

# Hist1016{25} / AS1025{25}

## The Civil War in Film

Prof. Patrick Rael, Bowdoin College, Spring 2013

Meets: (Class) TuTh 11:30-1:00, Mass Hall McKean Study 105  
(Film lab) TuTh 6:30-9:25, Mass Hall McKean Study 105  
Office hours: TuTh 2-4, by apt.

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This course examines the history of the Civil War as presented in feature films. Of course, the Civil War has long captured the American imagination. In the last century, films have become perhaps the most important culture expression of popular historical consciousness. We will thus explore the history of the Civil War by examining film as a medium for interpreting that conflict. What was the Civil War about, and what were its consequences? How have feature films offered understandings of this central conflict in American history? How do films more generally handle historical subjects, and what does this say about their role in formulating the popular historical consciousness? How have films as history changed over time? What, in short, is the relationship between film as a pop-cultural expression and the American past? In essence, then, we are examining the history of historical interpretations — perhaps more than we are actually examining the history of the war itself.

**Level:** This course is a first-year seminar, intended to do several things: introduce students to their subject areas, introduce students to college-level paper-writing, practice introductory skills in their discipline (in this case, history), and socialize students to the seminar experience. This last objective is important. Seminars at any level require the intensive participation of students. Do not expect your professor to provide highly-structured lectures; it is up to the students to carry this class forward. This course will also challenge you to practice presenting your ideas, in both written and oral forms. We will practice various forms of paper writing, and end the class with a run-through of the entire process of writing a research paper. The course will require considerable work outside of class. I expect students to spend at least six hours per week outside of class reading, reviewing class notes, and preparing course assignments. Finally, we will of course watch films during our weekly film lab.

**Course website:** The material for this course may be found online through the Blackboard system. You will find a copy of this syllabus, as well as all the reading and paper assignments. You may easily refer to the website for the most recent course assignments and requirements. You will also find my website <<http://academic.bowdoin.edu/faculty/P/prael/>> useful. It links to guides on writing, plagiarism, and other matters crucial to your success in history courses.

**Books:** Please purchase these required books from the campus book store or online.

Chadwick, Bruce. *The Reel Civil War*. New York: Vintage, 2002.

Cassidy, John M. *Civil War Cinema: A Pictorial History of Hollywood and the War Between the States*. Missoula, Mont.: Pictorial Histories Publishing Company, 1986.

Shaara, Michael. *The Killer Angels*. New York: Ballantine Books, 2010.

Rampolla, Mary Lynn. *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*. 3rd edition. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 2001. A short, concise, and complete guide for history undergraduates.

Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 6th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. The ultimate student guide to citations and paper writing.

Hacker, Diana. *Rules for Writers: A Brief Handbook*. 4th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999. A handy reference for tackling writing problems.

### ASSIGNMENTS

**Writing workshops** (5 @ 4 pts each = 20%): A series of short assignments designed to help improve your writing.

**Film journals** (10 @ 2 pts each = 20%) : I will ask you to keep a journal, with one entry for each film we watch. The journal is an opportunity to practice analyzing historical movies. Your writing can be very informal, but it should rely on the analytical questions we establish early in the class. For each film, you will earn 2 points (solid post), 1 point (shaky post), or 0 points (no or incompetent post) for each, for a maximum of 20 points.

**Film analysis** (10%): A 4-6-page piece of formal writing analyzing a historical film about the Civil War of your choice (not on the syllabus). You will submit a first draft (10%) and a final draft (5%).

**Class participation and attendance** (10%): Thoughtful participation and consistent attendance are particularly crucial in a seminar class such as this.

**Research paper** (40% total): A formal research paper assignment designed to familiarize you with the research process. Your paper may not be about a single film, but must engage several (at least three) films, all of which speak to a particular theme, problem, or concern. This will be broken down into steps, as below:

Annotated bibliography	5%
Road map	5%
First draft	10%
Peer evaluation	5%
Self evaluation	5%
Final paper	10%

## COURSE CONTRACT

**Films and film lab:** Students are responsible for having thoughtfully viewed assigned films by the class session after the film is assigned. I have scheduled a film lab each week to ensure that you will have time to view the films. But you are welcome to view the film in another manner. The library should have copies of films on reserve, and you may also obtain these films in the typical ways: through Netflix, Bart'n'Greg's, Videoport, etc. In any case, *you are responsible* for making sure you've viewed the film.

**Attendance:** No absences are "excused" -- you are responsible for all material covered during missed class days. Those who may miss class to attend extra-curricular events are requested to inform me, as a courtesy, of planned absences. If special considerations (such as illness) prevent you from fulfilling course obligations, please provide me with documentation so we may consider an exception. Remember that it is your responsibility to initiate any discussion about missed work. Because it is disruptive to the entire class, please do not excuse yourself in the middle of a class session, unless you are sick or have an emergency. I do not mind the use of laptops in the class for taking notes, but the use of laptops for personal use during class is disruptive and prohibited. Same goes for cell phones: please keep them turned off and out of sight.

**Late or missed assignments:** Unless stated otherwise, assignments are due at the beginning of class; assignments handed in later in the day (during or after class) will be considered one day late. I will accept late assignments with no penalty only for documented health or other emergencies. In general, assignments which receive letter grades will be marked down one-third of a grade (e.g., from B+ to B), for each day late. A final but crucial point: *All work must be completed in order to pass this course.*

**A note on academic honesty:** Each author owns his or her own ideas, words, and research. You *must* give appropriate credit — generally in the form of quotations and proper footnotes — when using the work of another scholar. I expect you to be familiar both with Bowdoin's honor code, and with the guidelines for proper citation and attribution of sources provided for this course. If you have any questions, ask rather than take risks. *Plagiarism, whether intentional or not, is a serious violation of academic standards and Bowdoin's honor code.* I will enforce violations of the honor code by bringing immediate, uncontested action before the Judicial Board. Minimum penalties for plagiarism will be to fail the course.

**Offensive materials disclaimer:** Students occasionally find some course materials offensive. Views expressed in the material we will cover do not reflect my own personal opinions. The academic enterprise invites vibrant class discussion, which balances critical thinking with mutual respect. Students are expected to take responsibility for their experience in this course by examining their own reactions to material they consider offensive. At all times, our priority will be critical engagement with scholarly material. By continuing with this course, you are agreeing to be held academically accountable for all required materials in the syllabus, regardless of your own personal reactions to it. Students who are unwilling either to hear or think critically about such material are encouraged to drop this course at their discretion.

**Disabilities:** Students who have documented learning disabilities with the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs may be entitled to various accommodations. It is your responsibility to initiate with me any conversation over accommodations.

## SCHEDULE OF CLASS MEETINGS

- This is a tentative schedule, liable to change to suit class needs. The online syllabus always offers the most recent version of the syllabus.
- All readings should be completed before class.
- We will not discuss each reading with the same degree of rigor. I will do my best to let you know when to make special efforts with your reading. You are, however, responsible for all the assigned material, whether or not we discuss it in class.
- Readings listed with ® should be available through the "course readings" section of the Blackboard website.

<p><b>9/10     <u>The Civil War and Reconstruction: An Overview</u></b>  Read: Edward Ayers, "Worrying About the Civil War," in <i>What Caused The Civil War?: Reflections on the South and Southern History</i> (New York: Norton, 1993), ch. 5 (reserve); David Blight, "The Civil War in History and Memory," <i>Chronicle of Higher Education</i> (July 12, 2002), B7 (reserve).  Recommended: Check out this podcast of Prof. Gary Gallagher's lecture, "The Civil War in American Memory."</p>	<p><b>9/12     <u>Analyzing historical films</u></b>  Read: Mark C. Carnes, "Hollywood History," <i>American Heritage</i> 46, no. 5 (September 1995) &lt;<a href="http://www.americanheritage.com">http://www.americanheritage.com</a>&gt;; Robert Brent Toplin, "Cinematic History: An Anatomy of the Genre," <i>Cineaste</i> 29, no.2 (March 2004): 34-39 (reserve).  First film analysis assignment given.</p>
<p><b>9/17     <u>The Epic Era: Extermination</u></b>  Read: Assigned primary sources   <p style="text-align: right;">Film screening: "The Birth of a Nation"</p> </p>	<p><b>9/19     <u>The Birth of a Nation</u></b>  Read: Bruce Chadwick, <i>The Reel Civil War: Mythmaking in American Film</i> (New York: Knopf, 2001), ch. 8; Eric Niderost, "The Birth of a Nation," <i>American History</i> 40, no. 4 (October 2005), &lt;pdf&gt;.  In-class film: "Ethnic Notions"</p>
<p><b>9/24     <u>The Epic Era: Sentimentalism</u></b>  Read: Chadwick, <i>Reel Civil War</i>, ch. 10; Michael P. Bibler, "Always the Tragic Jezebel: New Orleans, Katrina, and the Layered Discourse of a Doomed Southern City," <i>Southern Cultures</i> 14, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 6-27 (Project Muse).   <p style="text-align: right;">Film screening: "Jezebel"</p> </p>	<p><b>9/26     <u>Writing day</u></b>  Read: Patrick Rael, "What Happened and Why? Helping Students Read and Write Like Historians," <i>History Teacher</i> 39, no. 1 (November 2005), 23-32.  Paper writing instruction</p>
<p><b>10/1     <u>Sentimentalism, Antebellum style</u></b>  Read: Selections from <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i>   <p style="text-align: right;">Film screening: "Uncle Tom's Cabin"</p> </p>	<p><b>10/3     <u>Uncle Tom's Cabin</u></b>  Read: Chadwick, <i>Reel Civil War</i>, ch. 5; Kendra Hamilton, "The Strange Career of Uncle Tom," <i>Black Issues in Higher Education</i> 19, no. 8 (June 2002) &lt;Academic Search Premier&gt;</p>
<p><b>10/8     <u>The Sectional Crisis: Madmen</u></b>  Read: Sean Wilentz, "Homegrown Terrorist," <i>New Republic</i> (October 24, 2005), 23-30 &lt;pdf&gt;; Peggy A. Russo, "John Brown Goes to Hollywood: Santa Fe Trail and Seven Angry Men," in <i>Terrible Swift Sword: The Legacy of John Brown</i>, Peggy A. Russo and Paul Finkelman, eds. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), 190-212 &lt;pdf&gt;.   <p style="text-align: right;">Film screening: "Santa Fe Trail"</p> </p>	<p><b>10/10     <u>Santa Fe Trail</u></b>  In-class film: <i>John Brown's Holy War</i>  Film analysis due</p>
<p><b>10/15     <u>No class for fall break</u></b></p>	<p><b>10/17     <u>Writing day</u></b></p>
<p><b>10/22     <u>The Civil War: Revisions</u></b>  Read: James M. McPherson, "The Glory Story," in <i>Drawn with the Sword: Reflections on the American Civil War</i> (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), ch. 7; Ira Berlin, "Glory Be," <i>Radical History Review</i> 53 (Spring 1992), 141-48.(Reserve)   <p style="text-align: right;">Film screening: "Glory"</p> </p>	<p><b>10/24     <u>Glory</u></b>  Read: Chadwick, <i>Reel Civil War</i>, ch. 14; Thomas Cripps, "Frederick Douglass: The Absent Presence in 'Glory,'" <i>Massachusetts Review</i> 36, no. 1 (Spring 1995). &lt;Academic Search Premier&gt;</p>

<p><b>10/29    <u>The Civil War: Resurrections</u></b>  Read: Thomas Desjardin, "America's Flawed Valhalla," <i>Military History</i> 21, no. 3 (August 2004) &lt;Academic Search Premier&gt;; Thomas A. Desjardin, "Constructing the Consummate Gettysburge Hero," in <i>These Honored Dead: How the Story of Gettysburg Shaped American Memory</i> (Cambridge, Mass.: Da Capo Press, 2004), 127-52. (Reserve); selections from Michael Shaara, <i>The Killer Angels</i> (1974).</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Film screening: "Gettysburg"</p>	<p><b>10/31    <u>Gettysburg</u></b>  Read: Phillip Beidler, "Ted Turner et al. at Gettysburg; or, Re-Enactors in the Attic," <i>Virginia Quarterly Review</i> 75, no. 3 (Summer99) &lt;pdf&gt;; Patrick Rael, "Gods and Generals is Good Hollywood — Don't Go See It," <i>History News Network</i> (February 24, 2003).  <a href="http://hnn.us/articles/1280.html">http://hnn.us/articles/1280.html</a></p>
<p><b>11/5      <u>The Civil War: The North</u></b>  Read: Elliott J. Gorn, "'Good-Bye Boys, I Die a True American': Homicide, Nativism, and Working-Class Culture in Antebellum New York City," <i>Journal of American History</i> 74, no. 2 (September 1987), 388-410. (Jstor); Leslie M. Harris, "The New York City Draft Riots of 1863," excerpt from <i>In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626-1863</i> (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), &lt;online&gt;.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Film screening: "Gangs of New York"</p>	<p><b>11/7      <u>Gangs of New York</u></b>  Read: Timothy J. Gilfoyle, "Scorsese's Gangs of New York: Why Myth Matters," <i>Journal of Urban History</i> 29, no. 5 (July 2003), 620-27 &lt;pdf&gt;; Bryan D. Palmer, "The Hands That Built America: A Class-Politics Appreciation of Martin Scorsese's The Gangs of New York," <i>Historical Materialism</i> 11, no. 4 (2003), 317-45 &lt;pdf&gt;.</p>
<p><b>11/12    <u>The Civil War: Postrevisionism</u></b>  Read: Armstead L. Robinson, "In the Shadow of Old John Brown: Insurrection Anxiety and Confederate Mobilization, 1861-1863," <i>Journal of Negro History</i> 65, no. 4 (Autumn 1980), 279-97. (Jstor)</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Film screening: "Cold Mountain"</p>	<p><b>11/14    <u>Cold Mountain</u></b>  Read: Kevin Grauke, "Vietnam, Survivalism, and the Civil War: The use of History in Michael Shaara's <i>The Killer Angels</i> and Charles Frazier's <i>Cold Mountain</i>," <i>War, Literature &amp; the Arts: An International Journal of the Humanities</i> 14, no. (2002) &lt;pdf&gt;; Ed Piacentino, "Searching for Home: Cross-Racial Bonding in Charles Frazier's <i>Cold Mountain</i>," <i>Mississippi Quarterly</i> 55, no. 1 (Winter 2001-2002) &lt;pdf&gt;.</p>
<p><b>11/19    <u>Emancipation</u></b>  Patrick Rael, <i>Eighty-Eight Years: The Long Death of Slavery in the United States, 1777-1865</i>, ch. 7.  <p style="text-align: right;">Film screening: "Lincoln"</p> </p>	<p><b>11/21    <u>Lincoln</u></b>  Patrick Rael, "Lincoln's Unfinished Work"; Patrick Rael, "All About Lincoln"; Patrick Rael, "Tarantino vs. Spielberg: Two Films About Slavery."</p>
<p><b>11/26    <u>Writing day</u></b>  <p style="text-align: right;">Film screening: "Lincoln"</p> </p>	<p><b>11/28    <u>No class; Thanksgiving</u></b></p>
<p><b>12/3     <u>Reconstruction</u></b>  Patrick Rael, <i>Eighty-Eight Years: The Long Death of Slavery in the United States, 1777-1865</i>, ch. 8.  <p style="text-align: right;">Film screening: "Sommersby"</p> </p>	<p><b>12/5     <u>Sommersby</u></b>  Read: Robert J. Rabel, "Impersonation and Identity: Sommersby, The Return of Martin Guerre, and the Odyssey," <i>International Journal of the Classical Tradition</i> 9, no. 3 (Winter 2003), 391-406 &lt;pdf&gt;; Nancy Bishop Dessommes, "Hollywood in Hoods: The Portrayal of the Ku Klux Klan in Popular Film," <i>Journal of Popular Culture</i> 32, no. 4 (Spring 1999), 13-22 &lt;Academic Search Premier&gt;.</p>
<p><b>12/10    <u>Wrap-up</u></b></p>	<p><b>12/17    <u>Final paper due</u></b>  12:00 noon</p>