intensity of the Interterm schedule puts an even higher premium than usual on class attendance. You are allowed three absences without penalty. Each absence after that deducts five percent from your final grade.

DISABILITY SERVICE

If you have a disability that prevents you from fully expressing your abilities, please contact me as soon as possible so we can discuss necessary accommodations to ensure your full participation and facilitate your educational opportunity.

SPECIAL INJUNCTION

You are responsible for seeing that this syllabus does not interfere with your education. You can always do more work or different work (within reason) than the syllabus requires. Consult with me if you wish to explore the possibilities for better adapting this course to your needs.

## PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE OF READINGS

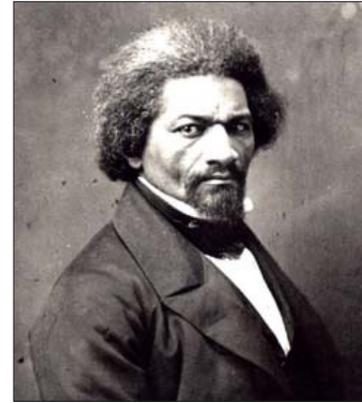
Reading assignments should be completed before class on the date listed. In addition to the book(s) containing the works assigned, please bring Negri, *Civil War Poetry*, to class with you each day. We will occasionally have opportunity to supplement in-class discussions with poems from the anthology.

<b>M, Jan. 3</b>	Introduction to course; some historical context <b>View</b> Ken Burns' <i>The Civil War</i> , Part I
<b>"New Realists"*: The Trial of Fire</b>	
<b>T, Jan. 4</b>	<b>Read</b> Crane <i>LR</i> : "A Mystery of Heroism" (1-8), "A Gray Sleeve" (9-21), "The Little Regiment" (44-59), "An Episode of War" (73-76); Whitman: "Vigil Strange I Kept," "A March in the Ranks Hard-Prest," "A Sight in Camp," "The Wound-Dresser," "The Artilleryman's Vision," "To a Certain Civilian" ( <i>CWP</i> 89-95)
<b>W, Jan. 5</b>	<b>Read</b> Bierce <i>CWS</i> : "A Horseman in the Sky" (27-32), "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" (33-40), "Chickamauga" (41-46); "One of the Missing" (53-62); "The Affair at Coulter's Notch" (69-76), "The Coup de Grâce" (77-81), "The Mockingbird" (119-23).
<b>Th, Jan. 6</b>	<b>Read</b> Crane <i>Red Badge of Courage</i> (1-74)
<b>F, Jan. 7</b>	<b>Read</b> Crane <i>Red Badge of Courage</i> (75-146) <b>View</b> John Huston's <i>Red Badge of Courage</i>
<b>M, Jan. 10</b>	<b>Read</b> Shaara <i>Killer Angels</i> (1-68) <b>View</b> <i>Gettysburg</i>
<b>T, Jan. 11</b>	<b>Read</b> Shaara <i>Killer Angels</i> (73-150) <b>View</b> <i>Gettysburg</i> (cont.)
<b>W, Jan. 12</b>	<b>Read</b> Shaara <i>Killer Angels</i> (155-270) <b>View</b> <i>Gettysburg</i> (cont.)
<b>Th, Jan. 13</b>	<b>Read</b> Shaara <i>Killer Angels</i> (275-347) <b>View</b> <i>Gettysburg</i> (cont.)

\* "A man who has been shot at is a new realist, and what do you say to a realist when the war is a war of ideals?" —*The Killer Angels* (32)

### Shaping Memories, Interpreting Meanings of the Civil War

<b>F, Jan. 14</b>	<b>Read</b> Harris "A Story of the War" (online), Dixon <i>The Clansman</i> (TBA) <b>View</b> <i>Birth of a Nation</i>
<b>T, Jan. 18</b>	<b>Reaction Paper 1 Due</b> <b>Read</b> Dixon <i>The Clansman</i> (TBA) <b>View</b> <i>Birth of a Nation</i> (cont.)
<b>W, Jan. 19</b>	<b>Read</b> Walker <i>Jubilee</i> (3-80) <b>View</b> <i>Gone with the Wind</i>



**Frederick Douglass**

"The truth is the American people and Government did at the beginning, design that this war should have but one object, and that object should be simply the restoration of the old Union; and for a time that war was kept to that object, strictly, and you know full well, with what results.... [But] this war is, and of right ought to be, an abolition war. This is its central principle and comprehensive character, and includes everything else which this struggle involves. It is a war for the Union, a war for the Constitution, and a war for Republican Institutions, I admit; but it is logically such a war, only in the sense that the greater includes the lesser."

—Speech delivered in Philadelphia, Penn.  
1863



There was a land of Cavaliers and Cotton Fields called the Old South... Here in this pretty world Gallantry took its last bow... Here was the last ever to be seen of Knights and their Ladies Fair, of Master and Slave... Look for it only in books for it is no more than a dream remembered. A Civilization gone with the wind...

Introduction to  
*Gone with the Wind*

<b>Th, Jan. 20</b>	<b>Read Walker <i>Jubilee</i> (81-174)</b> <b>View <i>Gone with the Wind</i> (cont.)</b>
<b>F, Jan. 21</b>	<b>Read Walker <i>Jubilee</i> (177-260)</b>
<b>M, Jan. 24</b>	<b>Read Walker <i>Jubilee</i> (261-312)</b> <b>View <i>Glory</i></b>
<b>T, Jan. 25</b>	<b>Read Walker <i>Jubilee</i> (315-412)</b> <b>View <i>Glory</i></b>
<b>W, Jan. 26</b>	<b>Read Walker <i>Jubilee</i> (413-497)</b>
<b>Th, Jan. 27</b>	<b>Reaction Paper #2 Due</b> Optional Final Exam