

## The Coming of the Civil War

**PROFESSOR:** DR. S.L. WILLIAMSON**EMAIL:** [savannah.williamson@sulross.edu](mailto:savannah.williamson@sulross.edu)*Where and when to find Dr. Williamson—Office Hours & Locations*

<b>Mondays</b>	10am-12pm, <i>or by appointment</i>	UC 212
<b>Tuesdays</b>	12:30-2pm	LH 211
<b>Wednesdays</b>	10am-12pm, <i>or by appointment</i>	UC 212
<b>Thursdays</b>	12:30-2pm	LH 211
<b>Fridays</b>	<i>Available by appointment</i>	

**I. Introduction**

The Civil War was responsible for more American deaths than any other, as many as 620,000 men with as many more wounded. The carnage was so great that only now, in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century, have the combined deaths from the American Revolution through the “War on Terror” in Iraq and Afghanistan surpassed the number of casualties sustained during the Civil War. Those 620,000 represented roughly 2% of the entire population of the United States in 1860. When, why, and how did such a crisis occur?

This course examines the political, cultural, economic, and social histories of the United States from roughly the Missouri Compromise of 1820 to the presidential election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860. In our study, we will engage in regular reading, scholarly discussions, and written analysis to understand events in the years leading up to the Civil War.

*A Note on Course Content*

At times this semester we will be discussing historical events that may be disturbing, even traumatizing, to some students. If you suspect that specific material is likely to be emotionally challenging for you, I’d be happy to discuss any concerns you may have before the subject comes up in class. Likewise, if you ever wish to discuss your personal reactions to course material with the class or with me individually afterwards, I welcome such discussions as an appropriate part of our classwork. If you ever feel the need to step outside during a class discussion you may always do so without academic penalty. You will, however, be responsible for any material you miss. If you do leave the room for a significant time, please arrange to get notes from another student or see me individually to discuss the situation.

**II. Learning Objectives****Student Learning Outcomes**

*SLO 1*—The history student will demonstrate historical research skills in a logically organized, written paper that is mechanically correct and supported by relevant documentation of historical content.

*Marketable skills*— Students can identify useful resources from a pool of data.  
Students can select and organize data in a relevant manner.  
Students can make written presentations to various audiences.

*SLO 2*—The history student will demonstrate the ability to write about topics in historiography and how those topics are interpreted.

*Marketable skills*— Students can utilize data to persuade various audiences.

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Students can utilize data to generate and strengthen ideas.

Students can decipher stances adopted by various individuals.

*SLO 3*—The history student will demonstrate knowledge of historical events, movements, major turning points and personalities of the past.

*Marketable Skills*— Students can meet deadlines in a successful manner.

Students can discharge responsibilities in an adequate manner.

Students can manage the absorption of data.

### III. Required Materials

**Books**—All assigned readings and course materials are *FREE*—available as free e-books through your SRSU library account, as pdfs in Blackboard, or via weblink.

- Elizabeth R. Varon, [\*Disunion!: The Coming of the American Civil War, 1789-1859\*](#) (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008).
- Joshua A. Lynn, [\*Preserving the White Man's Republic: Jacksonian Democracy, Race, and the Transformation of American Conservatism\*](#) (Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2019).
- Noel Rae, [\*The Great Stain: Witnessing American Slavery\*](#) (New York, NY: The Overlook Press, 2018).
- Phillip F. Gura, [\*Man's Better Angels: Romantic Reformers and the Coming of the Civil War\*](#) (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2017).
- Daniel W. Crofts, [\*Lincoln and the Politics of Slavery: The Other Thirteenth Amendment and the Struggle to Save the Union\*](#) (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, The University of North Carolina Press, 2016).

**Technology**—This is a technology-infused course, which means that you **must** have regular, reliable access to a working computer with internet and word processing ability. Students are responsible for checking their email and the Blackboard site on a regular basis to access course materials and information.

**Energy**—Think of this course like joining a gym—you get out what you put in. As your professor, it is my responsibility to make sure you know how to use the equipment and to assist you when you need a spotter. Meanwhile, it is your responsibility to engage with the course materials, put in the work, and complete the assignments by the designated due dates. The grade you earn is determined by the quality of your effort, not necessarily the time you spend.

### IV. Assignments & Grading

#### Course Grading

A 90-100%    B 80-89%    C 70-79%    D 60-69%    F 59% or lower

**Discussions & Participation** (30%): Students are expected to read the assigned materials before the start of class and contribute to discussions of course materials. Regular participation is required of each individual student.

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**Four Book Reviews** (10% each, 40% of the semester grade): Students will write and submit précis, or scholarly book reviews, over assigned texts. Each review should be 2-3 pages in length, double-spaced, with 12-point font and 1” margins on all sides. Late submissions will not be accepted without documentation.

- A précis should summarize a given book or article’s argument, scope, and methodology as clearly and concisely as possible. Some reviews may require students to write a comparative analysis of multiple readings at the discretion of the professor. These reviews should evaluate the effectiveness of the monograph or article(s) as well as its limitations. Précis should be 2-3 full, double-spaced page, in 12-point Times New Roman font, with one-inch margins all around. For examples of a scholarly review (otherwise known as a precis), see: [www.h-net.org/reviews/home/php](http://www.h-net.org/reviews/home/php)
- The purpose of a review is to both summarize the books or article’s contents and, more importantly, to critically evaluate its contribution to knowledge, both factual and historiographical. The reviewer’s priority is to critically appraise each book; to analyze it on its own terms, to discuss what it did and did not do, what sort of evidence the author used and how well, what its strengths and weaknesses were.
- *Be sure to point out the thesis of each book and whether the author presented a supported a persuasive argument.* Also ascertain what kind of historiographical context (if any) the author provided—in other words, how did the author’s work fit into a broader body of historical literature? If the author did not do this, hold them to task. For examples of scholarly book reviews, see: [www.h-net.org/reviews](http://www.h-net.org/reviews)

**Final Paper** (30%): Each student will utilize a selection of primary and secondary sources to interpret and evaluate, place in historical context, and utilize to construct an analytical essay. The essay will require that students think critically about the sources, examine how individual choices and decisions influenced the course of history, and consider the ways in which individuals engage with regional, national, and/or global communities.

- You will consult with the professor about possible research topics prior to making your final decision. This essay should have a strong, coherent thesis statement, supported by scholarly and primary sources, contextual details, analysis, and examples.
- You may choose any subject relative to the theme of this seminar.
- Papers must be typed or word-processed in 12-point fonts (Times New Roman, Arial, or Calibri), double-spaced, with one-inch margins all around.
- The two to three (2-3) pages research proposal (aka prospectus) that outlines the major themes of your project, research questions, tentative thesis, discusses your possible sources or what you think you will find, and includes a tentative works cited.
- All papers should be a minimum 8-10 full pages (not including cover page and works cited).
- Your thesis should be supported by a minimum 10 scholarly sources, at least 5 of which should be primary sources.
- Papers that are not formatted according to guidelines and requirements will be dropped one letter grade automatically.
- Papers will be evaluated on the following points:
  - strength of your historical arguments and content
  - how well you have used historical evidence to support your arguments
  - composition (i.e., spelling, grammar, sentence structure)

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- form (i.e., correct citation)

A word of advice: Do not write as though your audience is your professor, or someone who is knowledgeable in the subject you are engaging with. In other words, avoid any assumptions about your reader's prior knowledge, as to avoid losing points for leaving out details or contextual explanations that can enhance the quality of your work.

**The 5 C's of Historical Reasoning**

1. **Change and Continuity:** Historians are required to debate what has changed over time and what has remained the same. Change can be a dramatic pivot or a slow shift.
2. **Causation:** Historians debate the causes of historical events. It would be more accurate to say that we often discuss about causality, sometimes passionately. Few events have only one cause (monocausal), so we debate with one another about which cause should be considered the most important.
3. **Context:** Historians insist that the past must be understood on its own terms. Any historical event, person, idea must be placed in the context of its historical era to be interpreted. The historian's goal is to discover how people in the past understood their own lives, which is often quite different from how we may react to their situation.
4. **Contingency and Connections:** Historians are aware that events happen for a variety of reasons, which are often interconnected. Change one factor, and the event might not have happened at all. This idea helps us to remember that historical events are not inevitable.
5. **Complexity:** Historical reasoning is not about memorizing dates and names. It is about making sense of the messiness of the past, in all its complexity. That often means recognizing that different historical groups experienced events in different ways.

**V. Classroom & Teaching Philosophy**

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***A Climate of Mutual Respect***

Importantly, this class will foster free expression, critical investigation, and the open discussion of ideas. This means that all of us must help create and sustain an atmosphere of tolerance, civility, and respect for the viewpoints of others. Similarly, we must all learn how to probe, oppose, and disagree without resorting to tactics of intimidation, harassment, or personal attack. No one is entitled to harass, belittle, or discriminate against another on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, age, gender, national origin, or sexual preference. Still, we will not be silenced by the difficulty of fruitfully discussing politically sensitive issues.

***Commitment to Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion***

I aim to create a learning environment for my students that supports a diversity of thoughts, perspectives, and experiences, and honors your identities (including race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, etc.). I also understand that ongoing challenges from COVID-19, economic disparity, and health concerns could impact the conditions necessary for you to succeed. My commitment is to be there for you and help you meet the learning objectives of this course. I do this to demonstrate my commitment to you and to the mission of Sul Ross State University to create an inclusive environment and care for the whole student as part of the Sul

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Ross Familia. If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class, please don't hesitate to come and talk with me. I want to be a resource for you.

***Children in the Classroom***

The policy described here is thus, a reflection of my own beliefs and commitments to student, staff, and faculty parents.

1. All exclusively nursing/breastfeeding babies are welcome in class as often as is necessary to support the nursing/breastfeeding relationship. Because not all women can pump sufficient milk, and not all babies will take a bottle reliably, I never want students to feel like they must choose between feeding their baby and continuing their education. You and your nursing baby are welcome in class anytime.
2. For older children and babies, I understand that minor illnesses and unforeseen disruptions in childcare often put parents in the position of having to choose between missing class to stay home with a child and leaving him or her with someone you or the child does not feel comfortable with. While this is not meant to be a long-term childcare solution, occasionally bringing a child to class to cover gaps in care is perfectly acceptable.
3. I ask that all students work with me to create a welcoming environment that is respectful of all forms of diversity, including diversity in parenting status.
4. In all cases where babies and children come to class, I ask that you sit close to the door so that if your little one needs special attention and is disrupting learning for other students, you may step outside until their need has been met. Non-parents in the class, please reserve seats near the door for your parenting classmates.
5. Finally, I understand that often the largest barrier to completing your coursework once you become a parent is the tiredness many parents feel in the evening once children have *finally* gone to sleep. I recognize the struggles of balancing school, childcare, and sometimes even another job, are exhausting! I hope that you will feel comfortable disclosing your student-parent status to me—this is the first step in my working to accommodate any special needs that may arise. While I maintain the same high expectations for all student in my classes regardless of parenting status, I am happy to problem solve with you in a way that makes you feel supported as you strive for school-parenting balance.
6. Don't forget to check out the SRSU Lactation Room on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of Lawrence Hall!

**VI. Course Policies*****Attendance***

Students should arrive on time and stay for the entire class period. If you must arrive late or leave early for some extraordinary reason (natural disaster, medical emergency, the joyous arrival of a child, and so on), let the professor know in advance and be as quiet as possible in entering or exiting the class.

***Grading***

While I am always happy to discuss ways to improve your writing and performance on exams, I am not in the business of haggling over grades. Grades in this class are the product of careful deliberation and are not negotiable. If you find that the instructor—who is human—made a mathematical error, please bring the matter to my attention during office hours.

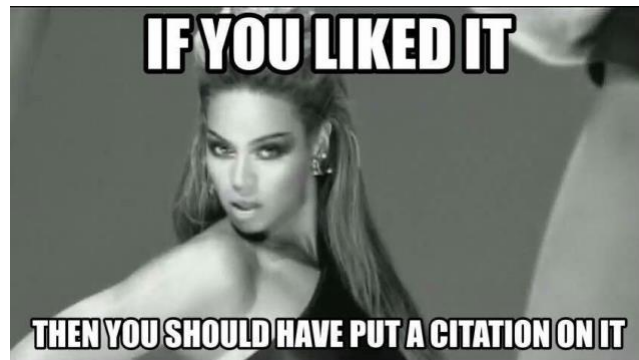
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***Late Work***

All exams and course work will only be accepted on the due dates in the class calendar. In the case of extraordinary medical or personal circumstances, you must contact the instructor **before** the due date of the assignment or exam. If you miss a class or an assignment for extraordinary circumstances, you must submit appropriate paperwork or communicate the situation with the professor.

***Academic Integrity***

The University expects all students to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is beyond reproach and to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of their classroom. The University may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty, including but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work, plagiarism, collusion, and the abuse of resource materials.



Please read the complete policy at

[http://www.sulross.edu/sites/default/files/sites/default/files/users/docs/stulife/student\\_conduct\\_discipline.pdf](http://www.sulross.edu/sites/default/files/sites/default/files/users/docs/stulife/student_conduct_discipline.pdf)

## VII. University Programs and Services

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***SRSU Library Services***

The Sul Ross Library offers FREE resources and services to the entire SRSU community. Access and borrow books, articles, and more by visiting the library's website, [library.sulross.edu](http://library.sulross.edu). Off-campus access requires your Lobo ID and password. Check out materials using your photo ID. Librarians are a tremendous resource for your coursework and can be reached in person, by email ([srsulibrary@sulross.edu](mailto:srsulibrary@sulross.edu)), or phone (432-837-8123).

***Learning Strategies, Styles, and Centers***

- **Academic Success Center.** 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Library, offers tutoring for many subjects, holds numerous workshops on developing better notetaking, reading, and study skills as well as assisting students with writing and test taking strategies.
- **Tutoring.** The University offers tutoring for many subjects, holds numerous workshops on developing better notetaking, reading, and study skills as well as assisting students with

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writing and test taking strategies through the **Academic Center for Excellence (ACE)**.

Location: FH 214. Web: <http://www.sulross.edu/academic-center-excellence>

***Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)***. Sul Ross State University is committed to equal access in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. It is SRSU policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request for accessibility services each semester for each class. *Students seeking accessibility services must contact:*

Mary Schwartz Grisham, M.Ed., LPC

SRSU Accessibility Services Coordinator

Telephone: 432-837-8203

Location: Ferguson Hall 112

Mailing Address: P.O. Box C-122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas, 79832

***Counseling and Psychological Services***. Provides counseling services and offers other services to students.

Location: Ferguson Hall 112

Hours: M-F 8am-12pm and 1pm-5pm

Phone: (432) 837-8203

Web: <http://www.sulross.edu/section/2408/counseling-accessibility-services>

***SRSU Distance Education Statement***. Students enrolled in distance education courses have equal access to the university's academic support services, such as library resources, online databases, and instructional technology support. For more information about accessing these resources, visit the SRSU website. Students should correspond using Sul Ross email accounts and submit online assignments through Blackboard, which requires secure login. Students enrolled in distance education courses at Sul Ross are expected to adhere to all policies pertaining to academic honesty and appropriate student conduct, as described in the student handbook. Students in web-based courses must maintain appropriate equipment and software, according to the needs and requirements of the course, as outlined on the SRSU website. Directions for filing a student complaint are located in the student handbook.

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**IX. Course Schedule**

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**A Note on Assignments:** Assignments are due by 11:59pm of the Sunday in the week during which they are assigned unless otherwise instructed. Discussion Posts in Blackboard should be a minimum 1-2 paragraphs in length. All assigned readings are available in Blackboard or through your SRSU Library account, using SRSU login.

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**Week 1 (August 22-28): Introductions****Assignments**

- Review syllabus
- Familiarize yourself with the course Blackboard page
- Discussion Entry, “Introductions”

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**Week 2 (August 29-September 04): Debates in the Early Republic****Readings**

- Elizabeth R. Varon, *Disunion!*, Introduction + Part I, ch. 1 (p.1-54).

**Assignments**

- Bb Discussion, “Debates in the Early American Republic.” Reflect on the assigned readings—what was notable to you? What was new? What questions did it raise? Reactions to the materials?

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**Week 3 (September 05-11): Abolitionism & Backlash****Readings**

- Elizabeth R. Varon, *Disunion!*, Part I, ch. 2-3 (p.55-126).

**Assignments**

- Bb Discussion, “The Birth of Abolitionism”

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**Week 4 (September 12-18):****Readings**

- Joshua A. Lynn, *Preserving the White Man’s Republic: Jacksonian Democracy, Race, and the Transformation of American Conservatism* (Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2019).

**Assignments**

- Book Review #1



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**Week 5 (September 19-25): Paper Topic Selection Meetings****Assignments**

- Final Paper Topic Selection— Students must communicate with the professor to discuss tentative final paper topics, sources, and to get topic approval. Students who do not have topic approval prior to submission of the assignment will be subject to an automatic 20-point deduction.

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**Week 6 (September 26-October 02): American Slavery****Readings**

- Noel Rae, *The Great Stain: Witnessing American Slavery* (New York, NY: The Overlook Press, 2018).

**Assignments**

- Book Review #2

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**Week 7 (October 03-09): Research Proposals****Assignments**

- Submit 2-3pg Research Proposal, which should introduce and explain your 1) topic, 2) your methods (approach, what types of sources will you use), 3) a tentative argument, 4) what you think you will find, and 5) a tentative source list

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**Week 8 (October 10-16): “Democracy” in the Age of Slavery’s Expansion****Readings**

- Elizabeth R. Varon, *Disunion!*, Part I, ch. 4-5 (p.127-198).

**Assignments**

- Bb Discussion, “Democracy & Slavery’s Expansion”

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**Week 9 (October 17-23): 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Social Reformers****Readings**

- Phillip F. Gura, *Man’s Better Angels: Romantic Reformers and the Coming of the Civil War* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2017).

**Assignments**

- Book Review #3

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**Week 10 (October 24-30): Crisis—1850s to Secession****Readings**

- Elizabeth R. Varon, [\*Disunion!\*](#), Part II, ch. 6 + Part III, ch. 7-Epilogue (p. 199-348)

**Assignments**

- Bb Discussion, “The 1850s to Secession”
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**Week 11 (October 31-November 06): Lincoln & the Politics of Slavery****Readings**

- Daniel W. Crofts, [\*Lincoln and the Politics of Slavery: The Other Thirteenth Amendment and the Struggle to Save the Union\*](#) (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, The University of North Carolina Press, 2016).

**Assignments**

- Book Review #4
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**Week 12 (November 07-13): Writing Days****Week 13 (November 14-20): Writing Days****Week 14 (November 21-27): Writing Days****Week 15 (November 28-December 04): Writing Days**

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**FINAL PAPERS DUE BY 5pm Monday, December 05, 2022**

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