

Civil War & Reconstruction (HIST 3334)

Spring Semester, 2026

Tuesday / Thursday 11:00-12:15

Classroom: MADLA 209

Instructor: Dr. William Kiser

Office: Central Academic Building, Room 313F

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OFFICE HOURS:

Tuesday & Thursday, 9:30-10:30 AM or by Appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course will examine the history of the Civil War Era, from 1845 to 1877. Important themes include: Manifest Destiny, slavery and capitalism, sectionalism, secession, abolition, diplomacy, Civil War battles, military strategy, and Reconstruction.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Develop critical thinking skills through classroom discussion, reading and writing assignments, and essay exams.
2. Practice and improve analytical writing skills.
3. Understand the history of the Civil War Era within the context of political, social, and cultural change over time.
4. Draw connections between Civil War era events and modern issues involving memorialization/commemoration of the war.

REQUIRED COURSE READINGS:

Elisha Hunt Rhodes, *All for the Union: The Civil War Diary and Letters of Elisha Hunt Rhodes* (any edition)

Tony Horwitz, *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War* (any edition)

Additional article-length readings will be posted on Blackboard

COURSE TEXTBOOK:

James McPherson and James Hogue, *Ordeal by Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction* (Fourth Edition).

E-Book: <https://create.mheducation.com/shop/#/catalog/details/?isbn=9781307353822>

MIDTERM AND FINAL EXAMS

There will be two tests, a midterm exam and a final exam. The exams are given in essay format to demonstrate your understanding of historical topics and to provide your own interpretations of events and themes. It is more important that you be able to demonstrate critical thinking skills by positing and defending an historical argument, rather than memorize names and dates. You must bring a blank blue book to the exam. The questions will be based on lecture, class discussions, and readings.

BOOK EXAMS

You will be required to read two books (Rhodes and Horwitz, listed above) and take an essay exam on each one. These exams will be taken in class. Students are allowed to use handwritten notes (but not computer-generated notes) and a hard copy of the book (but not an e-book) during the exam. I will provide a prompt for each of these essay exams, so you will be using the readings to respond to a specific historical question.

ARTICLE QUIZZES

In the weekly schedule below, there are several journal articles assigned. There will be an in-class quiz over each of these articles.

CLASSROOM PARTICIPATION

Students must participate and engage in classroom discussion over the readings, as well as the lectures. As this is an upper-division course, both attendance AND participation are expected and this counts as 10% of the final course grade.

GRADING SCALE

Midterm Exam: 175 points

Final Exam: 175 points

Book Exams: 400 points (2 essay exams worth 200 points each)

Article Quizzes: 150 points (3 quizzes worth 50 points each)

Classroom Participation & Attendance: 100 points

TOTAL POINTS: 1000

A= 1000-900; B = 899-800; C =799-700; D = 699-600; F = 599 and below.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Attendance: Class attendance is mandatory and is part of your final grade. You will not be able to succeed in this course if you habitually miss class. Please be punctual – do not arrive late, and do not leave early. If you know that you will be late or must leave early, please inform me ahead of time. If you arrive more than 10 minutes late to class, you will be marked absent for that entire period.

Extra Credit: I do not offer extra credit.

Blackboard: This course has a Blackboard site, which is where your grades will be posted. Course announcements and readings will be posted to Blackboard as well.

Make-Up Exams: Make-up exams are only allowed for emergencies such as debilitating illness, a death in the immediate family, and religious or school functions. In any case, you must provide documentation of your absence to be allowed a make-up exam.

Classroom Etiquette: Please be respectful in the classroom. Do not get up and leave early, turn your cell phone to silent mode, and do not hold personal conversations during lecture or discussion. Laptops may only be used to take notes.

Communication: E-mail me at any time regarding questions or concerns that you might have. I do my best to respond to email within one day. You may also schedule an appointment to speak with me in my office outside of regular office hours. All correspondence between professors and students must occur via University email accounts. You must have a Jaguar email account ready and working. If it is not working, contact the help desk at sahelp@tamusa.edu or 210-784-4357.

Statement on Artificial Intelligence: All student work must be generated by the students themselves. Students should not have another person/entity do the writing or any other portion of an assignment for them. This includes hiring a person or a company to write assignments, as well as using artificial intelligence tools including but not limited to ChatGPT, OpenAI, and Grammarly. Use of AI is strictly prohibited in this class, without exception.

Support Services & Disclosures

Academic Accommodations for Individuals with Disabilities: Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to providing all students with reasonable access to learning opportunities and accommodations in accordance with The Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, Disability Support Services is located in the Central Academic Building, Suite 210. You can also contact us via phone at (210) 784-1335, visit us <https://www.tamusa.edu/Disability-Support-Services/index.html> or email us at dss@tamusa.edu. Disabilities may include, but are not limited to, attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their disability-related needs with Disability Support Services as soon as possible.

Academic Learning Center: The Academic Learning Center provides free course-based tutoring to all currently enrolled students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. Students wishing to work with a tutor can make appointments through the Brainfuse online tutoring platform. Brainfuse can be accessed in the Tools section of Blackboard. You can contact the Academic Learning Center by emailing tutoring@tamusa.edu, calling (210) 784-1307, or visiting the Central Academic Building, room 202.

Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center: The Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center supports graduate and undergraduate students in all three colleges as well as faculty and staff. Tutors work with students to develop reading skills, prepare oral presentations, and plan, draft, and revise their written assignments. Our language tutors support students enrolled in Spanish courses and students composing in Spanish for any assignment. Our digital studio tutors support students working on digital projects such as eportfolios, class presentations, or other digital multimedia projects. Students can schedule appointments through JagWire under the Student Services tab. Click on “Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center” to make your appointment. The Center offers face-to-face, synchronous online, and asynchronous digital appointments. More information about what services we offer, how to make an appointment, and how to access your appointment can be found on our website at <https://www.tamusa.edu/academics>.

Counseling/Mental Health Resources: As a college student, there may be times when personal stressors interfere with your academic performance and negatively impact your daily functioning. If you are experiencing emotional difficulties or mental health concerns, support is available to you through the Student Counseling Center (SCC). To schedule an appointment, call 210-784-1331 or visit Madla 120. All mental health services provided by the SCC are free and confidential (as the law allows). The Student Counseling Center provides brief individual and group therapy, crisis intervention, consultation, case management, and prevention services. For more information on SCC services visit <http://tamusa.edu/studentcounseling>. Crisis support is available 24/7 by calling the SCC at 210-784-1331. Additionally, the TELUS Student Support App provides a variety of mental health resources to including support for in the moment distress, an anonymous peer-to-peer support network, mental health screenings, podcasts, and articles to improve your mental wellbeing.

Financial Aid and Verification of Attendance: According to the following federal regulation, 34 CFR 668.21: U.S. Department of Education (DoE) Title IV regulation, a student can only receive Title IV funds based on Title IV eligibility criteria which include class attendance. If Title IV funds are disbursed to ineligible students (including students who fail to begin attendance), the institution must return these funds to the U.S. DoE within 30 days of becoming aware that the student will not or has not begun attendance. Faculty will provide the Office of Financial Aid with an electronic notification if a student has not attended by the published Census Date (the first week of class). Any student receiving federal financial aid who does not attend prior to the published Census Date (the first week of class) will have their aid terminated and returned to the DoE. Please note that any student who stops attending at any time during the semester may also need to return a portion of their federal aid.

The Six-Drop Rule: Students are subject to the requirements of Senate Bill (SB) 1231 passed by the Texas Legislature in 2007. SB 1231 limits students to a maximum of six (6) non-punitive course drops (i.e., courses a student chooses to drop) during their undergraduate careers. A non-punitive drop does not affect the student's GPA. However, course drops that exceed the maximum allowed by SB 1231 will be treated as "F" grades and will impact the student's GPA.

Academic Misconduct: Students are expected to exhibit a high level of honesty and integrity in their pursuit of higher education. Students engaging in an act that violates the standards of academic integrity will find themselves facing academic and/or disciplinary sanctions. Academic misconduct is any act, or attempt, which gives an unfair advantage to the student. Additionally, any behavior specifically prohibited by a faculty member in the course syllabus or class discussion may be considered as academic misconduct. For more information on academic misconduct policies and procedures please review the

[Student Code of Conduct.](#)

University policy prescribes serious consequences for acts of academic misconduct including, but not limited to, a grade of 'F' on the particular paper or assignment or a failing grade in the course. Also, a referral may be issued to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities where the sanctions can vary up to possible expulsion from the University. Considering the potential consequences of academic misconduct, it is obviously in students' best interests to avoid even the appearance of such behavior. If you are ever unclear whether a specific act might constitute academic misconduct, please contact your instructor for an assessment of the situation. All student term papers and other written assignments are subject to analysis by anti-plagiarism software.

The complete academic calendar is available online:

<https://www.tamusa.edu/academics/academic-calendar/current-year/spring-2026.html>

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

IMPORTANT DATES:

February 17: Article Quiz 1 (Kiser)

February 26: Book Exam 1 (Rhodes)

March 19: Midterm Exam

March 24: Article Quiz 2 (Montejano)

April 21: Article Quiz 3 (Hahn)

April 30: Book Exam 2 (Horwitz)

Final Exam: May 12 at 10:00 AM

Week 1: January 20, January 22

Tuesday: Course Introduction & Syllabus

Thursday: American Slavery

Week 2: January 27, January 29

Tuesday: American Slavery

Thursday: The Antebellum South

READINGS: Textbook Chapters 1-2

Week 3: February 3, February 5

Tuesday: The Abolition Movement

Thursday: Westward Expansion (Texas & the Mexican-American War)

READINGS: Textbook Chapters 3-4

Week 4: February 10, February 12

Tuesday: Westward Expansion (California, New Mexico, Compromise of 1850)

Thursday: Filibustering in Latin America

READINGS: Textbook Chapter 5

Week 5: February 17, February 19

Tuesday: Alternative Slavery in the American Southwest; Article Quiz (Kiser)

Thursday: Bleeding Kansas & the Republican Party

READINGS: Textbook Chapter 6; Kiser Article (Blackboard)

Week 6: February 24, February 26

Tuesday: Dred Scott & the Political Crisis of the 1850s

Thursday: First Book Exam (Rhodes)

READINGS: Textbook Chapter 7

Week 7: March 3, March 5

Tuesday: Abraham Lincoln, the 1860 Election, The Secession Crisis

Thursday: Civil War Military Strategies

READINGS: Textbook Chapters 8-9

Week 8: March 10, March 12 – SPRING BREAK

Tuesday: No Class

Thursday: No Class

Week 9: March 17, March 19

Tuesday: Midterm Exam Review

Thursday: Midterm Exam

Week 10: March 24, March 26

Tuesday: Civil War Diplomacy; Civil War in Texas; Article Quiz (Montejano)

Thursday: The Civil War in the Far Southwest

READINGS: Textbook Chapters 11-12; Montejano Article (Blackboard)

Week 11: March 31, April 2

Tuesday: The Civil War in the East, 1861-63; Antietam and Emancipation

Thursday: Gettysburg & Vicksburg The Civil War in the East, 1864-65

READINGS: Textbook Chapters 14-15, 17, 19

Week 12: April 7, April 9

Tuesday: The End of the Confederacy

Thursday: Origins of Reconstruction, 1863-65

READINGS: Textbook Chapters 23, 25

Week 13: April 14, April 16

Tuesday: Reconstruction through 1877

Thursday: Reconstruction through 1877

READINGS: Textbook Chapters 26-27

Week 14: April 21, April 23

Tuesday: Greater Reconstruction in the American West; Article Quiz (Hahn)

Thursday: Greater Reconstruction in the Western Hemisphere

READINGS: Textbook Chapters 28-31; Hahn Article (Blackboard)

Week 15: April 28, April 30

Tuesday: Commemorating the Civil War; Discuss Horwitz Book

Thursday: Second Book Exam (Horwitz)

READINGS: Horwitz Book

Week 16: May 5, May 7

Tuesday: No Class

Thursday: No Class

Final Exam: Tuesday, May 12 from 10:00-11:50 AM

