

History 4323: US Civil War and Reconstruction



US and Ojibwa forces battle at Killdeer Mountain, 1864

General Introduction

The Civil War and Reconstruction eras – traditionally defined by American historians as the period between 1861 and 1877 (though this is changing as scholars increasingly explore Reconstruction's impact in the West) – are both intensely intriguing and extremely challenging histories. If the Civil War is the most frequently discussed era in the history of United States (perhaps only rivaled by World War II), Reconstruction is the least understood. These two interrelated eras in US History profoundly reshaped American society and continue to echo in our present. Both brought about strong feelings at the time and their interpretation remains sharply contested even today. In this course, we will discuss the origins, events, players, ideas, aftermath and legacy of these two eras. You will come away from the course with an intimate understanding of both these historical eras and the debates that have surrounded them ever since.

BASIC INFORMATION

Instructor: Dr. John Truden

Email: john.truden@sulross.edu

Office: Lawrence Hall 211

Class: Lawrence Hall 201

Office Hours: M (9-12) & W (1-3)

Land Acknowledgement

Sul Ross State University is on the ancestral lands of the Jumanos, Lipan Apaches, Comanches, Kiowas, Plains Apaches, Mescalero Apaches and Chisos Apaches.

Learning Objectives

At the end of this class, students should be able to:

1. Explain how political conflict over chattel slavery sparked the American Civil War
2. Chart the evolving societal position of African Americans in the United States between 1860 and 1880
3. Articulate a basic history of the Civil War
4. Articulate a basic history of Reconstruction
5. Situate Reconstruction in the broader context of American History
6. Identify Reconstruction's impact on US government policies towards Indigenous peoples
7. Recognize the impact of memory on American conceptions of the Civil War and Reconstruction era

Student Learning Outcomes

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skills in a logically-organized, written paper that is mechanically correct and supported by relevant documentation of historical content.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 will learn the importance of meeting deadlines in a successful manner.
- Students can identify the differences between primary and secondary sources, a crucial step in developing critical thinking skills.
- Students can learn to select and organize data in a relevant manner.
- Students can hone their writing skills.

The history student will demonstrate the ability to write about topics in historiography and how those topics are interpreted. Marketable Skills:

- Students can learn how ideas and interpretations change over time.
- Students can learn how to evaluate different interpretations and ideas.
- Students can learn how to use evidence to persuade various audiences.

The history student will demonstrate knowledge of American History, World History, and Non-American History. Marketable Skills:

- Students can develop a better understanding of the development of various cultures, political and economic systems, gender and race relations, and environmental change.
- Students can develop a multicultural perspective necessary for an increasing globalized world.
- Students can learn how to manage and absorb various perspectives and information.

Readings

All readings will be provided by the instructor.

A Note on Terminology

During this course, you may read or hear various terms that might make you uncomfortable. Partially, this is a consequence of how our language has changed since the nineteenth century. In some cases though, these terms were explicitly meant to demean and humiliate. Generally, I will only use outdated but common nineteenth century terms such as “negro” or “colored” as part of explaining the meaning of a proper noun. For example, I will explain the meaning of USCT – the abbreviation for United States Colored Troops, the African American military units that fought for the Union during the Civil War – once and then use the abbreviation. The n-word is not appropriate.

Connecting with Students for Success

As a part of a research study, I am committed in this course to the following:

I will know your name	I will provide user-friendly, timely feedback on your assignments	I will hold high standards and support you to achieve them	I will hold an individual meeting with each student during the semester
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History 4323 is a participant in the broader “Connecting with Students for Success” initiative at Sul Ross State University.

ASSIGNMENTS

Grades

Each person earns their own grade. My job as the instructor is to assess your work along clearly articulated guidelines and expectations. I also value and reward improvement. It is therefore critical that you do all assignments, attend all class sessions, and participate in all discussions. Remember, you are a contributor, a co-learner, and a fellow investor in our collective educational experience.

Participation (50%)

The foundation of our class is participation. As a community, we will work together to grapple with the history and legacy of the Civil War and Reconstruction era. While every student in this class can earn an A, I recognize none of you are taking this class in isolation. You may have other courses or collegiate-related concerns that require more attention. At the beginning of our class, you will choose which participation grade you would like to earn in this course based on the rubric below. You will then sign a contract (not legally enforceable but just to make things a little more real) with that grade. You may choose A, B, C, or D and are free to change your mind later in the semester, regardless of the contract. All of these choices are valid, with the caveat that you will obviously not receive the same academic credit for a D as for an A. As with your other grades, your choice will be kept secret apart from private discussion between you and myself. Regardless of your choice, you cannot participate if you are not present for a particular class. If you are not present, you will not receive credit for that day.

I reserve the right as instructor of record to interpret your participation as it fits into the rubric. I will determine your grade by evaluating your participation through the rubric below. Every five weeks, I will issue a short report on your participation. These three reports will include a paragraph evaluating your participation and a letter grade. At the end of the semester, these will be averaged as your overall participation grade.

Your participation grade may be affected by life circumstances out of your control. If this is the case, please see my policy on reasonable accommodation and extenuating circumstances.

A	An A student will complete all readings, attend and participate (speak/communicate in class with comments that relate directly to that class) in all classes, make clear in their own participation that they have taken time to examine and meditate on the assigned materials, and actively listen to their colleagues in discussion
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B	A B student will complete most readings, attend most classes, and participate in class regularly. They have read the materials from their contributions to the class and relevant responses to their colleagues' ideas.
C	A C student is present in class but either does not complete readings regularly or does not participate regularly. They may have read the materials, but they do not show that they have done so. Rather than building on or engaging with their colleagues, they talk past them.
D	A D student does not complete readings regularly and participates infrequently. They may have read the materials, but they do not show that they have done so. They do not engage with their colleagues' ideas and are unprepared to respond when asked about the topic at hand.
F	An F student does not participate apart from rare circumstances. They may have read the materials, but they do not show that they have done so. They rarely engage with their colleagues' ideas and are often inattentive in class.

Quizzes (20%)

You will complete fourteen (14) quizzes over the course of the semester. Each quiz will be about materials, lectures and discussions from the prior week. Each quiz will have ten questions and will be completed outside of class via Blackboard. You will have one week to complete each quiz. These quizzes are intended to be low-stakes exercises and are open book but need to be completed on your own.

Research Reports (15%)

As part of our class, you will craft two short oral reports on topics of your choice. One report will be on some aspect of the Civil War (a group of people, a battle, a topic, etc.) while the other will be on some aspect of Reconstruction. Both reports should have power points accompanying them but do not need to have any other written components. This report should be informal (dress how you usually do, chat with us, etc.) and does not need to be exhaustive. They are meant to enhance our class by adding your interests directly to the curriculum. Before choosing your topic, you will meet with me and we will decide on what class would be most relevant for a deadline. Each report should be 3-5 minutes. These reports will be graded pass/fail; if you attempt to do the report in good faith, I promise you will pass.

Class Project (15%)

For our class project, we will work together with Alpine Elementary School on a project related to some aspect of the Civil War and Reconstruction era. We will choose our format and topic together at the beginning of the semester and will "turn in" our finished product at the end of the semester. As long as you contribute your portion of the work (which will be distributed equally), you will receive full points.

POLICIES

Contact

Please contact me via email or speak to me during my office hours. During the work week (Monday through Friday), I will do my best to respond to your email within 24 hours.

Conduct

All are welcome in my classroom. I expect you to treat your fellow classmates and any guests with empathy, kindness, and respect. Remember that we (myself, you and your peers) can make mistakes. In that circumstance, I ask for grace for both myself and your colleagues. I hope to extend that same grace to you.

Academic Integrity

Students who violate academic integrity will receive a zero on the associated assignment. Some examples of violations of academic integrity are plagiarism, failure to properly cite sources of information, or submitting papers written by someone else (including with the assistance of artificial intelligence). To be successful in this class, your work must be yours and yours alone.

Technology

Laptops and phones in this class are a privilege and not a right; if I catch you using your laptop or phone for something other than class, I will ask you to put it away.

Reasonable Accommodation and Extenuating Circumstances

In the event of illness, a death in your family, or other catastrophic personal crisis, I will be sympathetic and flexible, *provided* that you alert me as soon as possible and preferably in advance of an assignment's due date. Belated excuses will not account for poorly done or late work. You will need to support any medical excuses with the appropriate, written documentation. I will also work with you to accommodate long term extenuating circumstances, such as pregnancy and childbirth, limited transportation, childcare, limited access to the internet, limited access to permanent housing, or other issues. While I cannot solve these problems, I will work with you.

RESOURCES

Students with Disabilities

Sul Ross State University is committed to equal access in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. It is SRSU policy to provide

reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities, but it is the student's responsibility to initiate a request each semester for each class. Students seeking accessibility services must contact:

Mary Schwartze

Ferguson Hall, Room 112

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

Phone: 432-837-8691

Email: mschwartze@sulross.edu

As a person with disabilities, I hope you will take advantage of these resources.

[Lobo Food Pantry](#)

The Lobo Pantry serves as a temporary, judgement free, resource for students experiencing food and financial insecurity. All currently enrolled students are eligible to use the Lobo Pantry services.

Counseling

Sul Ross has partnered with TimelyCare. All SRSU students will have access to nine free counseling sessions. You can learn more about this 24/7/365 support by visiting [Timelycare/SRSU](#). The SR Counseling and Accessibility Services office will continue to offer in-person counseling in Ferguson Hall room 112 (Alpine campus).

Academic Assistance

As an SRSU student, you have access to several programs designed to assist your academic performance. If you need help with writing, contact the SRSU Writing Center via Blackboard: https://shsu.blackboard.com/ultra/organizations/_195798_1/cl/outline or via Robin Alvarez (Writing Center Coordinator) at rka19ro@sulross.edu. You also have access to the Lobo Den Tutoring Center at Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library. Anthony Quintana is Coordinator of Tutoring Services: anthony.quintana@sulross.edu.

Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library

The Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library in Alpine 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. Librarians are a tremendous resource for your coursework and can be reached in person, by email (srsulibrary@sulross.edu), or phone (432-837-8123).

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1: The Road to War

Tuesday, August 26: Introduction

Thursday, August 28: The Long, Winding Road to War

- Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013): 1-17
- [The American YAWP, Chapter 13: The Sectional Crisis](#)

Week 2: Secession and the Eastern Theater

Tuesday, September 2: Secession

- [State of South Carolina, "Declaration of the Immediate Causes Which Induce and Justify the Secession of South Carolina from the Federal Union" December 24, 1860](#)
- [State of Mississippi, "A Declaration of the Immediate Causes which Induce and Justify the Secession of the State of Mississippi from the Federal Union" January 9, 1861](#)
- [State of Texas, "A Declaration of the Causes which Impel the State of Texas to Secede from the Federal Union" February 2, 1861](#)
- [Constitution of the Confederate States, Article IV \(4\), Section 2, March 11, 1861](#)

Thursday, September 4: The Eastern Theater

- [The American YAWP, Chapter 14: The Civil War](#)
- [National Park Service, Battlefield Virtual Tour: Gettysburg National Military Park](#)

Week 1 Quiz Due

Week 3: The Western and Trans-Mississippi Theaters

Tuesday, September 9: The Western Theater

- [Special Field Order No. 120, November 9, 1864](#)
- [Ken Burns, *The Civil War* – "Sherman's March" \(1990\)](#)
- [Meagan Snow, "Tracing General Sherman's 'March to the Sea'" \(2023\)](#)
- [Special Field Orders No. 76, May 30, 1865](#)

Thursday, September 11: The Trans-Mississippi Theater

- [Fort Union National Monument, “Slavery in New Mexico”](#)
- [Pecos National Historical Park, “Battle of Glorieta Pass”](#)
- Report of Maj. John M. Chivington, First Colorado Infantry, March 28, 1862
- Report of Col. W.R. Scurry, Fourth Texas Cavalry, March 30, 1862

Week 2 Quiz Due

Week 4: Salt and Air

Tuesday, September 16: The War at Sea

- [Encyclopedia of Alabama, “CSS Alabama”](#)
- [National Museums Liverpool, “Links between Liverpool and the Confederate States”](#)
- [Alabama Public Television, *Sink the Alabama* \(2023\)](#)
- John Browne, Report of Surgeon Browne, *U.S.S. Kearsarge*, July 23, 1864

Thursday, September 18: An Industrial War

- Joseph C. Scott, “The Infernal Balloon: Union Aeronautics During the American Civil War” *Army History* 93 (Fall 2014): 6-27
- [Thomas Paone, “More Than Just a Map” National Air and Space Museum \(2014\)](#)

Week 3 Quiz Due

Week 5: The Civil War and the Public

Tuesday, September 23: Women and the War

- [DeAnne Blanton, “Women Soldiers of the Civil War” *Prologue* \(1993\)](#)
- [Jessie Kratz, “Facial Hair Friday: Women Soldiers in the U.S. Civil War” \(2021\)](#)
- [National Park Service, “Cathay Williams”](#)
- [“The White Mountain Rangers”](#)

Thursday, September 25: The Home Front

- [Mary DeCredico, “Richmond Bread Riot” *Encyclopedia Virginia*](#)
- [“Sowing and Reaping” *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, May 23, 1863](#)
- [Smithsonian, “How the Civil War Draft Incited Violence in New York City” \(2013\)](#)
- George W. Walling, *Recollections of a New York Chief of Police* (New York: Caxton Book Concern, 1887): 78-86.

Week 4 Quiz Due

Week 6: War and Politics

Tuesday, September 30: Domestic Politics

- [Homestead Act \(1862\)](#)
- [Morrill Act \(1862\)](#)
- [Pacific Railway Act \(1862\)](#)
- [Kansas City Public Library, “First Progressive Income Tax”](#)
- [Federal Reserve History, “National Banking Acts of 1863 and 1864”](#)
- [Digital History, “Abraham Lincoln and Agriculture”](#)

Thursday, October 2: International Politics

- [University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, “Cotton Times: The Rio Grande Valley Civil War Trail” \(2020\)](#)
- Michael Hogan, “Juárez, Maximilian, and the French Occupation of Mexico” *The Oxford Handbook of Mexican History* (2020): 1-15

Week 5 Quiz Due

Week 7: African Americans and the Civil War

Tuesday, October 7: Experiments in Democracy

- [Fort Monroe National Monument, “Freedom’s Fortress”](#)
- [Reconstruction Era National Historical Park, “The Port Royal Experiment”](#)

Thursday, October 9: A War to End Slavery

- [National Park Service, “54th Massachusetts Regiment”](#)
- Showing: *Glory* (1989)

Week 6 Quiz Due

Week 8: Presidential Reconstruction in the South

Tuesday, October 14: Presidential Reconstruction

- [The American YAWP, Chapter 15: Reconstruction](#)
- [“Impeachment” Throughline \(2021\)](#)

Thursday, October 16: The Freedmen’s Bureau

- ["The First Department of Education" *Throughline*, June 12, 2025](#)
- [Toni Carrier and Angela Walton-Raji, Mapping the Freedmen's Bureau](#)
- ["The Misses Cooke's school room, Freedman's Bureau, Richmond Virginia" *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, November 17, 1866](#)
- ["The Freedmen's Bureau" *Harper's Weekly*, July 25, 1868](#)
- ["The Freedmen's Bureau!" \(1866\)](#)

Week 7 Quiz Due

Week 9: Radical Reconstruction in the South

Tuesday, October 21: Radical Reconstruction

- [Gregory P. Downs and Scott Nesbit, *Mapping Occupation* \(2015\)](#)
- [Eric Foner, "South Carolina's Forgotten Black Political Revolution" *Slate* \(2018\)](#)
- [National Park Service, "Robert Smalls"](#)
- [Justin A. Nystrom, "P.B.S. Pinchback" *64 Parishes* \(2023\)](#)

Thursday, October 23: White Terrorism and Political Resistance

- ["Scenes in Memphis, Tennessee during the riot" *Harper's Weekly*, May 26, 1866](#)
- [Thomas Nast, "This is a White Man's Government" *Harper's Weekly*, September 5, 1868](#)
- ["Two members of the Ku-Klux Klan in their disguises" *Harper's Weekly*, December 19, 1868](#)
- [Frank Bellew, "Visit of the Ku-Klux" *Harper's Weekly*, February 24, 1872](#)
- [Thomas Nast, "Worse than Slavery" *Harper's Weekly*, October 24, 1874](#)

Week 8 Quiz Due

Week 10: Reconstruction in the West, Part 1

Tuesday, October 28: US Expansion and Experimentation

- John Truden, "A US Army Officer's Report on a Forgotten Experiment at Fort Sill" *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* 100/2 (Summer 2023): 210-219
- [National Park Service, "Cheyenne, Arapaho, Kiowa, Comanche & Caddo Incarceration"](#)
- [Cheyenne and Arapaho Productions, *Lost Warriors: The Cheyenne and Arapaho Prisoners of Fort Marion* \(2024\)](#)

Thursday, October 30: Boarding Schools

- Julie Pearson-Little Thunder, Johnnie Diacon, and Jerry Bennett, *Chilocco Indian School: A Generational Story* (2022)
- Jacqueline Fear-Segal, "The Man on the Bandstand at Carlisle Indian Industrial School" (2006): 99-119

Week 9 Quiz Due

Week 11: Reconstruction in the West, Part 2

Tuesday, November 4: Allotment

- Katherine Ellinghaus, *Blood Will Tell: Native Americans and Assimilation Policy* (University of Nebraska Press, 2017): 1-44
- [Citizen Potawatomi Nation, Allotment Map](#)

Thursday, November 6: From the Plains to the Pacific

- [Leech Lake Reservation Business Committee, Battle of Sugar Point Oral History Project \(1987\)](#)
- Michael L. Tate, "Pershing's Pets: Apache Scouts in the Mexican Punitive Expedition of 1916" *New Mexico Historical Review* 66/1 (1991): 49-71
- Captain Bruno Casala to the Americans (1900)

Week 10 Quiz Due

Week 12: The End of Reconstruction in the South

Tuesday, November 11: White Violence and Black Rights

- [David Blight \(Yale Courses\), "The 'End' of Reconstruction" \(2008\)](#)
- [Justin A. Nystrom, "Battle of Liberty Place" 64 Parishes \(2023\)](#)
- [Virginia Theerman, "Waving the Bloody Shirt:" Reconstruction Era Violence and Political Identity" The Charleston Museum, \(2024\)](#)

Thursday, November 13: The Compromise of 1877

- [Sheila Blackford, "Disputed Election of 1876"](#)
- [Michael F. Holt, "By One Vote: The Disputed Presidential Election of 1876" \(2011\)](#)
- [Digital History, "The Significance of Reconstruction"](#)

Week 11 Quiz Due

Week 13: Black Reconstruction in the West

Tuesday, November 18: Black Soldiers West

- [Marfa Public Radio, "150 Years Later, History of the Buffalo Soldiers Remains Obscure for Many" \(2016\)](#)
- [National Museum of African American History and Culture, "Buffalo Soldiers: Legend and Legacy"](#)
[Bruce J. Dinges, "Henry Ossian Flipper: The First Black Graduate of West Point" *Handbook of Texas* \(1976\)](#)
- [Marfa Public Radio, "Lines in the Land: Descendants of the Buffalo Soldiers in Fort Davis" \(2015\)](#)

Thursday, November 20: Exodusters and Settlers

- [Larry O'Dell, "Boley" *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture* \(2020\)](#)
- Booker T. Washington, "Boley, A Negro Town in the West" *Outlook*, January 4, 1908
- [Detroit Institute of Arts, "Films of Reverend Solomon Sir Jones" \(2021\)](#)
- [PBS, *Black Frontier Towns* - "Boley, OK" \(2023\)](#)

Week 12 Quiz Due

Week 14: Reconstruction and Chinese Exclusion

November 25: Reconstruction and Chinese Exclusion

- Stacy Smith, *Freedom's Frontier: California and the Struggle over Unfree Labor, Emancipation, and Reconstruction* (2013): 206-230

November 27: No Class

Week 15: Memory

Tuesday, December 2: The Civil War in American Memory

- [Texas A&M University, "Agie Culture: Pennies on Sully"](#)
- [Raga Justin, "Targeting a statue at A&M and a school song at UT, Texas college students are pushing for a reckoning on race" *Texas Tribune*, June 16, 2020](#)
- [Kate McGee, "Texas A&M officials say moving Sul Ross statue is no longer an option, but students say the university never made that clear" *Texas Tribune*, January 27, 2021](#)
- [Beck Andrew Salgado, "'Alpine State University' movement starts, as students seek to change Sul Ross State University name" *Big Bend Sentinel*, September 9, 2020](#)

- ["Statement by Pete Gallego, President of Sul Ross State University" *Eagle Pass Business Journal*, September 14, 2020](#)

Week 13 Quiz Due

Thursday, December 4: Reconstruction in American Memory

- [National Museum of African American History and Culture, "What is Juneteenth?"](#)
- [Tom Brook, "The Birth of a Nation: The most racist movie ever made?" BBC \(2015\)](#)
- [The Associated Press, "History of the Confederate Flag in South Carolina \(2015\)](#)
- ["Contentious Jaybird Monument in Process of Being Relocated" *Fort Bend Star* \(2020\)](#)

Week 15 Quiz Due December 11

I RESERVE THE RIGHT TO AMEND THESE POLICIES AND THE SCHEDULE AT
MY DISCRETION AND WILL GIVE ADEQUATE NOTICE OF ANY CHANGE