HISTORY 5320.001
Research Methods: The American Civil War

Instructor: Dr. Robert Wooster
Office: FC 269 (825-2402)
E-mail: robert.wooster@tamucc.edu

Office Hours: MWF 11-11:45
M 1-3
W 5:30-6:45
And by appointment

Course Description
This is a graduate research seminar centered thematically on the American Civil War period, which is defined broadly as the period from 1848-1877 (from the end of the war against Mexico through congressional reconstruction). Each student will write a 30 page paper, based largely on primary source materials and including text, footnotes or endnotes, and bibliography, on a topic related to that period. All papers must declare a thesis, place the thesis in the context of historical literature, ground that argument in primary source evidence, and follow the discipline’s rules for citation, bibliography, and format. I must approve all paper topics.

Student Learning Outcomes
By selecting a topic, reviewing previous historical scholarship, conducting independent research, writing a research paper, participating in the process of scholarly review, and submitting a final research paper, students who successfully complete this course will:

- Develop skills in historical research by identifying relevant primary and secondary sources and gathering and processing evidence drawn from those sources;
- Demonstrate advanced writing skills by making original, well-organized arguments grounded in primary sources and connected to the historical literature; and
- Demonstrate proficiency in methods of historical citation and matters of writing style.

Writing a research paper will be a new experience for some, and even the hardiest veterans of such efforts can sometimes find the process to be frustrating. As such, it is highly recommended that you meet frequently amongst yourselves and with me. Sometimes we all need to “vent” our frustrations about the problems we encounter in researching and writing a paper like this. It is vital that we keep lines of communication open. You should feel free to drop by my office at any time during my regularly scheduled office hours; if those aren’t convenient, contact me and we can set up an appointment.

You need to select a topic that you are interested in. You must also consider the strengths and weaknesses of our local libraries and repositories. A growing number of good sources are available electronically, but you must be able to have enough resources available locally to write a good paper. The claim that “my paper is late (or short, or poorly done, etc.) because I couldn’t find enough materials” will not be accepted as a legitimate excuse. In other words, you need to select a topic that is interesting, enlightening, and doable.
The most important thing about your paper is its content. You have to have something to say, and you must convince your reader that you have done enough research so as to merit serious consideration of your scholarship. However, considerable attention will also be given to matters of style. Even the most informative and exhaustively-researched work will be doomed to obscurity if you don’t speak and write effectively.

**Required Materials**


**Historical Writing**
This class follows the “History Area Style Guide: Upper-Division and Graduate Level Papers,” available at [http://cla.tamucc.edu/history/History_Area_Guide_Fall2009.pdf](http://cla.tamucc.edu/history/History_Area_Guide_Fall2009.pdf). Every written assignment you turn in for this class must conform to this style guide, so read it carefully; I will adhere to it strictly when evaluating your work. For any questions or issues not addressed in the style guide, refer to Turabian’s *Manual for Writers*. If you still have doubts, consult me.

**Useful Tools**
The best single volume history of the Civil War is James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). It’s not required, but if you don’t have a copy, I urge you to get one, as every serious student of the Civil War can profit from its contents. It would also be an excellent refresher if you feel uncomfortable with your background knowledge of America’s bloodiest conflict. The best scholarly journal on the subject is *Civil War History*, which is available at the Bell Library.

Never trust electronic files or computers. Periodically, you should print out everything you have stored, so that you have a relatively recent hard copy of everything you have regarding your paper. And make backup files, and then backups of your backup files, taking care to store the backup files in a different place.

**Using the Internet**
You must provide a completed Internet Services Permission Form for every internet-based source that you use in your research paper (one form per internet source). The ONLY internet-based sources that do not require a Permission Form are:

- H-Net: (http://www.h-net.org/)
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- All electronic databases provided through TAMU-CC’s Bell Library
- Sources listed on the handout, “Civil War on the Web”

Under no circumstances are you allowed to include, as either a primary or secondary source, the following:
- Print or electronic encyclopedias, especially Wikipedia.com
- Print or electronic dictionaries
- Print or electronic textbooks
- Any commercial website (usually indicated by domain names ending with “.com” “.co” or “.net”)

Rare exceptions can be made based on the subject of your research. For example, it may be necessary to use dictionaries to cite the ways that word meanings have changed over time. Or, your paper may examine how textbook authors change their representation of certain events over time. These exceptions will be made on an individual basis and in consultation with the instructor. In these cases, I will provide written confirmation that you are allowed to use these sources. This confirmation must accompany your final paper.

A Permission Form for all internet-based sources must be included with your complete draft and final paper. These forms do not count toward your final page total. Each unique internet-based source must have its own unique Permission Form. For each instance that an electronic source is used without a Permission Form or a disqualified source is included in your paper, your assignment will be lowered by a full letter grade.

Blackboard
Class handouts and official course materials will be accessible through Blackboard.

Course Grade
Class Participation (10 pts.) – Participation and involvement in class activities is an integral part of any graduate course. Regular attendance is required (see Course Policies and expectations, below), and students will also be assessed on the quality and substance of their participation in class activities throughout the semester.

Thinking About a Research Paper Assignments (10 pts.) – Due September 9 and 16; see also handouts. Students will complete two assignments designed to help them understand important elements in selecting a final research topic and to recognize key historiographical issues regarding the American Civil War. Discussion of their findings on both of these assignments will also be part of their class participation grade.

Preliminary bibliography/informal description of topic (5 pts.) – Due September 23; see also handout. This must include at least 30 sources that deal with your approved paper topic. You
must have at least 15 primary and 15 secondary sources on your list. At least 15 secondary sources must be considered scholarly, and at least 7 must be from scholarly academic journals. You must divide all of the materials in your bibliographies into 2 categories – primary and secondary.

Attached to this preliminary bibliography should be a one page informal description of your topic that speculates about the issues you plan to discuss, questions you hope to answer, and problems you foresee. This exercise is designed to encourage you to get started writing about your project.

**Review of the Literature/Historiographical Survey** (5 pts.) – October 14; see also handout. This should be an essay (four pages minimum), in which you survey what other historians have said about your topic and describe the contributions to this debate that you hope to make. It should be written in clear prose style. Although some of the particular questions and issues you deal with will probably change, you should be able to incorporate most of this into your final paper.

“I’m starting to write my paper because the professor said I had to assignment” (5 pts.) – Due October 28; see also handout. Seven pages of typewritten, double spaced text, with appropriate footnotes or endnotes. I have two goals in making this a requirement. First, it gives me an opportunity to see an early sample of your writing. I can often make suggestions at this point that will be helpful to you. Second, it forces you to get started writing your paper early. You will be graded on the basis of having written at least seven pages of text (not including historiographical materials that you turned in earlier). This doesn’t necessarily have to be the beginning of your paper; pick a section that you feel comfortable with and go to it!

**Complete Draft** (15 pts.) - Three copies due November 11; see also handout. Grades for these drafts will be based upon the completeness of the product. A complete draft must include at least thirty typed, double spaced pages of text, footnotes or endnotes, and bibliography, using 12 point font. A completed draft must include some form of introduction, historiography (literature review), thematic development, evidence, interpretations, footnotes or endnotes, conclusions, and a bibliography. To receive full credit, each of these components must be fully developed, not simply listed, implied, or suggested. You’ll receive plenty of suggestions for additional research, emphasis, and rewriting at that time, but grades for drafts will be based upon the completeness of the product rather than the style, neatness, or organization of the text and accompanying notes.

On November 11, extra copies of drafts will be exchanged among fellow students, who will then read these drafts and comment in written and verbal form on November 18. These comments are intended to provide additional input to students, and to provide each student with greater perspective on the entire research and writing process. They will follow a guide, based upon what manuscript readers for historical journals and university presses comment on, which I provide. I will follow the same format when I make my own reader’s report on each of your papers.

Once again, remember to bring three copies of your complete draft with you to class: one for
your student reader, one for me, and one for you to keep. Before I accept your paper, you must show me these copies. Never trust electronic files.

**Final Paper** (50 pts.) – Due December 9 by 7 pm in my office; see also handout. Final papers must include a cover sheet as well as a minimum of thirty pages of text, endnotes or footnotes, and a complete bibliography. All papers must be typed, double-spaced, and use 12 point font. The right margin of the text must not be justified.

Key factors in grading the final paper will include:
1) quality and depth of research, especially in primary source materials;
2) quality and depth of analysis and interpretation;
3) effectiveness of organization, style, and proofreading, in the text as well as the accompanying footnotes/endnotes and bibliography;
4) effectiveness in developing the historiographical context;
5) **effectiveness in following these directions**.

**Course Policies**

**Expectations** - I assume that each of you is a bona fide graduate student. This means that you read the weekly assignments on time and are ready to discuss the materials in a serious fashion in class. Graduate courses in history are considerably more difficult than undergraduate courses, and my expectations are set accordingly. It also means that you expect to attend class regularly, and have made home and work arrangements to allow this to happen. Students who have than one unexcused absence will have 10 points deducted from their class participation grade for every additional unexcused absence.

**Late work** - All work submitted after the listed deadlines will be penalized one letter grade for each day it is late.

**Plagiarism** - Plagiarism is a serious academic offense akin to stealing someone else's child. Students who commit plagiarism, whether intentional or not, will receive, at minimum, a grade of zero on the assignment. Extreme cases of plagiarism will result in automatic failure of the course, as well as a letter submitted to your permanent academic file. For a good scholarly discussion of plagiarism and means of avoiding it, see *A Manual for Writers, 78-82*. For university rules, regulations, and penalties, see “General Academic Policies and Regulations” at [http://catalog.tamucc.edu/content.php?catoid=9&navoid=279](http://catalog.tamucc.edu/content.php?catoid=9&navoid=279) (scroll to “Academic Integrity” and “Academic Honesty”).

In most cases, plagiarism results from a student’s not knowing what it is, or from a student having fallen behind in their work. So make sure and know what plagiarism is, and get started on your work early.
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BH 126/W 7-9:30

Tentative Schedule of Events: (subject to change)

Aug. 26   Introduction; Using the Bell Library (print materials)

Sept. 2   The Civil War on the Web; Bibliographies (bring Turabian and the History Style Guide to class!)

Sept. 9   Thinking about a Research Paper Assignment 1 Due: Wartime Domestic Developments and Social and Economic themes (Holt, Rable, Paludan, Roark, Faust, and Kolchin essays in Writing the Civil War)

Sept. 16  Thinking About a Research Paper Assignment 2 Due: Military and Political Themes (Gallagher, Thomas, Glatthaar, and Mitchell, Neely, and Benedict essays in Writing the Civil War)

Sept. 23  Preliminary bibliographies/informal research proposals due Writing as a Process; review Turabian, 41-48, 63-83 and bring it to class.

Sept. 30* Mandatory individual conferences


Oct. 14*  Review of the Literature/Historiographical survey due in my office by 7:00. Optional individual conferences

Oct. 21   Library Research – No class meeting, as I will be serving as a panel chair at the Western History Association conference.

Oct. 28*  Mandatory individual conferences; “I’m starting to write my paper because the professor said I had to assignment” due in my office.

Nov. 4    A Few Basic Rules of Writing. Bring Turabian to class.

Nov. 11   Complete drafts due; bring three copies of your draft to class.

Nov. 18   Complete drafts returned; Revising Style. Bring Turabian and the History Area Style Guide to class.

Nov. 25*  Optional individual conferences

Dec. 9*   Final papers due in my office by 7:00
*On these dates, there will be no formal class meeting. I will be in my office (or helping students in the library; if I’m doing that, I’ll post a sign to that effect on my door) until 9 o’clock for additional consultation on these evenings. It’s a good idea to use me as a resource during these times.

ACADEMIC ADVISING
The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit system. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood #203. For more information please call 361-825-3466.

DISABILITY SERVICES
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall, Room #116.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

GRADE APPEALS PROCESS
Students who feel that they have not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in this class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, clatamucc.edu/students/studentinfo.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s Office.