

## THE FORT PILLOW CONTROVERSY

On April 12, 1864, Fort Pillow, a remote Union fort on the Mississippi River fell to Confederate troops. The Union loss might have been unremarkable, had it not been for disturbing rumors in the days that followed. Survivors claimed the Rebels massacred Union captives *after* they surrendered, and that African-American troops bore the worst of it. In response, Congress held an investigation, the records of which survive today. Fort Pillow was never fully resolved, perhaps because it raised larger questions about race relations, human rights in wartime, guerilla conflict within border states, and competing ideologies of manhood and nationalism in the American South. Controversies over Fort Pillow further reveal the contested nature of public memory. Using records from the U.S. War Department, the Congressional hearings, soldier letters from both sides, and site visits, we will research Fort Pillow and produce a documentary film exploring these issues.

### Course Objectives

- 1) To research and interpret the evidence surrounding Fort Pillow, drawing from firsthand narratives, official reports, newspaper coverage, photographs and prints from the war, period music of the region, site visits, public commemoration, and scholarly accounts.
- 2) To produce a documentary film presenting our interpretation of the incident, through collaboration in small teams as researchers, writers, interviewers, directors, and editors.

### Required Texts

Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Honor and Violence in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

Joseph Glatthaar, *Forged in Battle: The Civil War Alliance of Black Soldiers and White Officers* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000).

Bob Zeller, *The Blue and Gray in Black and White: A History of Civil War Photography* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2005).

James McPherson, *What They Fought For, 1861-1865* (New York: Anchor Books, 1995).

*War of the Rebellion; Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series I, Vol. 32, Part I, "Reports;" and Part III, "Correspondence." These documents are available online.

38<sup>th</sup> Congress, *Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, Investigation of Fort Pillow*, (May 6, 1864). Also available online.

Coursepack: A collection of xeroxed articles and primary sources, available online. Click on 'Academic Departments.' Select 'History.' Select 'Garceau.' Select 'Public folder.' Select 'History 405.' You will find the readings listed by author and/or abbreviated title.

## **Commitment and Planning**

- On days marked **Discussion, come to class prepared**; that is, having done the readings listed for that day. Participation in discussion will make up 33% of your grade. I will call on you every class to discuss the topics at hand.
- Note that on January 24, you will be responsible for having read two books plus two articles. Do begin these two books ahead of time, so that you can finish in time for our discussion.
- There will be frequent short writing assignments --with a purpose-- which is to generate quotes for voiceovers and narration for the film.
- You are part of a Film Production Team. That means you cannot renege on assigned tasks. An entire production depends upon you meeting the responsibilities to which you commit. The following are periods of intense work, for which you must plan ahead, depending upon which production sub-team you join:

**Script Writers:** March 22-31 will be intense.

**Music/Sound/Voiceover Producers:** Easter Break and April 4<sup>th</sup> week.

**Editors:** Easter Break and the last 3 weeks of the course.

**Directors:** Spring Break and the week of March 22-31.

## **Course Requirements**

- Consistent attendance and participation. At Rhodes, we have the advantage of small classes in which we generate new insights through discussion. This also means I cannot recreate a discussion with your participation, if you were absent. In other words, missed classes cannot be “made up.” More than one absence will lower your average by one letter grade.
- Completion of assigned work, on time. Writing or production assignments missed without a verifiable medical reason will earn a grade of zero.
- All work for this course should be pledged under the Honor Code. Use of outlines or notes prepared by another student is **plagiarism**. Plagiarism is a violation of the Honor Code, and will result in an automatic ‘F.’

## **Assignments**

- Informed participation in scheduled discussions. That means you refer specifically and cogently to material within the texts we have read. Feel free to raise questions about the readings; this often moves discussion forward! (33%).
- Count on weekly short writing assignments on the readings, for the first 6 weeks. (33%).
- Production: film shoots; editing; and recording music, voiceovers, and narration (33%).

## COURSE OUTLINE

- Jan 10** Introduction to the Course
- The Fort Pillow Controversy
  - How to make a Film

**Jan 17** Firsthand Accounts

- Elias Falls, WOR, 523,  
George Huston, WOR, 536-37.
- USCT James Lewis, WOR, 537.  
Corporal Jerry Stewart, WOR, 537-38.  
Sergeant Henry Weaver (white), WOR, 538-39; see also TBC, 79-80.
- Jason Souden, WOR, 524.
- 13th William Mays, WOR, 525.
- Tennessee John Ray, WOR, 527.
- Cavalry Lieutenant Mack Leaming, WOR, 559-63; see also TBC, 34-37.  
Lieutenants Francis Smith & William Cleary, WOR, 563-65.
- leaders Brigadier-General Mason Brayman, WOR, 518-19.  
and Elois Bevel, civilian, WOR, 520.
- civilians Hardy Revelle, civilian, WOR, 528-29.

Fighting Under a Black Flag

Drew Gilpin Faust, "Killing," *Coursepack*, 32-60.

John Cimprich, "The Fort Pillow Massacre: A Statistical Note," *Coursepack*, 830-37.

Jack Hurst, "Forrest's Fort Pillow Campaign," *Coursepack*, 165-78.

**Jan 24** Manhood and Nationalism, Honor and Violence

Steven Stowe, "The Touchiness of the Gentleman Planter," *Coursepack*, 195-206.

Elliot Gorn, "Gouge and Bite, Pull Hair and Scratch: The Social Significance of Fighting in the Southern Backcountry," *Coursepack*, 220-35.

Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Honor and Violence in the Old South* [read the whole book].

James McPherson, *What They Fought For, 1861-1865* [read the whole book].

**Jan 31**      Lincoln's Dilemma

"Mr. Lincoln and Freedom;" and "Lincoln's Cabinet," *Coursepack*, 1-21.

The Cabinet: Attorney General Edward Bates, 8-10.

Postmaster General Montgomery Blair, 10-11.

Treasury Secretary Salmon P. Chase, 11-12.

Secretary of State William Seward, 12.

Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, 12-14.

Secretary of the Interior John Usher, 14.

Secretary of the Navy Gideon Wells, 14-15.

Diary of Gideon Wells, Secretary of the Navy, *Coursepack*, 1-4.

Robert E. Lee on the Use of Slaves as Soldiers, *Coursepack*, 384-87.

Confederate Accounts

Congress of the Confederate States (May 23, 1864), "Joint Resolution," WOR, 619.

Written exchanges, General Forrest & Major Booth during battle, WOR, 560-63.

Captain Anderson, WOR, 595-99.

Stephen D. Lee, WOR, 599-604.

Written exchanges, General Forrest and General Washburn, WOR, 586-93.

Captain John Young, WOR, 594-95; see also WOR, 604-05.

General Forrest's narrative of what transpired at Fort Pillow, WOR, 613-16.

Captain John Goodwin, WOR, 619.

Brigadier-General James Chalmers, detailed report, WOR, 620-23.

**Feb 7**      Guerilla War in the Backcountry

General Nathan Bedford Forrest, WOR, 611-13.

General Braxton Bragg, WOR, 613.

Captain Robert Ekins, WOR, 623-24.

J.H. Odlin, on battles at Union City and Columbus, TBC, 69-70; WOR, 363, 541-42.

Colonel S.G. Hicks, WOR, 547-48, 550-51.

Captain Thomas Gray, WOR, 545.

Colonel Dudley Jones, WOR, 671-72.

Colonel Edward McCook, WOR, 672.

Brigadier-General Osterhaus, WOR, 676-77.

John Lubbers, on a paper he found, WOR, 678.

Benjamin Sheets, WOR, 679-80.      *\*Readings for today continue, next page...*

**Feb 7**     Guerilla War in the Backcountry (continued):

Reports on the Nickajack Trace, WOR, 682-85.

John Penwell, civilian, on Fort Pillow, TBC, 71-72.

General Mason Brayman, TBC, 9.

Surgeon Horace Wardner, TBC, 10-11.

Daniel Rankin, "They came in as skirmishers," WOR, 526.

Scholarly Accounts

Richard Brownlee, "The Lawrence, Kansas Massacre," *Coursepack*, 122-27.

Duane Schultz, "Quantrill's War," *Coursepack*, 242-48.

"Civil War Atrocities in Arkansas and Missouri," *Coursepack*, 1-3.

Robert Mackey, "The Guerilla War in Arkansas, 1862-65," *Coursepack*, 24-49;  
explanation of terms, 6-16; endnotes, 213-18.

**Feb 14**     Race Relations on the Battlefield

Joseph Glatthaar, "Filling the Ranks," *Forged in Battle*, 61-80.

Glatthaar, "Coping with Racism," *Forged in Battle*, 81-98.

Glatthaar, "Leaving Their Mark on the Battlefield," *Forged in Battle*, 143-68.

Military and Civilian Life at Fort Pillow

John Cimprich, "Military Life at the Fort," *Coursepack*, 38-48.

Dr. Chapman Underwood, Surgeon, Fort Pillow, TBC, 72-73.

W.R. McLagan, a trader conscripted by Forrest who later escaped, WOR, 557.

Elvis (also called Elois) Bevel, an Arkansan, TBC, 94; see also WOR, 520.

James Bingham (also called Brigham), store clerk, TBC, 93; and WOR, 520-22.

Hardy Revelle, dry goods clerk for Harris & Co., TBC, 91-92.

Jacob Thompson, TBC, 27-8.

James McCoy, TBC, 43-44.

John Nelson, TBC, 134.

Edward Benton, TBC, 101-04.

Daniel Stamps, TBC, 41.

Alfred Coleman, TBC, 82-83.

Mrs. Jane Ann Rufins, WOR, 530; Mrs. Rebecca Williams, WOR, 533.

Nancy Hopper, WOR, 533; Mrs. Rosa Johnson, TBC, 65-66.

**Feb 21**     Fort Pillow and Public Memory

Major-General Steven Hurlbut, Fort Pickering, Memphis, TBC, 58.

Derek Frisby, "Remember Fort Pillow!" *Coursepack*, 104-31.

Fitzhugh Brundage, "Race, Memory, and Masculinity: Black Veterans Recall the Civil War, 1865-1915," *Coursepack*, 136-56.

Court Carney, "The Contested Image of Nathan Bedford Forrest," *Coursepack*, 601-30.

James Lockett, "The Lynching Massacre of Black and White Soldiers at Fort Pillow," *Coursepack*, 1-15.

Fitzhugh Brundage, "Contentious and Collected: Memory's Future in Southern History," *Coursepack*, 1-26.

John Cimprich, "Public Memory and Fort Pillow," *Coursepack*, 108-24.

Recommended: Tony Horwitz, *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998).

Student Reports on Remaining Narratives

Each of you will have read an additional five short 1-2 page narratives from the *War of the Rebellion*; or from the 38<sup>th</sup> Congress Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War; and report any significant quotes you found.

**Feb 28**     Newspaper Accounts (use the *America's Historical Newspapers* database).

Northern newspapers: *New York Herald*  
*Chicago Post*  
*Philadelphia Inquirer*  
*Boston Herald*

Southern newspapers: *Macon Daily Telegraph*  
*Memphis Appeal*  
*Louisville Journal*  
*New Orleans Times*

Western newspapers: *San Francisco Bulletin*  
*Denver Post*

**March 7**     The War in Photographs

Select and bring copies of 5 photographs from one of the following websites:

[www.civilwarphotography.org](http://www.civilwarphotography.org) The Center for Civil War Photography  
[www.loc.gov/pictures/cwp/](http://www.loc.gov/pictures/cwp/) Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs  
Liljenquist Family Collection  
Civil War Drawings (for the nation's illustrated newspapers)  
Gladstone Collection of African-American Photographs

- March 9-17**     **Spring Break**  
    Film Shoots  
    Fort Pillow Historic Site  
    Reenactors, staged battle  
    Mississippi River mood shots  
    Miscellaneous scenics; landscape and/or weather as visual metaphors  
  
    Music Team  
    Research and record regional and period music  
    Sound effects of battle
- March 21**     During this week  
    Shoot filmed interviews.  
    In class, we will present and discuss storyboards.  
    Identify sequences to build.  
    Present/discuss music and sound effects.
- March 22-31** Writers: Choose the most telling quotes for voiceovers, and write narration.
- March 28, 30** Editing Lessons (Easter Break)  
    Editing instruction with Joann Self-Selvidge, local filmmaker.  
    These two days are **required** for student film editors.  
    At least one of these two days is required for student film loggers.
- April 4**     During this week  
    Shoot film of readers doing voiceovers.  
    Editors begin building sequences: voiceovers/images/reenactments/scenics  
    In class, we will review edited footage assembled so far.
- April 11**     During this week  
    Editors build sequences.  
    In class, we will review edited footage.  
    Discuss where music and narration are needed.
- April 18**     During this week  
    Record narration and music.  
    Editors add narration and music to sequences.  
    In class, discuss sequences: what works? What doesn't work?
- April 25**     During this week  
    Continue building sequences.  
    Adjust narration and music.  
    In class, view rough cut and critique.
- April 26,**     **Screen the rough cut at URCAS!**