Course Description: The Civil War is the seminal event in American history. The war ended the great contradiction between liberty and slavery and answered questions about the legitimacy of secession. Six hundred thousand Americans died in the conflict. Not surprisingly, no other historical event has generated such popular and scholarly interest or produced such an outpouring of books and articles. Yet, despite all of this attention, historians cannot agree on the causes of the war. To be sure, slavery was at the root of North-South tensions but slavery had existed since before the founding of the nation. What, then, accounts for the secession of eleven slaveholding states in the winter and spring of 1860 and 1861? Was the war the inevitable result of two irreconcilable cultures or economic systems or a preventable conflict brought on by fanatics and irresponsible politicians? What developments pushed slave and free states apart? Neither comprehensive nor chronological, this course will explore a variety of themes in the social, cultural, and gendered history of the United States from about 1815 until the end of the Civil War in attempt to assess why Americans went to war with each other in 1861.
In particular, we will focus on important historiographical debates that have shaped historians’ understanding of the period.

Course Objectives
Students will

- Locate, evaluate, and use secondary sources.
- Become familiar with the main events and themes in American history from the end of the War of 1812 until 1877.
- Identify major schools of thought and historiographical debates that have shaped historians’ understanding of the Antebellum period.
- Understand the ways in which historians have “constructed” the past.
- Learn to critically evaluate secondary sources.
- Further develop clear and effective oral and written communications skills.
- Use writing conventions appropriate to the discipline of history.

Required Texts


Required texts are available in the Moravian College bookstore. Additional readings are available via JSTOR or another database or will be placed on reserve in Reeves Library.

Attendance
While there is no penalty for missing classes, students are strongly encouraged to attend all classes. Comprehension of the material and success in the course depends upon your participating in class discussions.

Grade Distribution

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<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
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<td>Book Review</td>
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<td>Abstracts (2 books)</td>
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The participation grade reflects the quality and quantity of your participation. It is not an attendance grade. However, if you do not attend class, then you cannot participate.
**Reading Logs**
Throughout the semester you will be keep a weekly reading log in which you identify and evaluate the thesis, arguments, and evidence of articles and books you read. I will hand out forms which you can use to model your logs. I will read every log entry to ensure that you are keeping up with the reading and take them seriously. In terms of format and style, logs may be less formal than the essays. They will be graded for content, regularity, and willingness to engage with ideas, rather than for stylistic concerns such as spelling and grammar. Nonetheless, I do expect you to proofread your reading logs before handing them in. Reading logs are due at the **beginning** of class. Late logs will not be accepted. Logs will receive a grade of 1 or 0.

**Assignments**
During the course, you will write a major ten-page historiographical essay in stages. In consultation with me, you will select a topic and compile a ten-book bibliography. Together we will choose five books (or four books and three articles) from the bibliography, which you will use to write the historiographical essay. Between selecting a topic and writing the final paper, you will also write a book review of one of the books as well as abstracts of two other books (also from your bibliography). A historiographical essay should have a thesis and provide analysis on a number of works pertaining to one subject. Do not summarize the contents of the books. Instead, analyze the book’s evidence and conclusions and then compare the author’s evidence and conclusions with what you have found in other works.

**Late Policy**
Papers turned in after the beginning of the class on which they are due will be assessed a penalty of 10% for the first day they are late and 2% for each day thereafter. Computer and printing problems are not acceptable reasons for lateness.

**Academic Dishonesty**
According to the Moravian College Student Handbook, the following constitutes plagiarism: “as the use, deliberate or not, of any outside source without proper acknowledgment.” Plagiarism will result in the offender receiving zero in the course. Please consult the Student Handbook for fuller details.

**Students with Disabilities**
Students with physical, learning, or medical disabilities should speak to me and contact Laurie Roth, Director of the Learning Center, to arrange the appropriate accommodations. Please make these arrangements in the first weeks of the semester.

**Week 1 – Introduction**
**Jan. 20**
Antebellum America: An Overview
Reading and Writing Essays
Week 2 – Nation and Section
Jan. 27
COMMON READING
AND EITHER
OR
LOG ONE DUE

Week 3 – The Great Transformation: The Transportation Revolution in the North
Feb. 3
LOG TWO DUE
TOPIC DUE

Week 4 – The Great Transformation Continued
Feb. 10
BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE

Week 5 – The Market Revolution in the North and South
Feb. 17
COMMON READING
AND EITHER
OR
BOOK REVIEW DUE
Week 6 – Second Great Awakening and Reform
Feb. 24
READ EITHER
OR
LOG THREE DUE

Week 7 – NO CLASS – SPRING RECESS

Week 8 – Women, Family, and Households
Mar. 10
COMMON READING
AND EITHER
OR
LOG FOUR DUE

Week 9 – Unorthodox Sects
Mar. 17
LOG FIVE DUE
Week 10 – The World the Slaveholders Made
Mar. 24

ABSTRACTS DUE

Week 11 – Slavery
Mar. 31

LOG SIX DUE

Week 12 – Worrying About the Civil War
April 7
COMMON READING

LOG SEVEN DUE

Week 13 – Sectional Crisis
April 14
COMMON READING
James Oakes, “From Republicanism to Liberalism: Ideological Change and the Crisis of the Old South,” *American Quarterly* 37 (Autumn 1985): 551-571. JSTOR

LOG EIGHT DUE
Week 14 – The Civil War

April 21


FINAL PAPER DUE

Week 15 – Aftermath and Reconstruction

April 28

LOG NINE DUE