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The American Civil War
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The American Civil War

Scope:

This course examines the era of the American Civil War with emphasis on the period from 1861 to 1865, four years during which the United States endured its greatest national trauma. The lectures address such questions as why the war came, why the North won (or the Confederacy lost), how military campaigns unfolded, and how the war affected various elements of American society. The principal goal is to convey an understanding of the scope and consequences of the bloodiest war in our nation's history—a struggle that claimed more than 600,000 lives, freed nearly 4,000,000 enslaved African Americans, and settled definitively the question of whether states had the right to withdraw from the Union. The course also will address issues left unresolved at the end of the conflict, most notably the question of where former slaves would fit into the social and political structure of the nation.

Leading participants on both sides will receive extensive attention. Interspersed among discussions of military and nonmilitary aspects of the war will be biographical sketches of Abraham Lincoln, Robert E. Lee, Ulysses S. Grant, Frederick Douglass, "Stonewall" Jackson, William Tecumseh Sherman, Thaddeus Stevens, and several dozen other prominent figures. Although this is not a course on Civil War battles and generals per se, approximately half of the lectures will be devoted to the strategic and tactical dimensions of military campaigns. It is impossible to understand the broad impact of the war without a grasp of how military events shaped attitudes and actions on the home front, and there will be a special effort to tie events on the battlefield to life behind the lines.

Part I traces the prelude to the war by discussing the key issues of the antebellum period, starting with the Missouri Compromise of 1820 and continuing for 40 years to the election of 1860. The secession crisis that election precipitated turned into armed conflict in early 1861. Early lectures size up the two opposing sides of the military conflict, including a consideration of the men who manned the armies. The final five lectures of Part I trace the early fortunes of war from the Battle of Bull Run (First Manassas) through the Peninsula and Shenandoah Valley campaigns of early 1862, when first one side, then the other seemed to be in ascendancy.

Part II picks up the military narrative with the pivotal Seven Days' Battles before Richmond, when the Union advance in the East was halted by the newly appointed General Robert E. Lee, and continues up to the crucial Battle of Antietam in September. Lectures on the issue of emancipation, military conscription, and financing of the war provide a look at political and social issues that came to the fore in this period. Part II concludes with more discussion of major campaigns and battles, including Gettysburg and Chickamauga, bringing the narration up to the fall of 1863.

Part III begins with the campaign for Chattanooga that saw the ascendancy of Ulysses S. Grant as the top Union general. The emphasis shifts to the diplomatic front, as both sides vied to present their case before the world (i.e., European) audience. The war from the African American perspective comes next, followed by a discussion of northern wartime "reconstruction" policies. We devote two lectures to the naval war, both that conducted on the high seas involving the northern blockade and southern commerce raiding, as well as that which took place on the "brown water" of rivers and bays. Two lectures cover the experience of women in the war, on the home front, as medical workers on the field, and even (in a few cases) as soldiers. The focus then shifts back to the military events of 1864, moving the narrative forward to the Overland campaign up to the battles of the Wilderness and Spotsylvania in the spring of 1864.

Part IV brings us to the finale of the Overland campaign and the siege of Petersburg and Richmond. This offers an excellent opportunity to discuss the home front, in both the North and the South, and consider the differences in the wartime experience between the two sections. After one lecture on the issue of prisoners of war, we turn back to the military front to investigate how Grant's strategy to envelope the South and eliminate its ability to fight militarily played out in Sherman's Atlanta campaign and his inexorable pressure on Lee at Richmond. With the conclusion of the war in April 1865 came the chance for peace and reconciliation, but the assassination of Abraham Lincoln dominated the immediate period after the cessation of hostilities. A final lecture sums up the lessons and legacies of this great national trauma and reminds us that, in a larger context, the issues that divided the nation during the era of the Civil War continue to resonate in modern America. This course will attempt to make those issues clear while providing a sense of the drama and tragedy of this tumultuous period in the life of the nation.

Lecture Twenty-Five Grant at Chattanooga

Scope: This lecture will complete our examination of military events in 1863. Its focus is the Chattanooga campaign, the final episode in Ulysses S. Grant's preparation to assume the dominant position in the Union war effort. Both sides looked to Chattanooga as the crucial point on the strategic map after Chickamauga. Both armies involved in the campaign experienced problems of command. On the Confederate side, many of Bragg's lieutenants recommended his removal. Jefferson Davis heard their complaints but decided to retain Bragg and reassign several of the unhappy subordinates. Rosecrans similarly came in for criticism, and Grant, who was named overall Union commander in the West in mid-October, replaced him with George H. Thomas. Grant eventually took personal command of Union forces at Chattanooga, including Thomas's Army of the Cumberland, major reinforcements from Mississippi commanded by William Tecumseh Sherman, and reinforcements from Virginia led by Joseph Hooker.

Bragg conducted an increasingly ineffective siege and, by late November, Grant had completed preparations for an aggressive movement to drive Bragg's troops off high ground on Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge. In the battle of Chattanooga, fought on November 24-25, Grant's soldiers routed Bragg's army to win one of the more dramatic victories of the war. The consequences were significant: another key southern city had fallen; another success had been added to the string of Union triumphs begun at Gettysburg and Vicksburg; Bragg was removed from command; and Grant was confirmed as the preeminent northern soldier. The North reviewed the year with a sense of immense accomplishment and looked toward 1864 with considerable optimism. The Confederacy, in contrast, contemplated even greater sacrifice if it were to reverse the recent tide and win its independence.

Outline

- I. The Confederate Army of Tennessee and the Union Army of the Cumberland endured a difficult period after Chickamauga.
 - A. The Confederate High Command became embroiled in internal bickering.
 1. Several of Bragg's subordinates (including corps commanders, such as James Longstreet, and others, like Nathan Bedford Forrest) called for his removal. Longstreet recommended Joseph Johnston.
 2. Bragg criticized the performance of some of his subordinates.

3. Jefferson Davis visited the army, heard from both sides, and decided to keep Bragg and reassign several of the unhappy subordinates (including Longstreet and Forrest).
 - B. Rosecrans received heavy criticism and his army suffered a loss of morale.
 1. Lincoln lost confidence in Rosecrans.
 2. The Federals faced a crisis of supply in Chattanooga.
- II. The Confederates besieged Chattanooga and Grant assumed center stage.
- A. Bragg set up his army on Missionary Ridge and Lookout Mountain east of the city.
 1. The Confederates could not cover all the approaches to the city.
 2. The detachment of Longstreet and 15,000 soldiers to recapture Knoxville weakened Bragg's investing force.
 - B. Grant assumed overall command in the West on October 17, 1863, and replaced Rosecrans with George Thomas.
 1. Reinforcements from Mississippi and Virginia under Sherman and Hooker moved by rail to relieve the Army of the Cumberland.
 2. Grant took personal charge in Chattanooga.
- III. Grant planned a successful offensive that resulted in the Battle of Chattanooga and the utter defeat of Bragg's army.
- A. There were two engagements of note. The first was the Battle of Lookout Mountain (the "Battle above the Clouds"), which Hooker's force won on November 24.
 - B. Sherman's attacking force didn't fare well against Cleburne's veteran division, but Thomas's Army of the Cumberland carried Missionary Ridge with direct frontal assaults on November 25, the men going beyond their orders to capture only the first line of works.
 - C. Bragg retreated southward to a point near Dalton, Georgia. The 6,000 casualties on each side were small numbers by Civil War standards.
 - D. The Battle of Chattanooga ranked among the more important military engagements of the war.
 1. Chattanooga, a major center of communications and transportation and gateway to Atlanta and central Georgia, was irretrievably lost to the Confederates for the rest of the war. Knoxville was also gone, because Longstreet was unable to retake it.
 2. The string of Union victories in 1863 was completed. Chattanooga completely canceled the effects of Chickamauga, and the Confederates had now suffered a major setback in each of the three main theaters.
 3. Bragg was relieved of command and reassigned to a desk job in Richmond as Davis's military advisor; Davis appointed Joseph Johnston to replace him.

4. Grant was confirmed as the premier Union general; he would shortly be made General-in-Chief of the Union armies as a result of his victories at Vicksburg and Chattanooga.
5. Sherman, Thomas, and Philip H. Sheridan were promoted along with Grant--these four men would win the war for the Union in 1864-1865.

Essential Reading:

Hattaway and Jones, *How the North Won: A Military History of the Civil War*, chapter 14.

McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*, chapter 22.

Supplementary Reading:

Catton, *Grant Takes Command*, chapters 3-5.

Connelly, *Autumn of Glory: The Army of Tennessee, 1862-1865*, chapter 10.

Cozzens, *The Shipwreck of Their Hopes: The Battles for Chattanooga*.

Questions to Consider:

1. What do you think kept Confederate civilians and soldiers going after the military reverses of 1863?
2. Had the two sides been tested equally by this point in the war?

Lecture Twenty-Six

The Diplomatic Front

Scope: With this lecture, we turn from the battlefield to the world of diplomacy. In assessing Confederate prospects for success, the question of European recognition or intervention represented an unknown factor that might wield immense influence. Union and Confederate political leaders looked toward Europe with considerable concern, often with the example of decisive French aid to the colonies during the American Revolution in mind. The Confederacy directed its diplomatic efforts toward gaining recognition, while the Union worked hard to persuade London and Paris to remain aloof from the struggle. The Confederates initially believed that hunger for southern cotton would force the Europeans to side with them, an expectation that proved chimerical. Several issues and crises threatened the Lincoln Administration's relations with England and France, including the *Trent* affair of late 1861, disputes arising from the North's naval blockade of the Confederacy, northern anger over British construction of warships for the Confederacy, and French imperialism in Mexico. In the end, however, several factors allowed the North to prevail in the diplomatic arena: the skill of its diplomats (especially Charles Francis Adams); the strong antislavery sentiment in England and France; fears in London and Paris about the economic consequences of a war with the United States; and most important, the Confederacy's inability to string together enough military victories to persuade Europe that it could sustain its independence.

Outline

- I. The Confederacy banked on "King Cotton" diplomacy and initially hoped that Europe's (and especially Great Britain's) need for cotton would bring diplomatic recognition.
 - A. The South withheld cotton to increase demand rather than counting on the Union blockade to cut off supplies.
 1. This was not an official, but an understood, embargo.
 2. Much of the 1861 cotton crop was actually burned.
 - B. Several factors worked against the Confederacy.
 1. Britain had a surplus of cotton from large crops in the years before the war, enough, in fact, to carry the country well into mid-1862.
 2. Britain developed alternative sources in Egypt and India to offset the loss of southern cotton.
 3. Workers in textile industries suffered some hardship, but the American war boosted employment in other segments of the British economy, such as shipbuilding, iron manufacturing, and munitions.

4. Wool and linen production increased and took up some of the slack in cotton production.
 - C. The Confederacy eventually abandoned its "King Cotton" policy, but by then it was too late.
- II. The northern blockade of the Confederacy caused considerable tension between the United States and Europe.
 - A. The blockade raised political and legal questions that were especially important during the first year of the war.
 1. European nations issued proclamations of neutrality in 1861, thus recognizing the belligerent status of the Confederacy.
 2. The Confederacy could contract for loans and purchase supplies in neutral nations and exercise belligerent rights at sea (such as the use of privateers).
 3. Recognition of belligerency was often a prelude to recognition under international law.
 4. The North was actually the winner here, because these proclamations gave legitimacy to the blockade.
 - B. Britain decided to honor the blockade for selfish reasons.
 1. International law required that a blockade had to be effective in order to be legal.
 2. The British knew that the Union blockade was not effective but honored it, because to do otherwise might come back to haunt them if and when they might institute a blockade.
 - C. Britain also accepted the North's application of the doctrine of "continuous voyage"; that is, they recognized the right of U.S. warships to intercept merchant vessels sailing between neutral harbors if there was evidence that the cargo was eventually destined for the CSA.
 1. British merchants complained about this, but the policy was not changed.
 2. As with the blockade, British leaders wanted to avoid setting a precedent that could hurt them later.
- III. The *Trent* affair caused a major disruption of relations between the United States and Britain in late 1861.
 - A. An American vessel (the U.S.S. *San Jacinto*, Captain Charles Wilkes, commanding) removed two Confederate diplomats (James Mason and John Slidell) from the *Trent*, a British merchant vessel carrying them to England; the commissioners were eventually imprisoned in Boston.
 - B. Britain reacted strongly, complaining that the U.S. had violated British neutrality.
 1. The British deployed some military forces to Canada and reinforced the North American Squadron.
 2. Britain also demanded the release of the diplomats and an apology.

- C. The Lincoln Administration defused the crisis by releasing the diplomats on 1 January 1862 and acknowledging that their seizure had been improper.
- IV. Military events in the Eastern Theater between June and September 1862 created a potential diplomatic crisis for the North.**
- A. Confederate victories at the Seven Days' Battles and Second Manassas convinced key British leaders that the Confederacy was winning the war.
 - 1. The Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary agreed that some type of mediation would be proper if the Confederates won one more victory.
 - 2. On July 18, Parliament debated the question of recognition; there were further moves to mediate a settlement and to recognize the CSA.
 - 3. Emperor Louis-Napoleon of France was ready to recognize the CSA, as well.
 - B. The Battle of Antietam (on September 17) caused the British to decide to wait before making a major diplomatic move.
 - 1. Lee's retreat to Virginia seemed to indicate that the Union might be rebounding militarily.
 - 2. Lincoln used Antietam as a pretext to issue his preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, which made it far more difficult for the British to side with the Confederacy.
- V. The summer of 1863 brought a less serious crisis regarding British construction of commerce raiders and rams for the Confederacy.**
- A. The Lincoln Administration was unhappy about British construction of commerce raiders, such as the C.S.S. *Alabama* and C.S.S. *Florida*, earlier in the war.
 - B. The North learned in 1863 that two 1,400-ton ironclads (to be named C.S.S. *North Carolina* and C.S.S. *Mississippi*) destined for Confederate service were under construction at the Laird shipyards. Such vessels would pose a danger to the Union blockade.
 - 1. The North made it clear that delivery of these vessels would strain relations.
 - 2. The British government decided to seize the vessels, even before the United States Ambassador strongly protested.
 - 3. The South retaliated by expelling British diplomats over this move.
- VI. French intervention in Mexico also strained relations with the United States.**
- A. Napoleon III of France sent 35,000 troops to Mexico and overthrew the government of Benito Juarez in 1863.
 - 1. Austrian Archduke Francis Ferdinand Maximilian was installed as emperor of Mexico by Napoleon III.

- 2. The Confederacy offered to recognize this government if France would recognize the Confederacy.
 - 3. Napoleon III proved unwilling to extend recognition unless the British did so.
- B. The United States sent an army to the Texas-Mexico border at the end of the war.**
- 1. Napoleon III recalled his troops
 - 2. Maximilian remained in Mexico and was executed in 1867.
- C. Two major factors kept the European powers from recognizing the Confederacy:**
- 1. The failure of the CSA to win significant victories from late 1862.
 - 2. The issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation.

Essential Reading:

McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*, chapters 12, 18, 22.
 Thomas, *The Confederate Nation, 1861–1865*, chapter 8.

Supplementary Reading:

Case and Spencer, *The United States and France: Civil War Diplomacy*.
 Crook, *The North, the South, and the Powers, 1861–1865*.
 Jones, *Union in Peril: The Crisis over British Intervention in the Civil War*.

Questions to Consider:

- 1. Can you imagine any circumstances under which Britain or France would have sent the type of aid to the Confederacy that France had given the colonies during the American Revolution?
- 2. Short of intervention on a scale similar to France's during the Revolution, would any actions on the part of European powers played a significant role in the Civil War?

Lecture Twenty-Seven

African Americans in Wartime,I

Scope: This lecture examines the experience of African Americans who fled to the protection of northern military forces (these people were typically called “contrabands” during the war) and those who became Union soldiers (the United States Colored Troops). The phenomenon of slaves going to Union lines began when a handful of men sought protection with Benjamin F. Butler’s troops on the Virginia peninsula during the first weeks of the conflict. From that point forward, thousands of slaves made their way to Union armies in all parts of the Confederacy. Approximately 500,000, roughly one in seven of the enslaved black people in the Confederacy, passed from Confederate to Union control. Their lives often were difficult. Able-bodied men typically were put to work for the Union army; thousands of men, women, and children lived in camps, where they were subject to overcrowding and disease.

At first their status was uncertain, but the presence of thousands of black people behind Union lines forced the North to address the question of whether they should be declared free. Congressional action and the Emancipation Proclamation conveyed freedom well before the end of the war. A major debate arose in the North over whether to settle freed people on abandoned and confiscated lands in the South. Thousands of black people took up residence on such lands, but permanent ownership remained uncertain.

The black contribution to northern military operations was undeniable. Nearly 180,000 black men, most of them former slaves, served in the Union army. The vast majority of these individuals entered service in 1863 or later. They faced a range of problems, including lower pay, relegation to work details rather than combat duty, and hostility from many white soldiers. In the end, however, regiments of United States Colored Troops, as they were designated in the segregated army, rendered solid service on a number of battlefields. These veterans had risked their lives alongside white comrades and, thus, staked an unimpeachable claim to full citizenship.

Outline

- I. Emancipation came gradually to slaves in the Confederacy as thousands made their way to Union lines or found themselves in Union-controlled areas.
 - A. The government struggled to develop a coherent policy regarding contrabands.

1. The military played the most direct role in dealing with contrabands. The Treasury Department also became involved because of its responsibility for confiscated Rebel property.
 2. Various freedmen’s and missionary aid societies also played a role.
 - B. The army’s primary goal was to ensure that the contrabands did not interfere with military operations against the Confederacy.
 1. The contrabands were placed in camps, which were often overcrowded and ridden with disease.
 2. Many of the men were used as laborers to support military operations.
 3. Eventually, able-bodied men were taken into military service.
 - C. Freed people employed in nonmilitary situations often found themselves with a type of quasi-freedom.
 1. Northern speculators and southern planters who took the oath of allegiance often showed little concern for the welfare of black workers.
 2. Military commanders (most notably General Nathaniel P. Banks) often forced black laborers to sign long-term contracts that bound them to public projects or plantations, often for just room and board.
 3. Skilled laborers stood a much better chance of making a decent living.
 4. Laborers on government-run plantations typically fared better than those on privately run plantations.
 - D. Contraband camps, largely populated by women, children, and the aged, were overcrowded, unhealthy places where the average mortality rate was 25 percent (by way of contrast, Confederate soldiers suffered a mortality rate of nearly 20 percent).
- II. The North debated whether to give land to freed people to enable them to support themselves.
 - A. Abolitionists and others argued in favor of placing freed people on abandoned or confiscated land in the South. Freed people themselves said it would make them truly free and economically independent.
 1. Speculators opposed giving away the land, because they hoped to exploit it themselves, and they were often successful (as in the coastal islands of Georgia and the Carolinas).
 2. Lincoln muddied the water on this issue. In 1862, he stated that land would be confiscated from Rebels only for the lifetime of the owner. In late 1863, he stated that any Confederate who took the oath of allegiance could recover all his property except slaves.
 - B. Radical Republicans and their allies in Congress tried to give land to freed people.

1. In 1864, George W. Julian proposed making the Homestead Act apply to abandoned and confiscated lands.
 2. The Freedmen's Bureau legislation of 1865 included provisions relating to confiscated lands.
- C. William Tecumseh Sherman settled thousands of freed people on lands near the South Carolina coast.
1. His action did not convey permanent title but only "possessory title," pending congressional legislation.
 2. He acted out of concern for his military operations.
- D. The war ended without a clear resolution of the question of settling freed people on lands in the South. The North compiled a mixed record concerning freed people who came under its control.
1. Freed people suffered many abuses.
 2. But remember that the North faced an enormous refugee problem in the midst of a gigantic war.
 3. No government agencies existed to address this type of issue and there was no precedent for freeing so many slaves in the midst of war.
- III. The North debated whether to arm black men early in the war.
- A. Radical Republicans and black and white abolitionists favored doing so.
- B. Lincoln recognized the necessity by early 1863; active recruiting began in 1863 and, by the end of the war, more than 180,000 black soldiers served.
- C. Black soldiers were not treated the same as white soldiers were.
1. Their segregated units had virtually no black officers (there were 166 black regiments and only 100 black officers). This made sense at first because few black men had experience as soldiers, but even after many demonstrated aptitude for command, they were not made officers.
 2. Black soldiers were paid less (\$10 per month) than white soldiers (\$13 per month plus a clothing allowance) until 1864.
 3. They were given more menial duties. They were considered better suited to perform heavy manual labor in the southern heat.
 4. Some white people believed black men would not make good combat soldiers.
 5. Confederate policy regarding black prisoners made it problematical to place them in situations where they might be captured, because the South said that black soldiers would not be treated as prisoners of war.
- D. Black units eventually compiled a solid record in combat.
1. Most white soldiers expressed at least a grudging respect for them.
 2. Despite some very good fighting (e.g., at Port Hudson in Louisiana, Battery Wagner in South Carolina, and the Crater in Petersburg,

Virginia), black soldiers on balance saw far less combat duty than most white soldiers. They suffered a 1.5 percent killed-in-action rate compared to 6 percent for white soldiers. They suffered more deaths from disease than from battle.

3. After the war, many blacks remained in the army.

E. Military service was crucial for black men, because it established their claim to citizenship and gave them an active role in killing slavery.

Essential Reading:

Berlin et al., eds., *Free at Last: A Documentary History of Slavery, Freedom and the Civil War*, chapters 3–4, 6.

McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*, chapter 26.

Supplementary Reading:

Glatthaar, *Forged in Battle: The Civil War Alliance of Black Soldiers and White Officers*.

McPherson, ed., *The Negro's Civil War*, chapters 8–16, 20.

Powell, *New Masters: Northern Planters during the Civil War and Reconstruction*.

Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment*.

Questions to Consider:

1. How do you believe most freed people viewed the United States government?
2. As a northern military officer in an active campaign, how do you think you would have reacted to the presence of large numbers of freed people in the vicinity of your troops?

Lecture Twenty-Eight

African Americans in Wartime,II

Scope: This lecture will shift our attention from contrabands and black Union soldiers to the experience of black people in the North and slaves who remained under Confederate control in the South. In the North, as we have seen, black people were at the center of a debate over Union war aims. Would the conflict remain a struggle simply to restore the Union, or would black freedom be added to the national agenda as a second great goal? As African Americans in the North watched and participated in this debate, they often suffered persecution from groups who cared nothing for emancipation and preferred to keep all black people in an inferior economic and social position. Yet African Americans did register legal and symbolic gains during the war. The most important was passage by the House of Representatives, on January 31, 1865, of a 13th Amendment that would free all slaves (ratification was completed in December 1865). Various other pieces of legislation at the national, state, and local levels indicated progress on the long road toward more equitable treatment of black Americans.

In the South, slave labor allowed the mobilization of a huge percentage of military-age white manpower and kept the economy running. No major slave revolts took place in the Confederacy, but the institution of slavery underwent change as black and white southerners adjusted their social and economic relations amid the dislocation of war. A number of factors weakened white control over slaves, including the fact that many slaveholders were serving in the army, many white refugees found that their slaves exhibited more independence, and slaves sent to cities to work in war-related industries were less closely supervised than they had been on plantations and farms. The most striking proof of the changing nature of slavery was the remarkable late-war debate about placing armed slaves in the Confederate army. The debate came too late to affect the course of the war, but it indicated how radically the war had changed the South's slave-based society.

Outline

- I. Black people in the North registered significant gains during the war despite widespread racial prejudice.
 - A. Radical Republicans and black and white abolitionists were in the forefront of the effort to achieve positive change. The 13th Amendment was their most important victory.
 - 1. Legislation that would eventually be the 13th Amendment was defeated in the initial effort in the House of Representatives in June 1864.

- 2. The 1864 elections brought a Republican majority to both houses of Congress, but the new Congress would not take office until well into 1865.
 - 3. The legislation passed by a narrow margin in January 1865 because of the efforts of the Lincoln Administration.
 - 4. The process of ratification by the states was completed in December 1865. Southern states had to agree to the 13th Amendment as a condition of their readmission to the Union.
 - B. Various local, state, and national measures indicated additional progress.
 - 1. New state constitutions in Maryland (1 November 1864) and Missouri (11 January 1865) abolished slavery. Another border state, Kentucky, didn't follow suit until the 13th Amendment was actually ratified.
 - 2. On 3 March 1865, Congress freed the wives and children of black soldiers serving in the U.S. Army.
 - 3. Black people gained the right to testify in federal courts.
 - 4. Between 1863 and 1866, several northern states repealed "black laws" that discriminated against African Americans.
 - 5. John Rock was admitted as a lawyer before the United States Supreme Court on 1 February 1865 (eight years earlier, the *Dred Scott* decision had stated that black people could not be citizens).
 - C. Despite these advances and legal changes, black people still faced a range of discriminatory legislation and intensely racist attitudes.

- II. Slavery was essential to the Confederate war effort, because it freed white men to go into the military and provided labor to keep the economy running, especially in the agricultural sector. But the Civil War changed the institution of slavery in the South.
 - A. Early in the conflict, white southerners tightened control over slaves, because they feared insurrection and because the absence of so many men in the army left those on the home front feeling vulnerable.
 - B. This situation changed as the war progressed. No major slave revolts took place, and controls over slaves relaxed somewhat. Practical factors loosened the bonds of slavery.
 - 1. Masters were away in the army, limiting their day-to-day control over slaves.
 - 2. White refugees found it difficult to maintain strict control over their slaves.
 - 3. Large numbers of slaves moved to urban areas, where they enjoyed relatively more freedom.
 - 4. Slaves were given more authority on plantations and farms to get crops in and keep the establishments running in the absence of white men.

- III.** The Confederacy debated the issue of arming slaves, putting them in the army, and possibly freeing all who would fight.
- A.** This issue arose during the first years of the war.
1. Robert E. Lee recommended it to Jefferson Davis in 1861, and Richard Ewell suggested the use of black troops in July 1862.
 2. Members of the Alabama legislature called for enlistment of slaves in 1863.
 3. General Patrick R. Cleburne suggested it in January 1864 to leaders of the Army of Tennessee.
- B.** The major debate occurred in the winter of 1864–1865.
1. Some, like Howell Cobb of Georgia, argued that arming and freeing slaves who fought would undermine the founding principles of the Confederacy.
 2. Lee and others argued that independence was more important than maintaining slavery as then constituted.
 3. The CSA Congress decided in March 1865 to place slaves in the army but not to guarantee their freedom in return for service.
 4. The debate occurred too late to have any impact on the course of military events.

Essential Reading:

Berlin et al., eds., *Free At Last: A Documentary History of Slavery, Freedom, and the Civil War*, chapter 5.

McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*, chapters 26–28.

Supplementary Reading:

Durden, *The Gray and the Black: The Confederate Debate on Emancipation*.

McPherson, ed., *The Negro's Civil War: How American Negroes Felt and Acted during the War for the Union*, chapters 5–6, 17–19.

Mohr, *On the Threshold of Freedom: Masters and Slaves in Civil War Georgia*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Some historians have commented that slaves gained “nothing but freedom” from the war. How would you judge the importance of the conflict in the lives of African Americans of the mid-nineteenth century?
2. What does the Confederate debate over emancipation and arming of slaves suggest about the impact of the war on southern society?

Lecture Twenty-Nine Wartime Reconstruction

Scope: This lecture examines the wartime beginnings of Reconstruction. This issue spawned a lively debate between Abraham Lincoln and members of Congress over who would control the process and what conditions for readmission to the Union would be imposed on the Confederate states. Would southern society be recast in the image of the North? Would the entire pro-Confederate citizenry, especially the military and political leadership, be denied a role in shaping the postwar South? Would black people be granted full political and social equality? In short, what price would the white South pay for its experiment in rebellion? The answers to these and related questions would be different depending on whether Lincoln or Congress wielded the greater influence. In December 1863, Lincoln offered a simple and quite lenient blueprint for Reconstruction dubbed the “10 Per Cent Plan.” Radical Republicans in Congress responded with sharp criticism, insisting that Lincoln would be far too easy on the South and clashing with the president over implementing a plan for Reconstruction in Louisiana. In 1864, Congress presented its own blueprint in the Wade-Davis Bill, which laid out much harsher terms for the white South and somewhat better terms for black southerners. Lincoln killed the bill with a pocket veto, provoking bitter Radical Republican condemnation in the Wade-Davis Manifesto. Lincoln seemed to be moving closer to the Radical position on Reconstruction as the war drew to a close, but his assassination prevented the nation from learning what road he would have taken.

Outline

- I. Lincoln and Congress engaged in a wartime debate over Reconstruction.
 - A. Lincoln wanted to control the process through presidential proclamations, pardons, and Executive Orders, whereas Congress wanted to control the process through legislation.
 - B. At stake were several important issues:
 1. What would southern society look like?
 2. Would severe political disabilities be imposed for ex-Confederates?
 3. Would black men be given political rights?
 4. What constitutional and political steps would the Confederate states have to take to gain readmission to the Union?

- II. Lincoln offered his “10 Per Cent Plan” in December 1863.
 - A. He issued a proclamation of amnesty that offered full pardons and restored all but slave property to virtually all Confederates.
 - 1. Confederates must take the oath of allegiance to the United States.
 - 2. They must agree to abide by the Emancipation Proclamation and all other laws and proclamations concerning slavery.
 - 3. Certain classes of Confederates, such as civil and military figures, were exempted from the offer.
 - B. When 10 percent of the 1860 voting population in any Rebel state had taken the oath, they could organize a loyal state government that Lincoln would recognize.
 - 1. That government would have to accept the Emancipation Proclamation.
 - 2. Lincoln accepted a “temporary arrangement” under which black people would remain an essentially landless laboring class.
 - 3. This “arrangement” would cushion the shock of a sudden change in labor and social relations.
 - C. The plan applied immediately to areas under Union military control in December 1863. Large parts of Louisiana and Arkansas, key areas of Virginia and Mississippi, as well as most of Tennessee, qualified.

- III. The Radical Republicans in Congress criticized Lincoln’s plan heavily.
 - A. They said it provided too few safeguards for black freedom, because it did not provide land for economic independence and it left open the door for continued economic exploitation of black labor.
 - B. Radical Republicans also said that the political terms were far too lenient.
 - 1. They believed that 10 percent was far too small a percentage of the 1860 voter pool to warrant a popular government loyal to the United States.
 - 2. The white South was guilty of treason and should be punished severely in the areas of property holdings and political rights.
 - 3. The South should be recast in the image of the free-labor North.

- IV. The Republican Party debated the topic of Reconstruction for the rest of the war, focusing on whether the executive or the legislative branch of government would control the process.
 - A. Lincoln insisted that the Confederate states had not really left the Union, because the Union was indissoluble.
 - 1. They were temporarily under the control of bad leaders.
 - 2. Reconstruction meant merely allowing loyal white southerners to reassert control.
 - B. Most Republicans in Congress opposed Lincoln’s wish to allow Rebels back into the Union by taking the oath.

- 1. Only men who had been Unionists all along should have leadership in the South.
- 2. The seceding states had forfeited their constitutional rights. Thaddeus Stevens felt that they should be treated like conquered provinces, while Charles Sumner thought they were now Federal territories.
- 3. The southern states should be made to guarantee civil and political rights for freed people—they were the most loyal segment of the southern populace.
- C. Lincoln appointed military governors in four occupied states: Louisiana, Arkansas, Virginia, and Tennessee (Andrew Johnson was the governor there).
- V. The two sides clashed in 1864 over policy in Louisiana.
 - A. Lincoln accepted a state government and constitution that abolished slavery but failed to provide strong guarantees for freed people’s rights.
 - 1. Radicals damned the results in Louisiana as typical of what Lincoln’s conciliatory approach would yield, particularly because no radical Unionists had a voice in the government.
 - 2. Congress refused to seat representatives from Louisiana and Arkansas.
 - B. Congress answered with the Wade-Davis Bill of July 1864.
 - 1. It required that 50 percent of the citizens enrolled as voters in a state seeking to form a new loyal government take the oath of allegiance (an “ironclad” oath of past loyalty).
 - 2. It mandated that the states write new constitutions before setting up a loyal state government.
 - 3. It provided stronger safeguards for freed people’s rights but did not grant the franchise to black men.
 - 4. It provided for political liability for anyone who had borne arms against the United States.
 - C. The framers hoped the 50 percent provision would delay the process until after the war when the North might be willing to press for harsher measures against the South.
 - 1. Lincoln killed the bill with a pocket veto.
 - 2. Radical Republicans issued the “Wade-Davis Manifesto” on 11 August 1864, calling Lincoln’s action an “outrage.”
 - 3. The Radicals maneuvered unsuccessfully to deny Lincoln the Republican nomination for the presidency in 1864.
- VI. Lincoln and Congress enjoyed better relations on this issue toward the end of the war.
 - A. Lincoln’s 10 percent governments were functioning in two states.

1. He promised to accept legislation similar to the Wade-Davis Bill for future states if Congress would accept the two 10 percent plan governments.
 2. A short-lived compromise broke down when Congress proved unable to agree on new legislation.
- B. On April 11, 1865 (only three days before his assassination), Lincoln made a speech in which he mentioned that he would soon make a new announcement regarding Reconstruction.

Essential Reading:

Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863–1877*, chapter 2.

McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*, chapter 23.

Paludan, "A People's Contest": *The Union and the Civil War, 1861–1865*, chapter 10.

Supplementary Reading:

Harris, *With Charity for All: Lincoln and the Restoration of the Union*.

Simpson, *The Reconstruction Presidents*, Part 1.

Questions to Consider:

1. In light of the scale of human and material cost during the war, do you find it reasonable to argue that most Confederates should have been restored to full citizenship simply by taking the oath of allegiance to the United States?
2. Does the wartime debate over Reconstruction suggest that the North felt confident that it would defeat the Confederacy?

Lecture Thirty

The Naval War

Scope: This lecture introduces the naval side of Civil War military operations. Often overlooked or slighted in treatments of the conflict, the United States Navy played a major role in defeating the Confederacy. For its part, the Confederacy used technology and a small group of ironclads and commerce raiders in an impressive attempt to offset northern numbers and power. The North began with just 42 commissioned vessels manned by fewer than 10,000 officers and seamen. Four years later the United States Navy rivaled Britain's Royal Navy with nearly 60,000 men and 700 vessels, about a third of which were steam warships constructed during the war and 70 of which were ironclads. Northern industrial might made this remarkable transformation possible and guaranteed that the Confederacy would steadily lose ground in naval power. Northern strategy employed naval strength in three important ways: as a blockading force designed to cut off southern commerce with Europe, thus fulfilling part of the Anaconda Plan; in joint army-navy efforts along the Mississippi and other rivers; and as an important element in operations against key points along the Confederate coast. The Navy also helped guard Union lines of communication and supply along southern rivers. The Confederates began the war with no navy and put their limited resources into construction of ironclads that were capable of destroying wooden blockading vessels (37 were either completed or under construction when the war ended), technological developments designed to protect crucial harbors, and the purchase of several swift commerce raiders that preyed on northern shipping. The innovative Confederates even built the world's first successful submarine.

The blockade proved to be the most important element of the naval war. Throughout the conflict, the North slowly extended its control over the Confederate coastline by sealing ports, closing Wilmington, the last important southern port to fall, by capturing Fort Fisher in January 1865. The Union Navy never completely cut off commerce between the Confederacy and the outside world; however, it reduced that commerce to about one-third of its prewar levels, thereby denying the Confederacy precious war-related materials. By the end of the war, the blockade functioned as a principal component of the total northern war effort.

Outline

- I. The North began the war with a small navy but built it into a massive force by 1865.

- A. The number of commissioned vessels increased from 42 to nearly 700; 236 of these were new steam-powered warships, 70 were ironclads, and many others were converted merchant vessels.
 - B. Manpower increased from fewer than 10,000 to about 60,000.
 - C. Expenditures rose between 1861 and 1865 from about \$12,000,000 to \$123,000,000.
 - D. Congress and Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles mandated organizational changes.
 - 1. They created a new roster of ranks (including admiral).
 - 2. They provided for mandatory retirement at age 62 after 45 years of service.
 - 3. They created a system of bureaus (including one for steam engineering).
- II. Northern strategy used naval strength in several ways.**
- A. The Navy blockaded the Confederate coast as part of the “Anaconda Plan.”
 - 1. The South’s 3,500 miles of coastline, with hundreds of bays, rivers, and estuaries, posed a daunting challenge.
 - 2. Union operations closed southern ports one after another.
 - B. The Navy supported important military operations along southern rivers.
 - 1. It worked with Grant at Forts Henry and Donelson, Shiloh, and Vicksburg.
 - 2. It worked with McClellan on the James River and the Virginia peninsula in 1862.
 - 3. The Navy guarded Union lines of communication and supply along rivers and the Confederate coast.
- III. The Confederacy built a navy from scratch but could never compete with Union power at sea, on the rivers, or along the coast.**
- A. The South placed resources in a program that built or began construction of 37 ironclads.
 - 1. The C.S.S. *Virginia* (formerly the U.S.S. *Merrimack*) and other ironclads threatened the northern blockading squadrons.
 - 2. All the ironclads were underpowered, because the South could not build large enough engines.
 - B. A total of 237 officers resigned from the U.S. Navy to serve the South.
 - 1. The South had no real naval tradition, nor a shipbuilding industry.
 - 2. The South captured some naval bases and stores early in the war.
 - C. Confederate naval strategy sought to use innovation and technology to overcome a disadvantage in resources.
 - 1. Confederates hoped ironclads would help cancel superior numbers of northern wooden vessels.
 - 2. They used naval mines (called “torpedoes” in the nineteenth century) to protect harbors and river mouths. Mines sank 43 Union ships during the war.
 - 3. They built small rams and torpedo boats to harass Union blockading vessels.
 - 4. They built the *Hunley*, the world’s first successful submarine, which sank the U.S.S. *Housatonic* off Charleston, South Carolina, on 17 February 1864.
- IV. The blockade, imposed on 19 April 1861, was the most important naval dimension of the war. On 11 May 1861, the first blockade runner was captured.**
- A. The North seized key points along the southern coast to use as bases for blockading vessels.
 - 1. Hatteras Inlet, North Carolina, fell in August 1861.
 - 2. Ship Island off Biloxi, Mississippi, fell in September 1861.
 - 3. Port Royal, South Carolina, fell in November 1861 to a major Union effort.
 - B. The North systematically closed important southern ports and inlets.
 - 1. Savannah Harbor was closed to blockade runners in April 1862.
 - 2. Roanoke Island fell in February 1862, closing 150 miles of the North Carolina Sounds.
 - 3. The *Virginia* failed to break the Union blockade of Norfolk in March 1862 in the first battle of ironclads in history, fought with the U.S.S. *Monitor*.
 - 4. New Orleans fell in April 1862 to David Glasgow Farragut’s fleet.
 - 5. Mobile Bay was closed in August 1864.
 - 6. Wilmington, North Carolina, was closed in January 1865.
 - 7. The one city that resisted naval attack for the entire war was Charleston, South Carolina.
- V. The blockade never sealed the entire Confederate coast, but it proved effective as a component of Union strategy.**
- A. Overall, nine of ten blockade runners got through in 1861 and one of two in 1865.
 - 1. The South was able to import material throughout the war.
 - 2. A total of 8,500 ships got through, but 1,500 were captured.
 - B. About 20,000 vessels had cleared southern ports in the four years before the war and just 8,500 did so during the conflict.

1. Fewer ships tried to get in because of the blockade.
 2. The ships that got through were smaller on average than the prewar vessels.
- C. The net result was a two-thirds reduction in southern maritime trade during the war.
1. This hurt the war effort, because the Confederacy could not produce all the military goods it needed to fight the war.
 2. This also hurt civilian morale, because nonmilitary goods became scarce.

Essential Reading:

McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*, chapters 10, 12–13.

Supplementary Reading:

Davis, *Duel between the First Ironclads*.

Jones, *The Civil War at Sea*, vols. 1, 3.

Luraghi, *A History of the Confederate Navy*, chapters 1–3.

Perry, *Infernal Machines: The Story of Confederate Submarine and Mine Warfare*.

Still, *Iron Afloat: The Story of the Confederate Armorclads*, chapters 1–2.

Time-Life Books, *The Civil War: The Blockade, Runners and Raiders*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Can you imagine Union victory during the Civil War without the superiority of its Navy?
2. Think about Union naval wartime record. What conclusions can you draw (and support with facts) about the overall power of the northern economy and its ability to achieve astonishing military production while producing enormous amounts of consumer goods? Do the same kind of analysis with respect to the Confederate States Navy. What conclusions can you draw from the results of the two comparisons?

Lecture Thirty-One

The River War and Confederate Commerce Raiders

Scope: This lecture examines operations along the Mississippi and other western rivers and the impact of Confederate commerce raiders. The campaigning in the Western Theater afforded opportunities for the North's navy to play a major role. The Union put together a flotilla that included seven ironclads specifically designed for duty in narrow, shallow rivers. Under the command of Andrew Hull Foote and, later, Charles H. Davis and David Dixon Porter, the Union Navy cooperated effectively with Ulysses S. Grant's operations against Forts Henry and Donelson on the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers (February 1862) and the citadel at Vicksburg on the Mississippi (December 1862–July 1863). The Union Navy also assisted in the capture of Island No. 10 and Memphis (March–June 1862). Without the help of the Navy, it would have been far more difficult for the North to gain control of the Mississippi River and middle and western Tennessee.

As many weaker nations had done in the past, the Confederacy turned to commerce raiders to combat a stronger naval opponent. A range of problems convinced the Davis Administration that privateers promised more trouble than results, so the focus shifted to cruisers that would act as commerce raiders (privateers typically sold captured vessels, while commerce raiders typically destroyed them). Confederate strategists hoped these cruisers would do such damage to northern shipping that the North would have to send its blockading squadrons in pursuit of the raiders, terrorize northern coastal areas, and help induce war weariness among northern civilians. Lacking the necessary shipbuilding facilities, the Confederacy purchased several cruisers from British builders. Led by the C.S.S. *Alabama*, C.S.S. *Florida*, and C.S.S. *Shenandoah*, the southern raiders captured more than 250 merchantmen and whalers, drove another 700 to register under foreign flags, and kept many of the remainder in port because of skyrocketing insurance rates. Although the northern merchant marine suffered, northern commerce continued; shippers and companies used foreign bottoms to haul their cargoes. The raiders failed to achieve any of the broad strategic goals, garnering headlines but making no major contribution to the Confederate war effort.

Outline

- I. The Confederacy was vulnerable on the Mississippi, Tennessee, and Cumberland Rivers, so the Union devoted considerable attention to the Navy's role in the Western Theater.

- A. The Navy would contribute to the attempt to seize control of the Mississippi River and fulfill part of the Anaconda Plan.
 - B. The North created a flotilla to support Union armies along the western rivers.
 - 1. Side-wheelers were converted into timberclad warships.
 - 2. James B. Eads and Samuel Pook designed and built seven ironclads (dubbed "Pook's turtles") intended specifically for service on the narrow, shallow rivers.
 - 3. These vessels were 175 feet long, mounted 13 guns, and could go 9 knots downstream. By early 1862, all were afloat.
- II. The Navy played a major role in important western campaigns.
- A. A flotilla under Andrew H. Foote supported Grant's operations against Fort Henry on the Tennessee River and Fort Donelson on the Cumberland River in February 1862.
 - 1. The Navy took Fort Henry virtually without the army's help.
 - 2. The Navy suffered considerable losses at Fort Donelson, but the Cumberland River was opened by the Union victory.
 - B. Two timberclads fought at Shiloh in April 1862.
 - C. The U.S. Navy fought in actions on the upper Mississippi River.
 - 1. In March and April, a flotilla under Foote cooperated in driving Confederates from their stronghold at Island No. 10 near New Madrid, Missouri.
 - 2. Foote's flotilla (commanded by Charles H. Davis) defeated Confederate vessels in the Battle of Memphis on June 6, 1862.
 - D. A flotilla under David Dixon Porter assisted Grant in the campaign against Vicksburg in December 1862–July 1863.
 - 1. Naval forces assisted in the unsuccessful maneuvering in the winter of 1862.
 - 2. Under David Dixon Porter, vessels ran past the Vicksburg batteries in April 1863, setting up Grant's final movements toward Jackson and Vicksburg, which fell on 4 July 1863.
 - E. Without the Navy, the North would have faced a much sterner task in winning control of the western rivers and the hinterlands they drained.
- III. The Confederacy resorted to privateering and commerce raiding as part of a strategy designed to overcome Union naval advantages.
- A. The Confederacy lacked the shipyards to build commerce raiders and the ports to sustain them; therefore, it decided to attack indirectly.
 - 1. It turned to Britain as a source of seagoing vessels.
 - 2. It purchased several commerce raiders, both steam and sail, that were fast and heavily armed.
 - 3. It tried (unsuccessfully) to purchase powerful ironclad rams (the so-called "Laird rams," after the shipyard in which they were built).
 - B. The South hoped attacks on northern commerce would accomplish a range of goals, including forcing the North to divert blockading vessels to deal with privateers and raiders, posing a threat to northern coastal areas, and depressing northern morale.
- IV. Privateering was a traditional tool used by weaker naval powers that proved unsuccessful for the Confederacy.
- A. Jefferson Davis offered commissions to privateers in April 1861.
 - 1. Lincoln announced that privateers would be treated as pirates and hanged.
 - 2. Davis countered that Union prisoners of war would be hanged if crews of privateers were executed.
 - 3. The crew of the *Jeff Davis* was convicted and sentenced to death, but Lincoln backed down in 1862 when Davis ordered Union prisoners to draw lots to see who would be executed.
 - B. Neutral ports responded to pressure from the United States and refused to admit prizes taken by Confederate privateers.
 - C. The Union blockade made it difficult for privateers to take prizes into southern ports.
 - D. Without places to dispose of prizes, interest in privateering declined and the focus of the assault on the northern merchant marine shifted to commerce raiders.
- V. Commerce raiders numbered only 20 vessels but cut a wide swath through the Union merchant marine.
- A. Raphael Semmes was the most famous and successful captain of Confederate raiders.
 - 1. He captured 18 northern vessels with the steamer C.S.S. *Sumter* in 1862.
 - 2. He captured 65 northern vessels with the steam sloop C.S.S. *Alabama* (with a largely British crew) in 1862–1864 before losing a storied duel with the better-armed U.S.S. *Kearsarge* off Cherbourg, France, on June 19, 1864. Semmes escaped to England.
 - B. Two other cruisers compiled dazzling records. The C.S.S. *Florida* captured 55 northern vessels and the C.S.S. *Shenandoah* captured 38 merchantmen and whalers before surrendering several months after the end of the war (November 1865).
 - C. Commerce raiders did considerable damage to the United States merchant marine fleet.
 - 1. They captured a total of 257 vessels.
 - 2. They caused owners to transfer at least 700 vessels to foreign flags.
 - 3. They forced insurance rates to such heights that most remaining vessels flying the United States flag remained in port.

- D. Nonetheless, Confederate commerce raiders had little impact on the northern war effort or American commerce.
1. The North did not weaken the blockade to deal with raiders.
 2. Raiders did not threaten coastal areas.
 3. Northern commerce continued at full stride, because shippers and northern companies simply used foreign bottoms to carry their goods.

Essential Reading:

McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*, chapters 13, 18, 22.

Supplementary Reading:

Jones, *The Civil War at Sea*, vols. 2–3.

Luraghi, *A History of the Confederate Navy*, chapters 5, 12, 18.

Marvel, *The Alabama and the Kearsarge: The Sailor's Civil War*.

Robinson, *The Confederate Privateers*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Try to envision the war along the western rivers without northern naval superiority. How would this have complicated the Union task?
2. Would the Confederacy have been better served to ignore its Navy and pour all its resources into its armies? Would this have been feasible?

Lecture Thirty-Two Women at War,I

Scope: This lecture begins a two-part consideration of the ways in which women experienced the Civil War. This lecture will first consider how prewar northern and southern society idealized white women, how those idealized pictures differed in some important regards, and how they diverged from the reality of many women's lives at the time war erupted. Second, the lecture will sketch some common elements of the war's impact on women in the North and South. Finally, we will look at the wartime experience of northern women behind the lines.

Most northern women, like their male relatives and loved ones, had no conception of how all-encompassing the conflict would become. Nothing in their backgrounds prepared them for the many wartime changes. The war provided opportunities for middle-class women to enter the public sphere. Many worked with benevolent organizations, such as the U.S. Sanitary Commission, a major force in the war that grew out of Ladies or Soldiers Aid societies and sewing circles formed spontaneously early in the war across the North. These benevolent organizations raised money that purchased medical supplies, religious publications, and other goods that eased the soldier's burden. Women also entered the nursing profession, with Clara Barton and Dorothea Dix playing especially prominent roles. Still other women worked for the government as clerks and secretaries—positions that, like those in nursing, had been largely reserved for males before the war. The experiences of poorer white women and black women during the war are less well understood. Women filled a quarter of the manufacturing jobs but earned less than half the average wage of male workers. Wives of small farmers or workers who were widowed by the conflict often found themselves with no means of support. A number of them were arrested and imprisoned, which they considered preferable to a dangerous and uncertain life on the streets.

Outline

- I. Of 31 million Americans at the time of the Civil War, 15 million were women; it is well worth examining and considering how the war affected them and how they affected the war.
 - A. Women ran the gamut of all categories of the population. It is hard to generalize about them.
 1. Women on both sides took on the work of men at home, although northern women were not as directly touched by occupation and destruction of property as southern women were.

2. Most women supported their respective causes, but many on both sides also faltered in their support.
- B.** Both the North and the South in the mid-nineteenth century idealized upper- and middle-class white women. The “cult of domesticity” offered an ideal for the North.
1. This ideal placed men and women in separate spheres—men outside the home in a public sphere of politics and business and women in a domestic sphere at home, where they nurtured children and provided moral guidance for the family.
 2. Publications, lecturers, and ministers emphasized that women had a special moral gift to preserve society. In this concept, men were weak and easily tempted. Women provided a pure home, a shelter to which they (the men) could return each evening.
- C.** The ideal of “the lady” held sway in the South.
1. Manners and “purity” made a lady (Melanie Wilkes in *Gone With the Wind* is a slightly exaggerated version of this ideal).
 2. These ladies would be educated enough to converse in polite company and be engaging and uplifting.
 3. The ladies would also manage domestic production in households that were sometimes complex, but they never performed manual labor, such as cooking, cleaning, and washing.
 4. Manners and customs were important throughout the United States but more so in the South.
- II.** Most women’s lives were at least partly removed from these ideals, and they experienced inequalities.
- A.** Women could not vote. Education was limited for girls and women. Divorce was difficult (only 1 in 21 marriages ended in divorce).
- B.** Women in the North held one-fourth of the manufacturing jobs and two-thirds of the textile industry jobs but made only one-half the wages that men did. These workers were mostly young, single women, working to build a dowry before marriage. Many of these jobs went to immigrants (especially those from Ireland) as the war approached.
- C.** Many northern women operated outside the home before the war.
1. They worked as teachers and in charity, both of which were considered “womanly” work.
 2. They participated in reform movements, such as temperance, education and prison reform, and antislavery.
 3. The “women’s movement” itself, which pressed for equal rights beginning in 1848, was solely a northern phenomenon.
- D.** Only the wealthiest slaveholding women in the South fully met the ideal of the lady.

1. Most slaveholding women were busy managing plantations or farms. They oversaw dairy and egg production, spinning and weaving, and cultivation of vegetable gardens.
 2. They also managed the sick room and nursery.
- E.** Northern and southern white women also has much in common.
1. Daily life on small to middling farms was similar in labor demands.
 2. Women in both sections generally agreed on who should rear children (women) or run for political office and manage businesses (men).
- III.** The war brought change to the lives of many women in the North.
- A.** Some became active in benevolent associations (such as the U.S. Sanitary Commission), which raised money to purchase goods to improve soldiers’ lives at the front. No women held top positions of authority in these organizations.
1. Women joined Ladies and Soldiers Aid Societies and sewing circles.
 2. They worked with the New York Central Association of Relief, formed in 1861.
 3. They gained practical political and organizational experience in these activities that would be useful in the suffrage movement.
- B.** Roughly 8,000 women worked as nurses, fundamentally changing the profession from one dominated by men to one dominated by women. Among them were Louisa May Alcott, who volunteered as a nurse in Georgetown; Clara Barton, who played a conspicuous role in forming the American Red Cross; and Dorothea Dix, who served as Superintendent of Nursing.
- C.** Women filled secretarial and clerks positions for the government, job categories previously dominated by men.
- D.** Working class women’s and black women’s lives are harder to sketch.
1. Industrial real wages declined during the war and women’s wages lagged far behind men’s. Piece rates declined more than 50 percent between 1861 and 1864 for women.
 2. Widows of poorer husbands faced enormous difficulties and not infrequently served time in prison rather than live on the streets.
- E.** How permanent were the changes that occurred? When men returned from the war, they resumed their old jobs. Some women were probably not so happy to give up the new horizons they had discovered.

Essential Reading:

Clinton and Silber, eds., *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War*

Lecture Thirty-Three

Women at War, II

Supplementary Reading:

Attie, *Patriotic Toil: Northern Women and the American Civil War*.

Massey, *Bonnet Brigades*.

McPherson and Cooper, eds., *Writing the Civil War: The Quest to Understand*, Faust essay.

Questions to Consider:

1. Do you believe the Civil War served as a central event in the lives of northern women to the same degree that it did in the lives of northern soldiers?
2. Do you see parallels between debates about women's proper wartime roles in the mid-nineteenth century and debates about women's proper roles today?

Scope: This lecture continues our discussion of women during the war, turning the spotlight on two major topics. The first is women's experiences behind the lines in the Confederacy; the second is northern and southern women's work at the front. Women on both sides of the conflict shared common feelings of separation from male loved ones and a sense of loss when soldiers died or were killed. Poorer farm women suffered similar hardships and assumed greater burdens in the absence of their husbands. Despite these common hardships, it is important to note that women in the Confederacy felt the war more directly than their northern counterparts did. Because their lives were subject to direct intrusion from campaigning armies, they frequently suffered physical privation, economic dislocation, and fear for the safety of their families and possessions. Thousands of women became refugees (a topic we will take up in a later lecture), and in the end, they suffered an absolute defeat unknown in the North.

Southern women labored behind the lines much as northern women did, performing benevolent work; becoming full-time nurses or, more commonly, volunteering for temporary nursing duty; assuming enormous burdens on non-slaveholding farms; and working in war-related industries (though to a lesser degree than in the North). Slaveholding women took on additional authority in the absence of their husbands. Faced with acute shortages of food and other necessities, southern women expressed discontent. Often left alone to cope with advancing armies, they also experienced fear and isolation. Among black women, the war sometimes brought emancipation and the opportunity to solidify families and validate marriages while escaping the control of slavery. Many former slave women tried to devote themselves to their homes rather than continue to labor in the fields. The front attracted more women than might seem likely. Thousands served as nurses—most of them from the middle class, contending with filthy conditions, danger from disease, and hostility from some men. A handful of women disguised themselves and joined the military; others served as spies and camp followers of various kinds. The war altered the lives of women in sometimes dramatic and sometimes subtle ways. Some of the changes were short-lived, while others lingered long after the end of fighting.

Outline

- I. Southern women took on many of the same roles as northern women.
 - A. They worked in Soldiers' Aid Societies in communities or states, although these societies in the South never enjoyed the same level of organization as they did in the North. In the South, the societies were community based, as opposed to national in scope.
 - B. Southern women entered the nursing profession.
 1. About 1,000 became professional nurses.
 2. Far more served on an ad hoc basis (as Scarlett O'Hara did in *Gone With the Wind*).
 3. They often did not have to leave home to find the war as northern women usually did.
 - C. Some women worked for the Confederate government, although fewer did so in the South than in the North. This type of labor became more common as more men were drafted starting in 1862–1863.
 - D. The most important part of the Confederate women's story took place on farms.
 1. They filled in for husbands in the army as either managers or field laborers.
 2. The presence of slavery added a dimension missing in most of the North (the border states were an exception).
 3. Mistresses on plantations and large farms often had to rely on slaves for help.
- II. Hardship and fear prompted southern women to react in ways uncommon or unknown in the North.
 - A. They expressed discontent because of shortages of food and goods.
 1. There were bread riots in various places (Richmond, 1863, is a major example).
 2. Women wrote to the national government.
 3. They begged husbands in the army to come home and help out.
 - B. They defended their homes and property from Federal soldiers and marauding Confederate irregulars.
 1. Crops, farm animals, and household goods were often targeted by soldiers.
 2. Homes were used for headquarters or field hospitals.
 3. Women feared physical violation.
 - C. Thousands of southern women became refugees.
 1. Many went to cities because they considered them safer than the countryside. Richmond's population, for example, grew significantly during the war.
 2. Others removed to distant parts of the Confederacy considered unlikely targets of northern military campaigns.

- D. The war exacted a higher toll on southern families.
 1. A far higher percentage of Confederate men (25 percent) were killed or died in service, leaving a higher proportion of widows.
 2. Women found themselves as heads of families.
 3. Women outnumbered men by wide margins in most southern states after the war and had slim prospects for remarrying.
 4. These changes affected work and patterns of authority in the post-war South.
- III. Black women also experienced hardship and dislocation but nonetheless derived major benefits from the war.
 - A. Freedom came at different times in different parts of the Confederacy.
 1. Freed women and men could try to consolidate their families.
 2. They could formalize and legalize their marriages.
 3. They escaped the stultifying tyranny of slavery.
 - B. Black women were able to construct their own ideas about womanhood. They often tried to devote more attention to their households and sought to quit laboring in the fields.
- IV. Women were surprisingly numerous at the front.
 - A. They worked in the medical profession, which before the war had been almost entirely male.
 1. They often had to fight for the right to work in hospitals, because such work went against Victorian norms of propriety.
 2. They faced backbreaking labor and the possibility of infection.
 3. They fought the debilitating effects of a routine made up of long stretches of boredom punctuated by periods of gruesome labor.
 4. Most in the North were middle-class women inspired by Florence Nightingale's example in the Crimean War (1853–1856).
 - B. A few women (at least 400 in the North) disguised themselves and served as soldiers.
 1. Some wanted to be near husbands or lovers.
 2. Some were unmarried and patriotic.
 3. Some were prostitutes.
 4. Wounds or pregnancies unmasked some of these women soldiers.
 - C. Other women served as spies or camp followers.
 1. The efforts of women spies (such as Rose Greenhow and Belle Boyd) typically have been grossly exaggerated, but some rendered solid service.
 2. Camp followers included laundresses, teamsters, runaway slaves, and other mostly lower-class women.
 3. Some wealthier women (especially wives of southern officers) accompanied husbands to the front and lived nearby.

4. Unlike the popular image of camp followers as prostitutes, many of these women added to a sense of family and community by organizing religious activities and helping with hygiene.
- V. The war had a great impact on women and women had an impact on the war.
- A. Some women gained experience that they later used in reform movements.
 - B. In the North, the war opened more long-term opportunities in the health care field and perhaps other areas, such as secretarial work and teaching.
 - C. In the South, more white women had to perform field work, while similar work became somewhat less common for black women.
 - D. The long-term impact on marriage and family roles is unclear.
 1. "Spinsters" had less of a stigma after the war.
 2. Marriage remained the ideal, but war widows made people more sympathetic to single women.
 3. More women remained single heads of households.
 - E. Most women, northern and southern, supported their respective war efforts.
 - F. The war may have had a subtle "hardening" effect on some women similar to that experienced by men in combat.

Essential Reading:

Clinton and Silber, *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War*

Supplementary Reading:

Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War*.

Massey, *Bonnet Brigades*.

Rable, *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism*.

Questions to Consider:

1. How does the experience of white women in the Confederacy deviate from that of most other white women in American history?
2. Is it useful to speak of a "women's" Civil War? Or are the experiences of various groups of women so different as to make generalizations impossible?

Lecture Thirty-Four Stalemate in 1864

Scope: This lecture returns to military events with an examination of Union planning in the winter and spring of 1864 and attention to some early failures in executing northern strategy. As chief of Union forces west of the Appalachians, Ulysses S. Grant initially formulated a strategy for that arena. When he was promoted to General-in-Chief of the Union armies in March 1864, Grant broadened his thinking to encompass the entire military landscape. His final plan called for simultaneous advances on five fronts: Banks would strike from Louisiana against Mobile; Sherman would lead a group of three armies against Atlanta from Chattanooga; Grant would accompany Meade's Army of the Potomac in a campaign against Lee's Army of Northern Virginia; Benjamin Butler would move up the James River to menace Richmond from the south; and Franz Sigel would march out of West Virginia into the Shenandoah Valley to take control of that vital granary. Grant hoped to apply such pressure across the board that the Confederacy would be unable to muster sufficient resources to meet all the threats.

The most important action would be in Virginia and North Georgia, with the majority of northerners and southerners looking most closely at the duel between Grant and Lee in Virginia. Grant wanted all the armies in motion during the first week in May. This well-conceived plan quickly began to unravel, however, because of inept performances by Banks, Butler, and Sigel. Banks bogged down in a tangential operation along the Red River of Louisiana and never advanced against Mobile. Butler made a good start but retreated to a defensive position at Bermuda Hundred after a sharp engagement with Confederates under P. G. T. Beauregard at Drewry's Bluff just below Richmond on May 16. Sigel made progress up the Valley until May 15, when he was defeated at the Battle of New Market by a small Confederate force commanded by John C. Breckinridge. These failures meant that the brunt of Grant's grand offensive would be carried by the Army of the Potomac and Sherman's force.

Outline

- I. Grant began 1864 as chief Union commander in the West and planned a strategy for that theater.
 - A. Grant plotted a "strategy of exhaustion" designed to strike at the enemy's logistical and industrial capacity.
 1. This strategy would destroy the food and other material goods necessary to maintain Confederate armies in the field.

2. The plan was different than a “strategy of attrition,” which seeks to reduce the enemy’s manpower by inflicting casualties in battle.
- B.** Grant envisioned two main campaigns in the spring of 1864.
1. Sherman would march from Chattanooga toward Atlanta.
 2. Banks would strike from Louisiana against Mobile, Alabama.
- C.** Union forces would live off the land whenever possible, which would free up soldiers usually assigned to protecting long supply lines and deny food and fodder to the Confederacy.
- D.** Sherman carried out a small-scale trial in the Meridian campaign of February 1864.
- II.** Grant expanded his strategic thinking after his promotion to General-in-Chief in March 1864 with the rank of Lieutenant General (previously worn only by George Washington).
- A.** He formulated a strategy that combined elements of exhaustion and attrition.
1. He retained his plans for the Western Theater, even while moving his headquarters to the East.
 2. In Virginia, Meade’s Army of the Potomac would engage Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia with the goal of tying it down and inflicting the greatest possible number of casualties.
 3. Butler’s small Army of the James would advance against Richmond from the south.
 4. Sigel’s small force would move from West Virginia to the Shenandoah Valley and attack Confederate logistics in that great granary.
- B.** Grant would accompany the Army of the Potomac.
1. He preferred to remain in the West.
 2. Northern public opinion demanded that he face Lee in Virginia.
- C.** The five advances under Banks, Sherman, Meade (Grant), Butler, and Sigel would begin simultaneously in the first week in May 1864.
1. Grant hoped simultaneous pressure on so many fronts would stretch limited Confederate resources to the breaking point.
 2. Meade’s (Grant’s) and Sherman’s parts of the strategy were most important.
- D.** The northern public had high expectations because of Grant’s previous record of success.
- III.** Early execution of Grant’s strategy was deeply flawed on all the secondary fronts.
- A.** Banks never advanced against Mobile.
1. He became bogged down in the Red River campaign in the Trans-Mississippi, starting in March 1864.

2. He barely extricated his army from a badly managed operation after the Battles of Mansfield/Sabine Crossroads and Pleasant Hill in early May.
- B.** General Benjamin Butler made a promising start, but retreated before reaching Richmond.
1. His army was just 7 miles from Richmond by mid-May.
 2. He retreated after the Battle of Drewry’s Bluff on May 16.
 3. He hunkered down in Bermuda Hundred and played no active role for several weeks.
 4. Beauregard was able to send troops to reinforce Lee.
- C.** Sigel marched southward into the Shenandoah Valley.
1. His goal was Staunton, a vital rail center.
 2. He retreated northward after the Battle of New Market on 15 May. In this battle, cadets from the Virginia Military Institute made a famous charge against veteran Union troops.
- D.** The failures of Banks, Butler, and Sigel left Meade (Grant) and Sherman bearing the entire burden of Union success in the spring of 1864.

Essential Reading:

Hattaway and Jones. *How the North Won: A Military History of the Civil War*, chapters 15–16.

McPherson. *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*, chapter 24.

Supplementary Reading:

Davis, *The Battle of New Market*.

Johnson, *Red River Campaign: Politics and Cotton in the Civil War*.

Robertson, *Back Door to Richmond: The Bermuda Hundred Campaign, April–June 1864*.

Questions to Consider:

1. How did Union strategic planning in early 1864 reflect the ways in which politics and military affairs intersected?
2. Try to imagine yourself a civilian in the North in April 1864. How optimistic would you be about Union prospects for victory?

Lecture Thirty-Five

Sherman versus Johnston in Georgia

Scope: This lecture continues our examination of military events in 1864, training a lens on the first ten weeks of the campaign for Atlanta. This operation figured prominently in Grant's strategic blueprint for the spring of 1864. He expected Sherman to advance southward from Chattanooga toward Atlanta, using the railroad between those cities as a supply line. Once Atlanta fell, Grant wanted Sherman to strike into the Confederate interior in a logistical raid that would implement the strategy of exhaustion. Sherman commanded what would be called an army group in modern parlance. Under his command were George H. Thomas's Army of the Cumberland, James B. McPherson's Army of the Tennessee, and John M. Schofield's Army of the Ohio—a total of about 100,000 troops. Joseph Johnston and the Army of Tennessee, which initially numbered about 65,000 but gained strength as the campaign progressed, blocked Sherman's path. Sherman intended to use his three armies to maneuver Johnston out of defensive positions and, perhaps, catch him in a vulnerable situation where a flank might be assailed. Johnston hoped to delay Sherman while looking for a chance to counterpunch.

The campaign opened in early May and proceeded southward over the next two months. Poor coordination cost the Federals a golden opportunity at Resaca on May 12–13, after which Johnston covered himself well. Heavy skirmishing near New Hope Church, some 30 miles northwest of Atlanta, took place in late May, and Sherman launched futile frontal attacks against Johnston at Kennesaw Mountain a month later. Following a pair of successful Union flanking moves, Johnston retreated across the Chattahoochee River and occupied Atlanta's defenses on July 9–10. Johnston's constant retreating caused many Confederates to lose faith in him, and a crisis developed between Johnston and Jefferson Davis in mid-July. Aware that Atlanta held immense importance as a rail, manufacturing, and distribution center and was second only to Richmond in terms of psychological value, Davis decided to remove Johnston. On July 17, John Bell Hood assumed command of the Army of Tennessee. The first phase of the Atlanta campaign ended in stalemate; neither side won a significant battlefield victory and the armies settled into siege lines. Northerners expressed disappointment at Sherman's inability to capture the city more quickly, and many Confederate citizens lamented the loss of so much territory without a major fight.

Outline

- I. Union generals Grant and Sherman shared a rare bond that was of great value to the Union.
 - A. Grant always gave full credit to Sherman (the same was not true of all his subordinates).
 - B. Because of the failures of Banks, Sigel, and Butler, the onus for strategic success fell squarely on Sherman.
 - C. Sherman's success is arguably the result of the fact that Grant was his commanding general. Grant had inspiring confidence in eventual victory, but Sherman was not as consistent in his own outlook.
 - D. Sherman was a West Pointer but did not serve in the Mexican War as so many of his contemporaries had.
 1. He was very intelligent and an excellent speaker and writer.
 2. He considered himself a failure in 1858 but, in 1859, took a post at a military school in Louisiana.
 3. He fought at First Manassas, then went west to Kentucky, where he did not perform well.
 4. He served under Grant at Shiloh and thereafter.
 - E. Sherman and Grant came to share the same hard vision of how the war was to be waged.
- II. The first phase of the Atlanta campaign pitted major armies commanded by veteran commanders against one another.
 - A. Sherman led a 100,000-man force made up of three armies.
 1. George H. Thomas's Army of the Cumberland numbered 60,000.
 2. James B. McPherson's Army of the Tennessee numbered 25,000.
 3. John M. Schofield's Army of the Ohio numbered 15,000.
 4. Sherman had a record of success as Grant's subordinate but had suffered failure when commanding in Kentucky early in the war.
 - B. Joseph E. Johnston's Army of Tennessee mustered 65,000 men at the outset but would grow as the campaign developed to be the second largest army ever fielded by the Confederate States of America.
 1. Johnston had a reputation in some quarters as a general who retreated too often.
 2. His soldiers were delighted to serve under him instead of Braxton Bragg.
 3. His corps commanders were Hardee, Hood, and Polk.
- III. Grant expected Sherman's campaign to unfold in two stages to maneuver Johnston out of position on the approach to Atlanta.
 - A. The first stage would follow the railroad from Chattanooga to Atlanta.
 - B. After Atlanta fell, Sherman would implement the strategy of exhaustion by striking into the Georgia interior and living off the land.

- C. Sherman progressed steadily toward Atlanta with relatively little fighting.
 1. Johnston exposed his army at Resaca on May 12–13, but the Federals (notably McPherson) failed to exploit the opportunity to cut Johnston off from Atlanta.
 2. Heavy skirmishing occurred near New Hope Church 30 miles northwest of Atlanta in late May.
 - D. The armies were near Marietta, Georgia, by the second week of June, and Johnston anchored his flank on Kennesaw Mountain.
 1. Sherman decided to attack at Kennesaw Mountain on 27 June 1864, partly because he feared his men had lost the offensive edge.
 2. Johnston's troops easily repulsed the Federals, who lost 3,000 men, but Sherman resumed his advance and maneuvering.
 3. By July 9–10, Johnston had retreated across the Chattahoochee River and occupied the Atlanta defensive works.
- IV. Confederate reaction to the campaign was negative.
- A. Many newspapers criticized Johnston's retreating without an aggressive battle.
 - B. The Confederate Cabinet voted to remove Johnston. Corps commanders Hardee and Hood also wanted him removed and an unhappy Jefferson Davis asked Johnston how he planned to save Atlanta.
 1. Johnston gave a vague and evasive reply (as was his practice), and Davis reached the end of his patience with Johnston, which extended back to Vicksburg and, perhaps, before.
 2. On July 17, Davis replaced Johnston with John Bell Hood in hopes of saving the psychologically important city of Atlanta.
 3. This change met with a mixed reaction in the army, but Johnston had given Davis little choice. His phased withdrawal had cost up to 20,000 men and had not stopped Sherman.
 4. Sherman was pleased at the change, because he knew that Hood would be under pressure to attack.
 - C. The first phase of the ten-week campaign ended without a clear resolution.
 1. High northern expectations had suffered because of Sherman's failure to capture Atlanta.
 2. Confederates expressed concern about a Union army's reaching the important city without having to fight hard to get there.
 3. No one knew how long the siege might last or what the result would be.

Essential Reading:

Hattaway and Jones, *How the North Won: A Military History of the Civil War*, chapters 17–18.

McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*, chapters 24–25.

Supplementary Reading:

Castel, *Decision in the West: The Atlanta Campaign of 1864*, chapters 1–7.

Kennett, *Marching through Georgia: The Story of Soldiers and Civilians during Sherman's Campaign*, chapters 1–7.

Questions to Consider:

1. Joseph Johnston's removal came at a time when his actions between May and early July inspired heated public debate. How much influence do you believe public expectations and opinion should exert on military affairs in a democracy at war?
2. How do you think you would have viewed the campaigning in Georgia as a northern civilian? As a Confederate civilian?

Lecture Thirty-Six

The Wilderness to Spotsylvania

Scope: This lecture examines the first phase of the contest in Virginia during May 1864 between Grant and Lee. In many ways the preeminent military confrontation of the conflict, the Overland campaign brought together each side's greatest captain in an operation that would break new ground in terms of style and cost. Grant's presence inspired high expectations from a northern populace hungry for success against Lee. On the southern side, Lee remained the central figure in the Confederacy. His fellow citizens looked to him and his army as their bulwark in the struggle for independence. Because of the importance invested by the North and South in Grant and Lee, their campaign would have immense impact on civilian morale. Public pressure for a victory against Lee compelled Grant to adopt a strategy of attrition in Virginia. He would advance southward, engage Lee's army, tie it down so Lee could not send reinforcements to the West (as the Confederacy had done the preceding summer), and bleed it to the greatest possible degree. If all went well, Richmond would fall in the course of the campaign. Lee hoped to parry Grant's thrusts, look for an opening to counterattack, and prolong the conflict in hopes of depressing northern morale. The armies came to grips as soon as Grant crossed the Rapidan River in early May and remained locked in almost continuous fighting for the next six weeks. Two enormous battles took place in the first three weeks. In the Battle of the Wilderness on May 5–6, Lee struck Grant's army first, then absorbed heavy counterattacks from the Federals. Heavy fighting favored first one side then the other and resulted in 30,000 casualties, but Grant pressed southward rather than withdrawing, as so many other Federal commanders had done. At Spotsylvania, between May 8–21, the armies suffered another 30,000 casualties; fighting at the Bloody Angle on May 12 set a standard for slaughter unmatched on any other battlefield of the war. By the end of May, soldiers and civilians on both sides were beginning to see that a new type of costly, grinding warfare without clear winners and losers was developing in Virginia.

Outline

- I. The confrontation between Grant and Lee in May 1864 dominated headlines and greatly influenced civilian morale.
 - A. The North looked to Grant as the man who finally would defeat Lee.
 1. This desire compelled Grant to accompany the Army of the Potomac rather than direct the war from the west.

2. Northern civilian morale in March and April reached a point that would be satisfied only with unequivocal victory in Virginia.
 - B. Southerners looked to Lee as their chief national rallying point.
 1. They expected success from him and his Army of Northern Virginia.
 2. Lee's campaigns offset bad news from other parts of the Confederacy.
 - C. Because of these high expectations for Grant and Lee, their campaign would be the most important of May 1864.
- II. Grant had three goals in mind for his 120,000-man army as the campaign opened.
 - A. He would tie Lee down so the Confederates could not send reinforcements to Johnston's army in northern Georgia.
 - B. He would cripple Lee's army by applying constant pressure.
 1. Lincoln had been trying to get his generals to do this for three years.
 2. This marked a departure for Grant, who had suffered relatively few casualties in most of his earlier campaigns (Shiloh was an exception).
 - C. He would take Richmond following any sound defeat of the Army of Northern Virginia, if General Benjamin Butler did not take it first.
- III. Lee also had a range of goals for his army of 64,000.
 - A. He hoped to hold off the Federals and punish them enough to influence northern morale.
 - B. He hoped to parry Grant's offensive and find an opening to counterattack. He hated to act solely on the defensive and believed aggressiveness could partially nullify northern numbers.
 - C. He hoped to protect his supply routes to the Shenandoah Valley.
 - D. His greatest fear was that Grant would push him into the defenses of Richmond, which would end all hope of strategic maneuvering and lead to a siege that would almost certainly end in northern victory.
- IV. The campaign opened with the Battle of the Wilderness.
 - A. Lee attacked Grant on May 5 as the Union army marched south through the area of scrub forest known as the Wilderness of Spotsylvania.
 - B. Grant counterattacked along the Plank Road and Turnpike.
 1. There was a gap between the two wings of Lee's army.
 2. James Longstreet's First Corps had not reached the battlefield.
 3. The first day ended with Lee's army in a vulnerable position.
 - C. Grant resumed heavy assaults on May 6.
 1. Lee's army almost broke on A. P. Hill's end of the line and Lee risked his life to rally his troops.

2. Longstreet arrived just in time to repair the line.
3. Confederate flank attacks gained success on both ends of Grant's line, but Longstreet was badly wounded, accidentally shot by his own troops. This was a great loss to the Army of Northern Virginia.
4. The second day's fighting ended with the lines essentially where they had been at dawn.
5. Fires in the woods killed many of the wounded men, who couldn't be rescued by their comrades.

V. Grant pressed southward rather than retreating

- A. Union troops cheered him when they realized they would continue the campaign; the Confederates were surprised by Grant's move to their right flank.
- B. The armies collided again in the Battles at Spotsylvania Court House on May 8–21.
 1. Poor Union movement allowed Lee's army to set up a defense at Spotsylvania just in time to block Grant's advance.
 2. The Confederates erected field breastworks; part of their line was an exposed salient dubbed the "Mule Shoe."
 3. Grant mounted assaults on May 8–9 that Lee's troops easily repulsed, but a Union attack under Emory Upton broke through the west face of the "Mule Shoe" salient on May 10.
 4. Lack of reinforcements and coordination limited Union success; Grant determined to launch an assault against the "Mule Shoe."
 5. Grant attacked the "Mule Shoe" with 20,000 troops on May 12. The Federals enjoyed initial success, but the Confederates counterattacked and stabilized the line.
 6. Hideous fighting ensued for twenty hours at the northwest arc of the "Mule Shoe," later called the "Bloody Angle."
 7. Lee constructed a new line at the base of the salient and occupied it on the morning of May 13.
- C. Various engagements between May 13 and May 21 yielded no decisive result, and the armies proceeded south after Spotsylvania, having reached no clear decision.

Essential Reading:

Hattaway and Jones, *How the North Won: A Military History of the Civil War*, chapter 17.

McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*, chapter 24.

Supplementary Reading:

Catton, *A Stillness at Appomattox*, chapters 1–2.

Freeman, *Lee's Lieutenants: A Study in Command*, vol. 3, chapters 17–22.

_____, ed., *The Wilderness Campaign*.

_____, *The Battle of the Wilderness, May 5–6, 1864*.

_____, *The Battles for Spotsylvania Court House and the Road to Yellow Tavern, May 7–12, 1864*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Which side did the type of fighting at the Wilderness and Spotsylvania favor militarily?
2. Which home front do you believe could cope most easily with news about heavy casualties without clear resolution in May 1864?