

HIST 202

Nineteenth Century American History

University of Oregon | Fall 2021 | 101 LLCS
Mondays and Wednesdays, 12:00-1:20

Instructor: Steven Beda
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Office: 307 McKenzie Hall

Office Hours: MW, 2:00-3:00 and by appointment

Graduate Employees:

Jack Evans

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Course Description

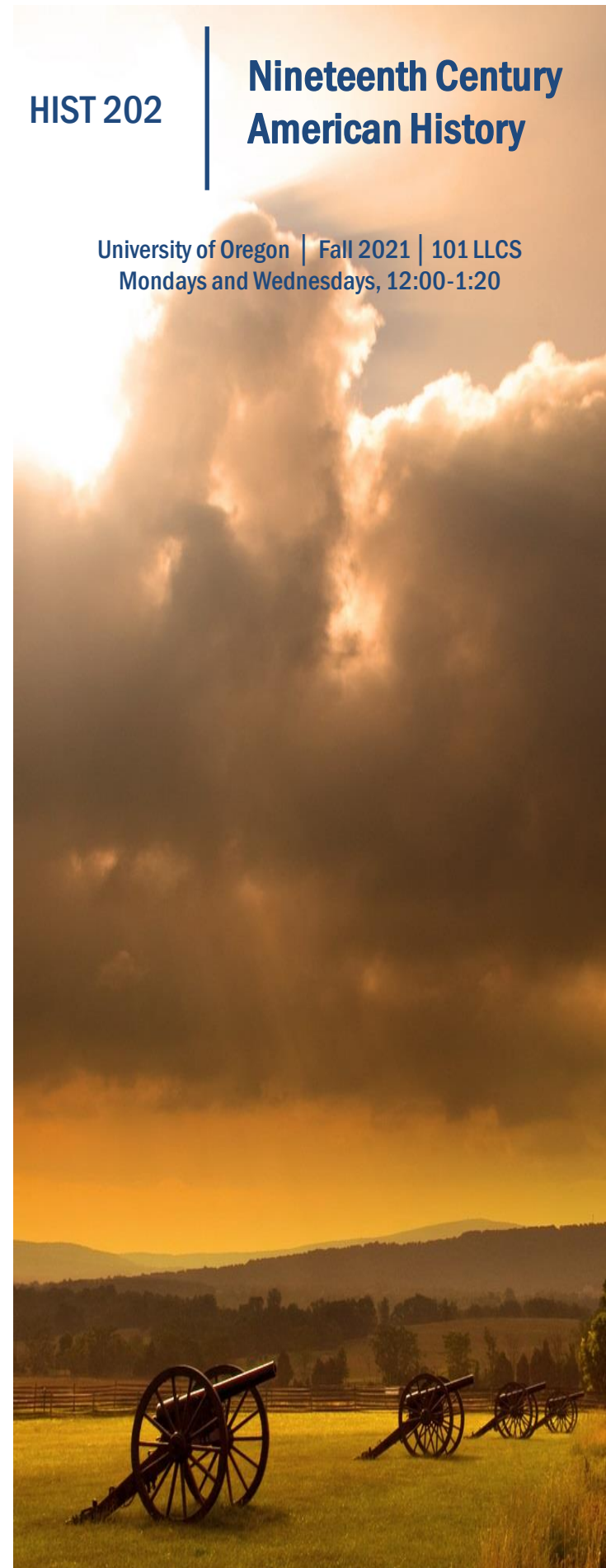
The nineteenth century is alive in twenty-first century America. We're still debating the Confederate flag, statues of Confederate generals, and the very meaning of the Civil War. Treaties that Native peoples signed with the U.S. government are still debated about in courtrooms. Some critics have charged that America has entered a new "Guided Age," the term Mark Twain famously coined to describe the graft and corruption at the center of the late-nineteenth century American economy. And, as recent events have made us all too painfully aware, our country is still reckoning with the histories of slavery, Native genocide, and Asian exclusion.

This course asks why—why, despite the fact that we're nearly a century removed from the major events of the nineteenth century, do those events and developments continue to shape American politics and society? In short, this class is concerned with how the past continues to shape our present, and how learning about American history helps us better understand America of today.

Over the course of ten weeks, we'll explore the major thematic moments in nineteenth century history. The course begins with histories of indigenous peoples, followed by histories of slavery and enslaved peoples. We'll then turn to the history of the Civil War and Reconstruction, and we'll end with the history of industrialization and urbanization in the late-nineteenth century.

While we'll certainly talk about important peoples and events, we'll also talk a good deal about historical memory and how events of the past get mythologized in the American imagination. Indeed, understanding the past and reckoning with it requires a thorough understanding of how history gets remembered and, more often than not, misremembered.

By the end of the quarter, students enrolled in this class will have a better understanding of nineteenth century America and, perhaps more importantly, a better understanding of contemporary America and the way it's been shaped by history.

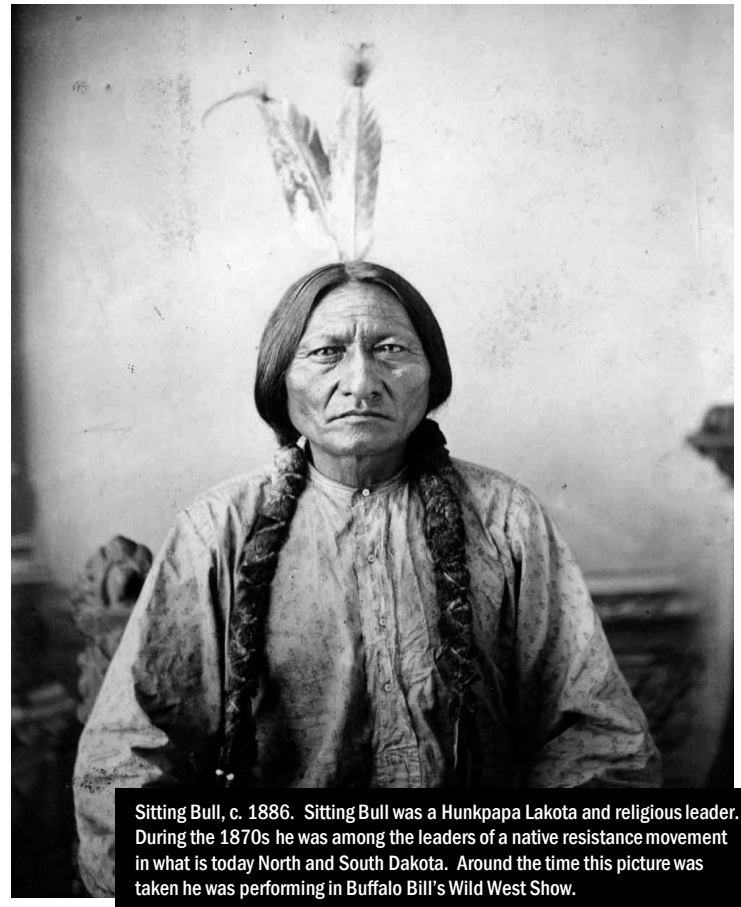


The Antietam Battlefield near Sharpsburg, Maryland, present day. The Battle of Antietam, fought on September 17, 1862, was the first major battle of the Civil War to take place on Union soil. More than 20,000 people were killed in the battle, making Antietam one of the bloodiest days of fighting in American history

Learning Objectives

Students who take this course can expect:

- A better understanding of American history in the nineteenth century;
- A better understanding of how race, ethnicity, and gender have shaped American history;
- A better understanding of how political movements, the political economy, and urban growth shape racial and economic inequality;
- To think critically about race and ethnicity and the meanings of American democracy;
- To engage in critical discussions about America's present-day problems and think about how history can help us better understand and creatively address those problems;
- To hone their reading and interpretive skills through classroom discussions and careful readings of primary and secondary sources;
- To hone their writing skills through a research assignment and two take-home exams.



Sitting Bull, c. 1886. Sitting Bull was a Hunkpapa Lakota and religious leader. During the 1870s he was among the leaders of a native resistance movement in what is today North and South Dakota. Around the time this picture was taken he was performing in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show.



John Stuart Curry, *Tragic Prelude* (1937). Curry's painting depicts abolitionist John Brown's raid on the armory at Harper's Ferry in 1859. Brown hoped to seize the weapons and distribute them among slaves and begin a rebellion to end slavery.

Class Format

This class meets three times a week. Mondays and Wednesdays will be largely devoted to lectures. You will then meet with your Graduate Employees in sections on Wednesday afternoons. Sections are perhaps the most important part of this course. The best learning takes place in interactive environments, when students can ask questions and develop ideas through discussions with classmates. While lectures are interactive and I will regularly ask questions and ask for your thoughts, the size of our lecture means not everyone will get a chance to participate regularly. I therefore strongly encourage you to take sections seriously and come to all section meetings prepared to participate. The majority of your time in sections will be spent discussing readings. Please complete the assignments listed in the schedule below before coming to your Wednesday section.

Assignments

The major writing assignment for this class is a **five to seven page** research essay. In this class we will be exploring how episodes from the nineteenth century are remembered in contemporary America and how those memories impact the way we understand and deal with problems in the present. For instance, some present-day southerners say the Confederate Battle Flag, also known as the “Stars and Bars” has nothing to do with slavery or white supremacy but instead represents southern pride and heritage. Others believe it is impossible to separate Confederate symbols from the history of slavery and maintain that the ubiquity of the Confederate Battle Flag speaks to the prevalence of white supremacy in contemporary America. This is an example of a historical memory and how different ways of remembering the past generate conflicts. Your job for this assignment will be to watch **two** movies that deal with a specific episode from American history and then write an essay that (1) examines how popular culture remembers that event and (2) considers why that event is remembered in particular ways. A list of potential topics and recommended movies will be distributed during the first week of class.

A research proposal, basically a short, one-to-two paragraph statement of what movies you’ll be watching and what themes you intended to explore, will be due on **Friday, October 8th**. Your final paper is due on **Friday, November 12th**.

You must also complete a take-home midterm and a (non-cumulative) take-home final. Both the midterm and final will be a combination of short-answer questions and a longer essay that will ask you to synthesize material presented in class and test your comprehension of lectures and readings. The take-home midterm is due on **Friday, October 29th** and the take-home final is due on **Thursday, December 9th**. Questions for both the midterm and final will be distributed approximately one week before the due dates.

Finally, participation is a major part of your grade. Please have each week’s section assignment completed before you come to your section.

You must complete every assignment to receive a passing grade in the class.



The Haymarket Martyrs' Monument, Forest Home Cemetery, Forest Park, IL, c. present day. The monument memorializes the eight anarchists convicted and hanged for a bombing in Chicago's Haymarket Square on May 4th, 1886. Many political radicals and labor radicals maintained that the anarchists were innocent and were found guilty only because of their political beliefs.



Slaves working in a South Carolina rice field, c. 1850s.

Grading

Grades on each assignment as well as your final grade for the course will be given in points. Here is the point-value of each assignment as well as a breakdown of how each assignment will be used in calculating your final grade:

Participation	200 points (20%)
Take-Home Midterm	200 points (20%)
Take-Home Final	200 points (20%)
Research Paper Proposal	50 points (5%)
Final Research Paper	350 points (35%)

The following table will be use to translate your point score into your final letter grade:

A+	1000-990
A	989-940
A-	939-900
B+	899-870
B	869-840
B-	839-800
C+	799-770
C	769-740
C-	739-700
D+	699-670
D	669-640
D-	639-610
F	609-0

Grading Guidelines

I follow the guidelines established by the History Department in evaluating your work:

A+:	Work of unusual distinction;
A:	Work that distinguishes itself by the excellence of its grasp of the material and the precision and insight of its argument;
B:	Work that satisfies the main criteria of the assignment, and demonstrates command of the material, but does not achieve the level of excellence that characterizes work of A quality;
C:	Work that demonstrates a rudimentary grasp of the material and satisfies at least some of the assigned criteria reasonably well;
D:	Work that demonstrates a poor grasp of the material and/or is executed with little regard for college standards;
F:	Work that is weak in every aspect, demonstrating a basic misunderstanding of the material and/or disregard for the assigned question.

For more information on the History Department's grading guidelines, please see:

<http://history.oregon.edu/undergraduate/>

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty

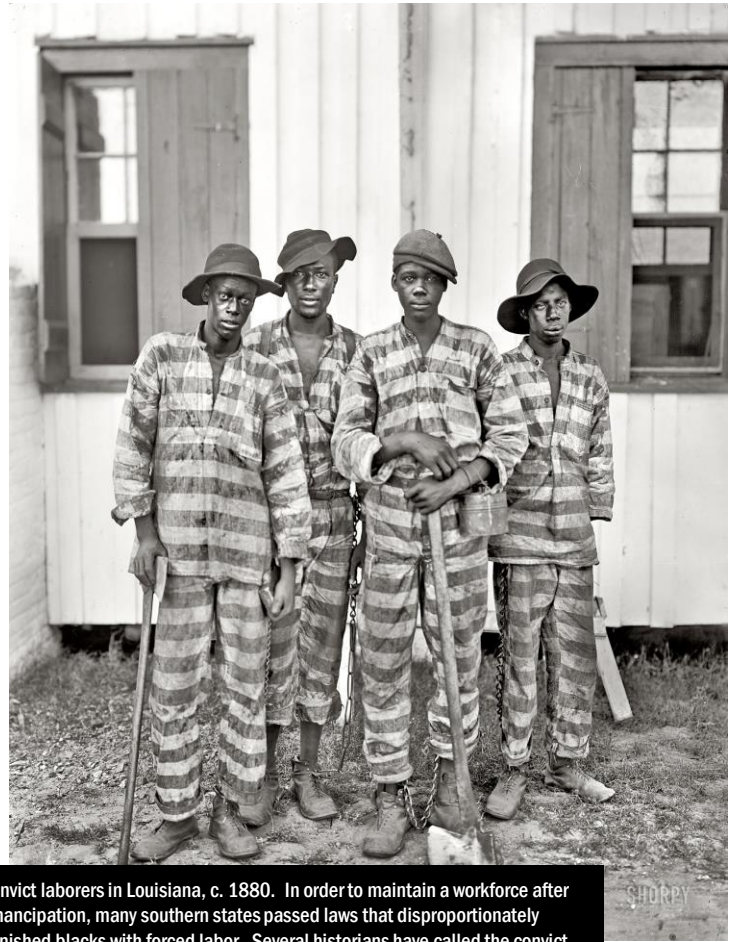
Any form of plagiarism or academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and students suspected of academic misconduct may face disciplinary action, as outlined in the Students' Code of Conduct:

<https://uodos.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/AcademicMisconduct.aspx>

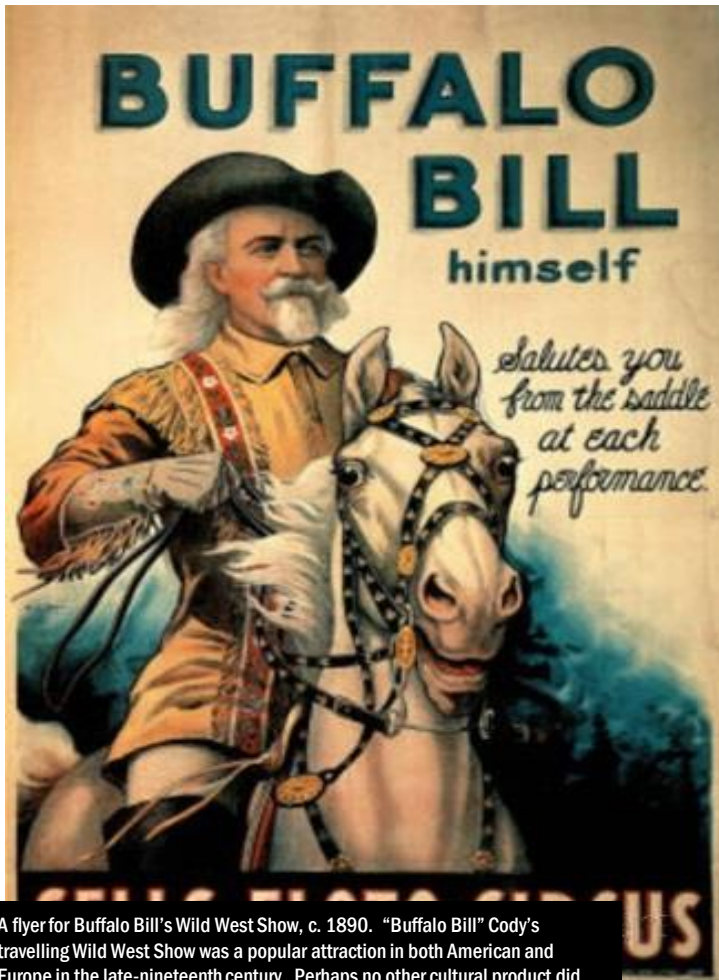
It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with University policies regarding plagiarism and what constitutes academic misconduct:

<http://library.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/index.html>

Please come see me or your Graduate Teaching Fellow if you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or academic misconduct or if you are unsure how to properly cite a source.



Convict laborers in Louisiana, c. 1880. In order to maintain a workforce after emancipation, many southern states passed laws that disproportionately punished blacks with forced labor. Several historians have called the convict labor system in the post-Civil War South, "slavery by another name."



A flyer for Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, c. 1890. "Buffalo Bill" Cody's travelling Wild West Show was a popular attraction in both American and Europe in the late-nineteenth century. Perhaps no other cultural product did more to create the image of the "wild west."

Required Texts

You do not have to purchase any books or materials for this class. All readings and assignments will be made available through the course Canvas page.

COVID-19 Considerations

We're still in the midst of a pandemic....as if any of us could forget that. My first priority this quarter is to ensure all of us—students, Graduate Employees, and me—stay healthy and safe. Per University of Oregon guidelines, **all students and instructors** must wear masks while attending class. If you are not wearing a mask you will be asked to do so, and if you refuse, you'll be asked to leave. For any questions about masking policies or what constitutes an acceptable mask, please see [THIS](#) page.

If you're infected with the COVID-19 virus, if you even *suspect* you're infected, or if someone in your immediate social circle tests positive, please do not come to class until you've received a negative test and/or a medical professional says it's safe for you to return to class. Here is my promise to all of you: **if you have to miss class because you have COVID or you suspect you may have COVID, your grade will not be adversely affected. The GEs and I will work with you to ensure you stay caught up.**



The "White City" at the Chicago Columbian Exposition, 1893.

Course Website

This course uses the Canvas system and you can access the course website via your Canvas front page. The course website contains this syllabus, assignment guidelines, the questions for the take-home midterm and final (when posted), and lecture slides. Please submit all written work online, via the course website. Your GEs and I will comment on and grade your written work directly in the Canvas system.

A Note on Course Themes

This class deals with many of the more troubling aspects of American history, including slavery, native genocide, and racial violence. I believe that the best way to confront these topics and reckon with their legacies in the present, is to directly confront them in the past. That said, I understand this is very troubling subject matter.

As I previously stated, my first goal this quarter is to ensure that everyone enrolled in the class stays safe. My close second goal is to ensure that everyone feels welcome and safe in this class. Generally speaking, I feel that trigger warnings—that is, announcements alerting students to when we'll be dealing with potentially distressing topics—are a good thing. That said, nearly every lecture and assignment this quarter will deal with some troubling aspect of American history, and often histories of racial exclusion and violence, which means I'd necessarily have to issue trigger warnings before every class, which would get a bit redundant. So consider this a blanket trigger warning for the next ten weeks: we're going to be discussing racial violence, sexual violence, and racism. Many images presented in lectures will be disturbing and troubling.

If you have any concerns, I strongly encourage you to bring them to me or your GE. Alternatively, if you do not feel comfortable approaching me or your GE, there are many other options for reporting your concerns. Please see the History Department Diversity page and reporting resources [HERE](#). (Note: depending on the nature of the concern, you may or may not be able to remain anonymous.)

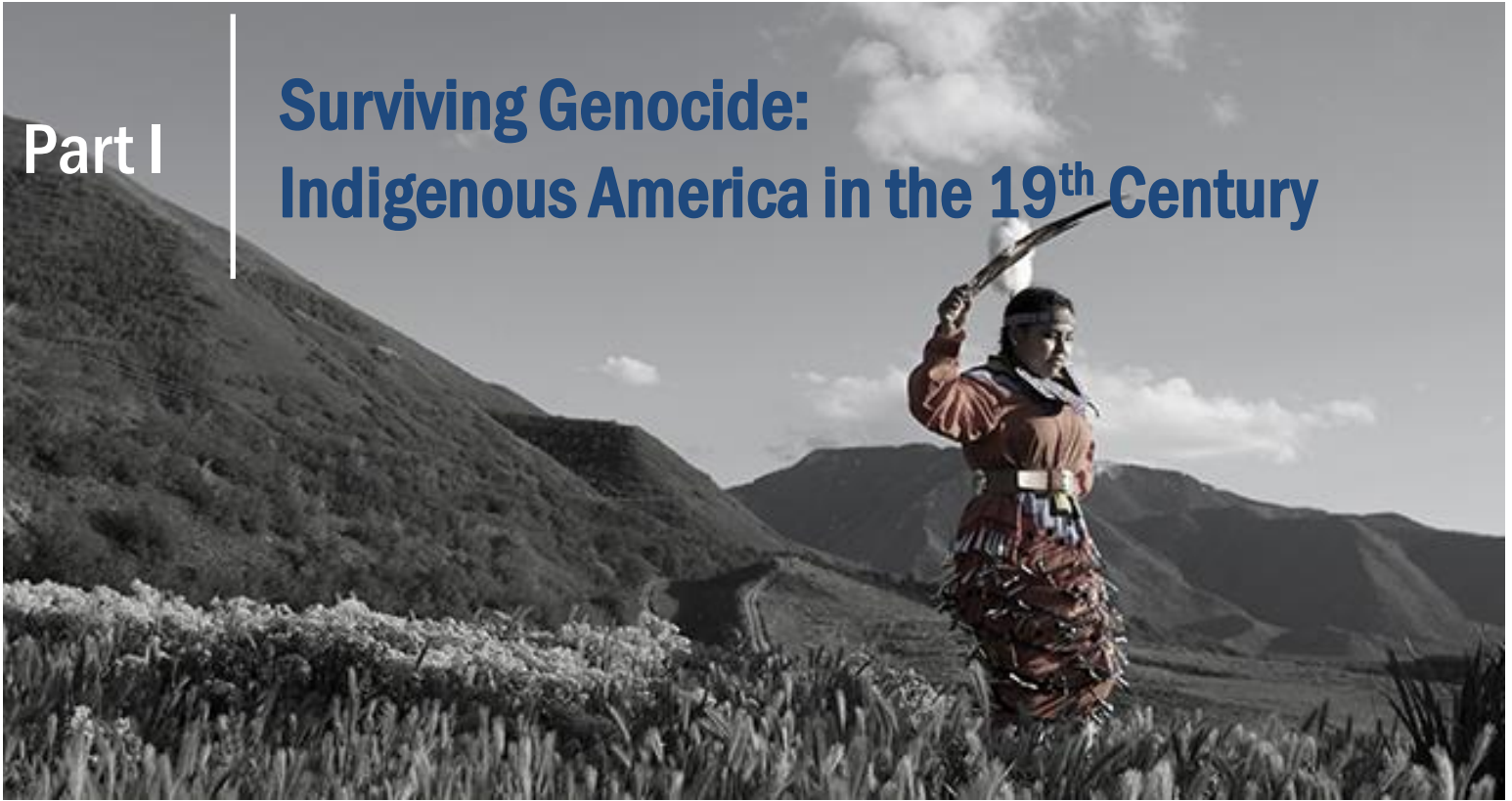
Instructor Contact

I am here to help you. I encourage you to come see me during my scheduled office hours (Mondays and Wednesdays, 2:00-3:00), or if you can't make those, let me know and I'm happy to find another time to meet. You can come see me to talk about any of the material covered in class, a reading you didn't quite understand, or if there's some aspect of history you'd like to know more about. I'm also more than happy to read early drafts of your paper and make suggestions for improvements. Or, you can just stop by just to chat. Email is the best way to get ahold of me. I will respond to all student emails within 24 hours.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

Part I

Surviving Genocide: Indigenous America in the 19th Century



Week 1

September 27 Settlers in a Native World

September 29 The “Indian Problem:” National Expansion and the Complex Meanings of Democracy

SECTION ASSIGNMENT:

READ: Vine Deloria, Jr., “Indians Today, the Real and the Unreal,” in *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969), 1-27

Week 2

October 4 “Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee:” Resistance in Indian Country

October 6 The “Vanishing Race” and other myths of Native History

SECTION ASSIGNMENT:

READ: Tess Thackara, “Challenging America’s Most Iconic Photographer of Native Americans,” *Artsy*, March 1, 2016.

VIEW: Edward R. Curtis photographs, from Northwestern University Digital Collection

RESEARCH PAPER PROPOSAL DUE BY 5:00 pm, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 8th, ON COURSE WEBSITE

Part II

The “Peculiar Institution”



Week 3

October 11 “King Cotton:” Slavery and the Nineteenth Century Political Economy
October 13 The World the Enslaved Made

SECTION ASSIGNMENT:

READ: Selections from WPA Slave Narratives

READ: Rebecca Onion, “Is the Greatest Collection of Slave Narratives Tainted by Racism?,”
Slate, July 6, 2016

Week 4

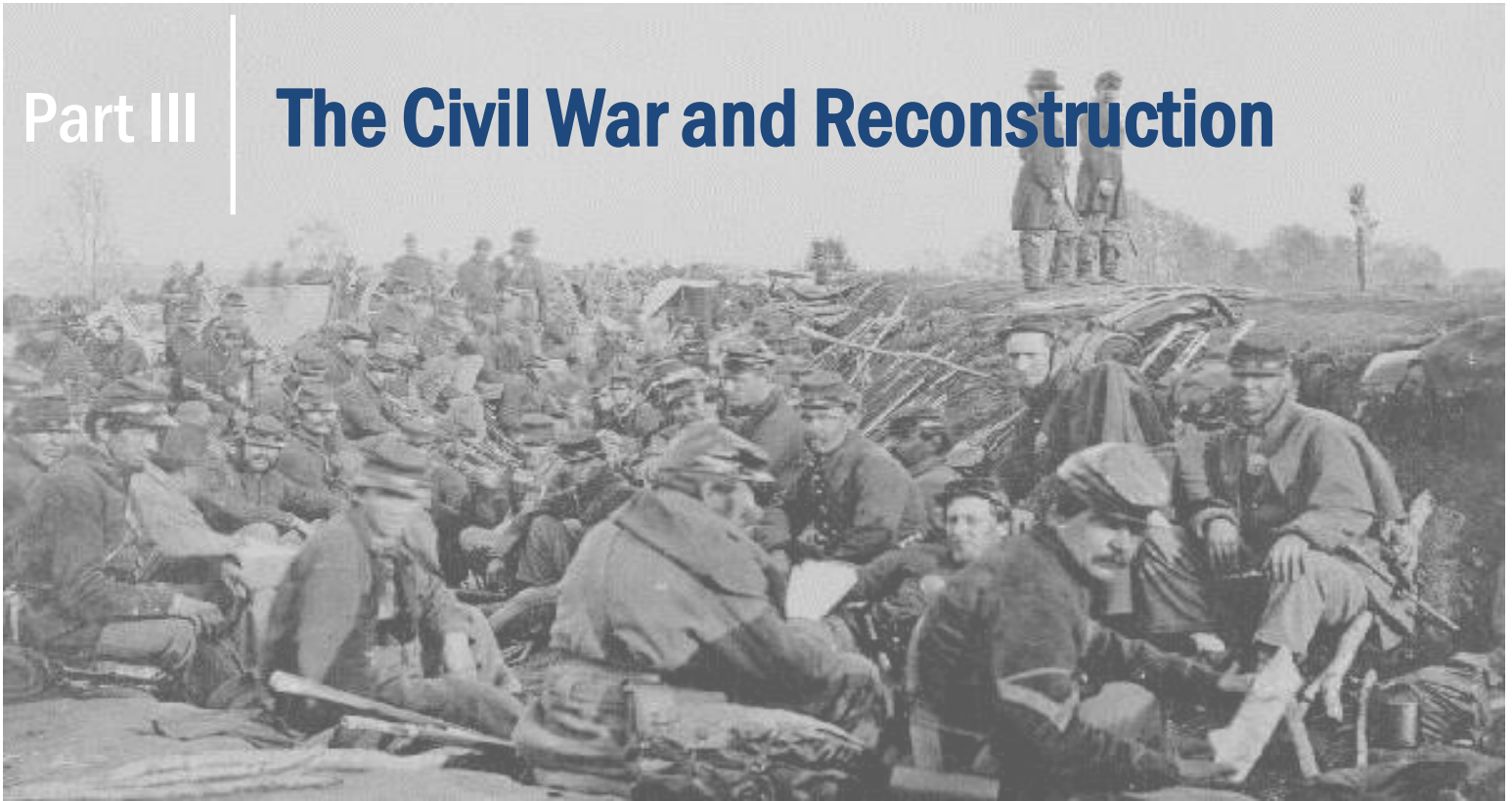
October 18 Slavery and the Problem of National Expansion
October 20 The Sectional Crisis

SECTION ASSIGNMENT:

READ: Frederick Douglass, “What, to the Slave, is The Fourth of July”

Part III

The Civil War and Reconstruction



Week 5

October 25 The General Strike of Slaves
October 27 Republic of Suffering: Death, Dying, and the Making of a Moral Crusade

SECTION ASSIGNMENT:

READ: Select letters and Diaries from *The Valley of the Shadow* project

TAKE-HOME MIDTERM DUE BY 5:00 pm, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 29 ON COURSE WEBSITE

Week 6

November 1 Radical Reconstruction
November 3 Slavery By Another Name

SECTION ASSIGNMENT:

READ: Jill Lepore, "The Invention of the Police," *New Yorker*, July 14, 2020

Week 7

November 8 Remembering the Civil War, part 1: Days of Jubilee
November 10 Remembering the Civil War, part 2: Causes Lost, and Not so Lost

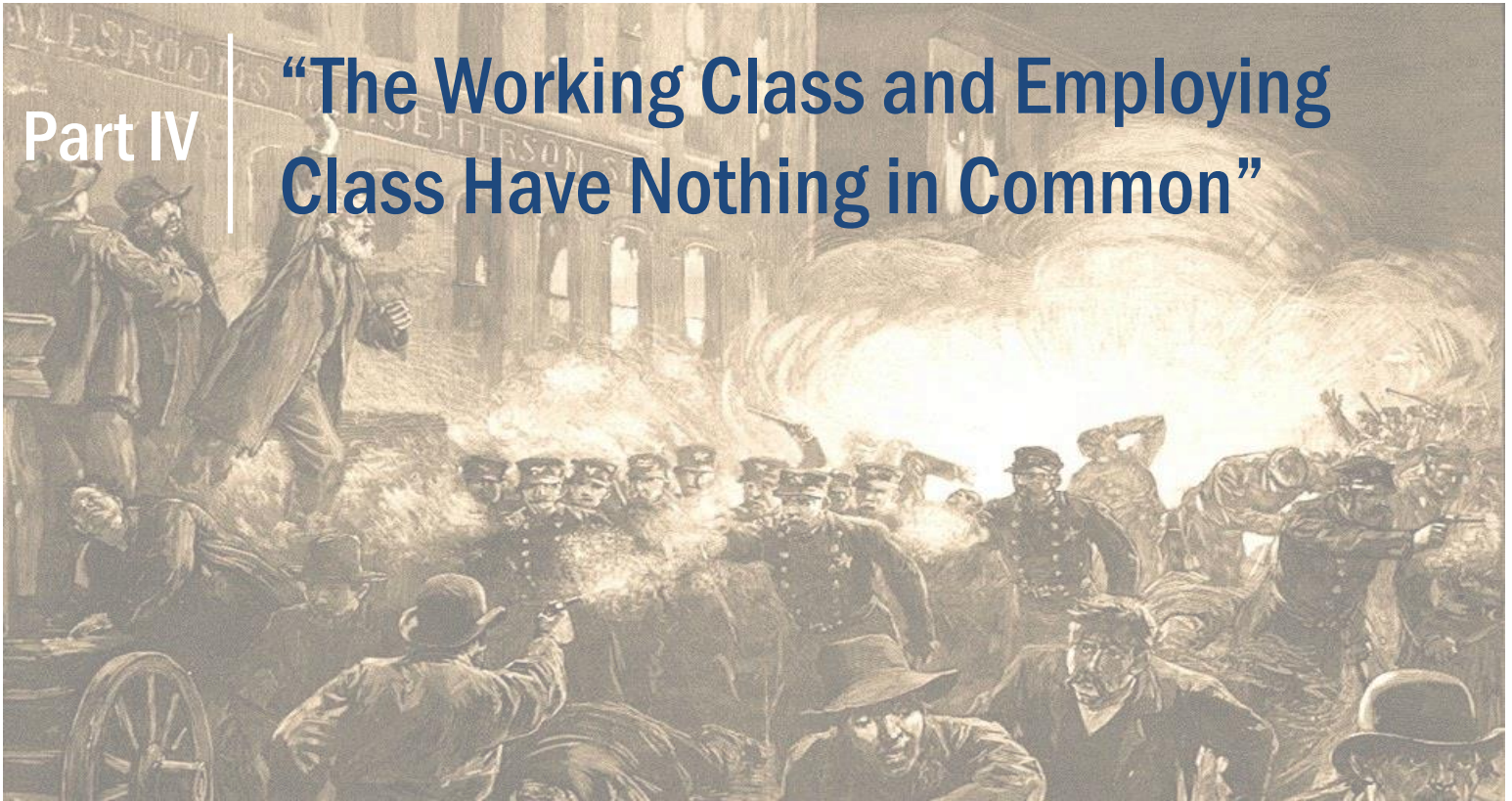
SECTION ASSIGNMENT:

COMPLETE: Confederate Statue Exercise, details on course website

FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DUE BY 5:00 pm, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 12 ON COURSE WEBSITE

Part IV

“The Working Class and Employing Class Have Nothing in Common”



Week 8

- November 15 Artisans into Workers: The Transformation of Labor
- November 17 Railroaded: The Economic Transformation of the American West

SECTION ASSIGNMENT:

COMPLETE: Census records exercise, details on course website

Week 9

- November 22 How the Irish Became White
- November 25 **No Class—Thanksgiving Holiday**

NO SECTIONS THIS WEEK

Week 10

- November 29 “Americans Must Rule America:” Xenophobia and Chinese Exclusion
- December 1 Death in the Haymarket

SECTION ASSIGNMENT:

LISTEN: Songs of the labor movement

TAKE-HOME FINAL DUE BY 10:15 am, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9 ON COURSE WEBSITE