

**History 105**  
**Introductory Seminar: Lincoln – Spring 2010**  
**TR, 2:00-3:15 p.m.**

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**Course Description and Objectives:**

Abraham Lincoln stands out, in many ways, as the most important figure in the history of the United States. As president during the Civil War, Lincoln arguably played a more significant role than any other single person in both holding the Union together and emancipating four million enslaved African Americans. His murder in April 1865 brought the war to a violent and tragic end and ensured that the martyred president would hold an enduring place in American memory. This class will examine Lincoln in depth—as an aspiring politician, as war-time commander, as emancipator, as nation-builder. In the process, students will also investigate the broader canvas of nineteenth-century America, considering how it both shaped and responded to Lincoln's life and work.

Class meetings will consist of a mixture of lecture and discussion based on the assigned readings. Therefore, to maximize the quality and depth of discussion for each class meeting (and to maximize your grade), you will need to complete the readings beforehand. You should leave this class with a broad understanding of the historical forces that have shaped Lincoln and his America, as well as improved critical thinking and written communication skills.

**Readings:**

Orville Vernon Burton, *The Age of Lincoln* (2007).

David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln* (1995).

James McPherson, *Lincoln as Commander in Chief* (2008).

Orville Vernon Burton, ed., *The Essential Lincoln* (2009). (EL).

Supplementary articles and documents, available through the Academic Volume and as handouts.

**Assignments and Grading Policies:**

Your final grade in this course will be determined as follows:

- Final Examination – 25%
- Essays (5 @ 10% each) – 50%
- Class participation/Quizzes – 25%

Attendance is mandatory at all class meetings. More than two absences will adversely affect your grade in this course. You should make all travel and vacation plans in accordance with the schedule below. Airline arrangements, in other words, are no excuse for missing classes, deadlines, or exams.

Make up exams will not be given without a verifiable medical excuse, and all excuses are subject to the approval of the instructor. No late papers will be accepted. Quizzes are unannounced and cannot be made up.

All work, unless otherwise indicated, is pledged under the Rhodes College Honor Code.

### **Class Assignments:**

#### **Part I. "Prelude to Greatness"**

##### **1. Lincoln's America**

Jan. 14 – Introduction to course

Jan. 19 – The Early Republic, 1800-1840

- Burton, *Age of Lincoln*, chaps. 1-3
- Donald, *Lincoln*, chaps. 1-2

**Discussion Questions:** What makes Lincoln so important? Is he important enough to merit an entire course? Why are *you* interested in Lincoln? What was America like in 1809, the year of Lincoln's birth? In what ways did early nineteenth century America shape Lincoln's life? What were the most important social, cultural, political, and economic developments of the period? Where did Lincoln fit into early nineteenth-century America? Was he a product of the frontier? Was he just plain poor?

##### **2. Lawyer and Politician**

Jan. 21 – Lincoln and the Whigs

- Donald, *Lincoln*, chaps. 3-5
- *EL*, 3-17: "To the People of Sangamo County," Lyceum Speech at Springfield, Illinois; Handbill to the Voters of the Seventh Congressional District

Jan. 26 – Lincoln and the Slavery Question

- Burton, *Age of Lincoln*, chap. 4
- *EL*, 18-30: Speech at Peoria, Illinois on the Kansas-Nebraska Act

**Discussion Questions:** Who were the Whigs? Did they really stand for anything, or were they just the anti-Jackson party? What were their views on economic policy? What does Lincoln's devotion to the Whig party tell us about his early political views? Why was he so fond of Henry Clay? Was Lincoln a nationalist? A conservative? A moderate? A pragmatist? What were his views on the slavery issue at this point in his career? Does Lincoln's legal career shed light on any of these questions?

### 3. Lincoln, Taney, and Douglas

Jan. 28 – Lincoln and the Republicans – **Essay #1 Due**

- Donald, *Lincoln*, chap. 7
- *EL*, 31-38: Letter to Joshua Speed, “Notes for a Law Lecture”

Feb. 2 – Taney and the Dred Scott Case

- *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (handout)
- *EL*, 39-43: “A House Divided” Speech

Feb. 4 – Douglas and the Great Debates

- Donald, *Lincoln*, chap. 8
- *EL*, 44-64: Speech at Chicago, Illinois Lincoln-Douglas Debates, Letter to Henry L. Pierce and Others

**Discussion Questions:** Why did the Republican Party form? Were they a unified bunch? Were the Republicans more interested in moral issues or economic matters? What about slavery? Was it a moral issue for Lincoln and the Republicans, or primary an economic issue? Did Lincoln’s views on slavery evolve during this period? If so, how? What were the key differences among Lincoln, Taney, and Douglas on the slavery question? Were their views in any way similar? To what extent was Lincoln a “typical politician?”

## Part II. Lincoln as Leader and President

### 4. Election and Inauguration

Feb. 9 – The Election of 1860

- Donald, *Lincoln*, chap. 9
- Hammond, “Cotton is King”
- *EL*, 65-97: “Address to Wisconsin State Agricultural Society,” “Speech at Cooper Union”

Feb. 11 – Inauguration, Secession, and Sumter – **Essay #2 Due**

- Burton, *Age of Lincoln*, chap. 5
- Donald, *Lincoln*, chap. 10
- *EL*, 101-109: First Inaugural Address

**Discussion Questions:** How did such a relatively obscure and inexperienced politician win election to the presidency in 1860, or, for that matter, even secure the nomination of a major political party? What qualities did Lincoln possess that made it possible for a man of such humble birth to attain the nation’s highest office? What kind of a president-elect was Lincoln? Did he do anything during this period? What do you make of the First Inaugural Address? Was it too harsh on the South? Too accommodating toward the South? Did it send a clear message at all? Was Lincoln a southerner?

## 5. Commander in Chief

Feb. 16 – Lincoln and *Merryman*

- Donald, *Lincoln*, chap. 11
- *Ex Parte Merryman*
- *EL*, 110-114: “Message to Congress in Special Session, July 4, 1861.”

**Feb. 18 – No class. (Prof. Huebner out of town)**

Feb. 23 – Limited War

- McPherson, *Tried by War*, preface, chaps. 1-2
- Donald, *Lincoln*, chap. 12

Feb. 25 – Lincoln and McClellan

- McPherson, *Tried by War*, chaps. 3-6

Mar. 2 – Total War

- *EL*, 142-143: Order of Retaliation
- McPherson, *Tried by War*, chaps. 7-8
- Daniel E. Sutherland, “Abraham Lincoln, John Pope, and the Origins of Total War,” *Journal of Military History*, 56 (1992), 567-586.

**Discussion Questions:** What kind of a commander in chief was Lincoln? Did he know much about military strategy? Did his wartime powers justify his suspension of the privilege of the writ of habeas corpus? What do you make of his policy of total war? Couldn't the Union have been restored without the killing on such a massive scale? Did total war violate centuries of tradition on how war should be conducted? Should that matter? How did Lincoln relate to his generals? Was he overly patient with them? Too impatient? Was he a great commander in chief?

## 6. Emancipator

Mar. 4 – The Emancipation Proclamation - **Essay #3 Due**

- Donald, *Lincoln*, chap. 13
- *EL*, 115-122, 125-128: Annual Message to Congress, Letter to Horace Greeley, Emancipation Proclamation

Mar. 9 – Emancipation Debated

- James McPherson, “Who Freed the Slaves?” in McPherson, *Drawn with the Sword*, 192-207.
- Ira Berlin, “Who Freed the Slaves? Emancipation and Its Meaning” in David W. Blight and Brooks D. Simpson, eds., *Union and Emancipation: Essays on Politics and Race in the Civil War Era*, 105-121.

Mar. 11 – Lincoln the Racist

- Lerone Bennett Jr., “Was Abe Lincoln a White Supremacist?” *Ebony* (1968).
- George M. Fredrickson, “A Man But Not a Brother: Abraham Lincoln and Racial Equality,” *Journal of Southern History*, 41 (1975), 39-58.

**[Spring Break: March 15-19]**

Mar. 23 – Lincoln the Great

- *EL*, 144-152, 162-167: Letter to Nathaniel P. Banks (Louisiana) on Reconstruction, Letter to James C. Conkling on Emancipation, Letter to Michael Hahn, Address to Sanitary Fair
- Phillip Shaw Paludan, “Lincoln and Negro Slavery: I Haven’t Got Time for the Pain,” *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association*, 27 (2006), 1-23.

**Discussion Questions:** Why did Lincoln issue the Emancipation Proclamation? Was it primarily to save the Union or to liberate slaves? Was Lincoln personally opposed to slavery? Did he believe that black people were equal to white people? Did he really believe that colonization was the solution to the problem of slavery? Did he believe that he was constrained by law or public opinion, or both, in dealing with slavery? What should matter the most as we evaluate Lincoln’s record in this area—his private thoughts or his public acts? In the end, should we see him as the “Great Emancipator,” or as a nineteenth-century white supremacist? By what standard should we judge historical figures?

## **7. Nation Builder**

Mar. 25 – Confronting the Opposition

- *EL*, 129-141, 155-161: Letter to Erastus Corning and Others, Annual Message to Congress
- Burton, *Age of Lincoln*, chaps. 6-7
- Donald, *Lincoln*, chap. 16
- **SPECIAL EVENT:** *From Civil War to Civil Rights: An Unfolding Legacy*, 7 p.m. Bryan Campus Life Center (Attendance Required)

Mar. 30 – Building the Nation – **Essay #4 Due**

- *EL*, 153-154: Gettysburg Address
- Edmund Wilson, excerpt from *Patriotic Gore*
- Garry Wills, “Revolution in Thought,” in *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words that Remade America*.

## **Apr. 1 – Easter Break**

Apr. 6 - Defeating the Rebels

- Burton, *Age of Lincoln*, chaps. 9
- McPherson, *Tried by War*, chaps. 9-10, Epilogue

**Apr. 8 – No class. (Prof. Huebner out of town.)**

Apr. 13 – Winning Re-election

- Donald, *Lincoln*, chaps. 18-19
- Herman Belz, “Lincoln and the Constitution: The Dictatorship Question Reconsidered,” in Belz, *Abraham Lincoln, Constitutionalism, and Equal Rights in the Civil War Era*, 17-43.

**Discussion Questions:** How did Lincoln treat his opponents? Did he silence them? Manipulate them? Win them over? Did he “impose himself” on the nation? Did his fatalism, his relationship with his father, his desire for order, and his aspirations to fame determine his course as president? Or should we take a less cynical view? Was he a great patriot with an oath sworn to defend the Union? What do we make of the Gettysburg Address? What was so significant about it? Did the speech really remake the nation? What does the 1864 election tell us about Lincoln’s political skills? His political thought? His motivations as a leader and president? Was he a “dictator,” or a great president?

### Part III. Lincoln in Death and American Memory

#### 8. Inauguration and Assassination

Apr. 15 – The Second Inaugural – **Essay #5**

- *EL*, 168-170: Second Inaugural Address
- Donald, *Lincoln*, chap. 20

Apr. 20 – Victory and Death

- *EL*, 171-177: Speech from the Balcony, Last Public Address
- Video: “The Assassination of Abraham Lincoln”
- Burton, *Age of Lincoln*, chap. 10
- Donald, *Lincoln*, chap. 21

**Discussion Questions:** Why does the Second Inaugural rank with the Gettysburg Address as one of Lincoln’s greatest speeches? What does the speech reveal about Lincoln’s thinking about the war, the nation, and emancipation by 1865? How had Lincoln changed from the time of his first inaugural address? What does the speech tell us about Lincoln’s religious views? Why did Booth murder Lincoln? How and why did the nation respond to his death in the way that it did?

#### 9. The Legacy and Meaning of Lincoln

Apr. 22 – Reconstruction and Beyond

- Burton, *Age of Lincoln*, chaps. 11-14

Apr. 27 – Lincoln in American Memory

- Frederick Douglass, “Oration in Memory of Abraham Lincoln” (1876).
- Walt Whitman, excerpts from *Leaves of Grass* (1881).
- David Donald, “Getting Right with Lincoln,” in Donald, *Lincoln Reconsidered: Essays on the Civil War Era*, 3-18 (1955).

Apr. 29 – Summary and Review

- William Lee Miller, “The Exacting Legacy of a Virtuous President,”

**Discussion Questions:** What were the main outlines of the Reconstruction policy that Congress ended up implementing? Did they reflect a Lincolnian approach? What about post-war economic policy? Did it follow the patterns established by Lincoln during his presidency? Is it possible to speak of an “Age of Lincoln?” What was Lincoln’s legacy? How should he be remembered? How has your image of Lincoln evolved as you have taken this course?

**Take-Home Final Examination Due: Tuesday, May 4, 12 noon.**