

The University of North Texas
Department of History
HIST 4860—The Civil War and Reconstruction
Spring 2026
Wooten Hall, 121
T-TH, 12:30 to 1:50 p.m.

Dr. Alex Mendoza

Office: WH 260

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. or by appointment

Email: alex.mendoza@unt.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

HIS 4680 examines the era of the American Civil War. This course describes and analyzes the history of America's greatest crisis, from its origins in the early nineteenth century through the abandonment of Reconstruction in 1877, with some attention to sectional reconciliation and the various ways in which the crisis is remembered.

The course interweaves the political, military, social, economic, and cultural dimensions of this experience with emphasis on the linkages between them. Students will achieve an understanding of the main developments of the Civil War and Reconstruction era, the ways in which these developments reflected or shaped developments in general American history, and the main interpretations advanced by scholars who have studied this subject. This course will not simply focus on the military aspects of the Civil War.

ASSIGNED TEXTS:

- **Steven E. Woodworth, *This Great Struggle: America's Civil War* (2012) ISBN: 978-1-4422-1987-8**
- **PDF files on Canvas**

GRADING:

Generally speaking, a grade of 90.00% corresponds to a borderline A- & 89.99% to a B+; 80% is the line between a B- & a C+ and so on. **Grades will not be curved in this course. No extra credit will be accepted to substitute for poor test grades or non-attendance.**

- | | |
|---|-----------------------|
| ▪ Midterm Exams (2) | 40% (20% each) |
| ▪ Final Exam | 20% |
| ▪ Primary Source Discussions (3) | 10% (avg) |
| ▪ Quizzes (3) | 10% (avg) |
| ▪ Civil War Newspaper Project | 10% |
| ▪ Class Attendance/Participation | 10% |

This course tries to maintain a strict reading/testing schedule. Students who have a difficult time reading or following schedules are encouraged to rethink about enrolling in this course.

EXAMS:

A total of three exams—two midterms and a final—will be administered during the semester. Exams will be comprised of matching, short identification, and essay. Each test will focus on lectures and assigned readings. Exams are worth 20% each.

QUIZZES:

Throughout the semester students will be asked to submit answers to approximately 3-5 quizzes (films/videos are included as well). The dates for these assignments will be *unannounced*. Whether the format for each quiz will vary from multiple choice in-class or take-home essay, students are responsible for submitting their work on the scheduled due-date of each quiz. The average of the top 3 quiz grades will be used to comprise 10% percent of the overall grade.

DISCUSSION ASSIGNMENTS:

There are three graded discussion assignments during the semester (10% of final average). Several primary (firsthand) documents have been uploaded by the instructor in the appropriate discussion forum (Discussion Forum #1, #2, & #3) for the course. Students will be required to write a posting of approximately 250-words per assignment which should cover the questions posed. The topics and due dates for each Discussion assignment are: **January 29, March 05 & April 16.**

RESEARCH PAPER:

Students will write a short 3-5 page paper drawing from primary newspaper sources of the Civil War era. These newspapers can be found at: **The Portal to Texas History** website, <https://texashistory.unt.edu/>. For modern students of the Civil War, 1860s newspapers are notoriously difficult to read, so attention to this assignment before the due date is imperative. Students must adhere to guidelines described in Chicago/Turabian and turn in their final drafts on **April 23**. The professor will be available for consultation during this process. The paper is worth 10% of the overall grade. There will be a more detailed Research Paper Guide distributed later this semester.

CLASS ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION:

A portion of your grade will be based on a class attendance and a subjective participation component. I may occasionally call on students to answer questions or to explore themes related to the individual topics. Obviously, since you must attend class to contribute to the class, there will be a strong emphasis on attendance. The professor will check attendance regularly and use this to correlate this portion of the overall grade. Students who arrive late or leave early are subject to being marked absent for the day. UNT Policy 06.039 provides greater detail as to the university's attendance policies.

I hope students attend class each week. Yet, if you are ill or otherwise unable to attend class for whatever reason, please **do not** feel obligated to email the professor or to provide additional information. This component is worth 10% of final average.

MAKEUP POLICY:

Exams may **NOT** be taken early—including the final exam. Students must arrange work schedules and last-minute travel plans in order to take the tests & quizzes on the scheduled dates.

If you miss a test due to illness or another emergency, please email the professor and respectfully request a makeup. There are no reviews for the makeup exams, which will be in a different format and question set than the original test. You must reach out within 48 hours of the originally scheduled exam.

LATE WORK POLICY:

All Canvas assessments, unless otherwise noted, are due at 11:59 p.m. on the date posted for each assignment. It is your responsibility to ensure that the assignment was submitted properly. Late assignments can be submitted by reaching out and requesting late work to be submitted. The penalty is 10% each day after the due date (including weekends) until a week after the originally scheduled assessment date. **No makeup assignments will be accepted after the last day of classes at UNT on April 30, 2026**

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

The University of North Texas promotes the integrity of learning and embraces the core values of trust and honesty. Academic integrity is based on educational principles and procedures that protect the rights of all participants in the educational process and validate the legitimacy of degrees awarded by the University. In the investigation and resolution of allegations of student academic dishonesty, the University's actions are intended to be corrective, educationally sound, fundamentally fair, and based on reliable evidence.

Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences. According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University. Plagiarism, cheating, and other academic integrity violations take many forms, including, but not limited to the use of another author's words without citation, cutting and pasting uncited materials from the internet, having someone else to do your work and claiming it as your own, and copying from another student's paper or exam.

USE OF STUDENT WORK:

A student owns the copyright for all work (e.g. software, photos, reports, presentations, and discussion posts) he or she creates within a class and the University is not entitled to use any student work without the student's permission unless all of the following criteria are met:

- The work is only used once
- The work is not used in its entirety
- Use of the work does not affect potential profits from the work
- The student is not identified

ADA POLICY:

The University of North Texas (UNT or University) does not discriminate on the basis of disability in admission, treatment, or access to its programs or activities, nor in employment in its programs or activities. The University is committed to providing equal educational access for qualified students with disabilities in accordance with state and federal laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 as Amended, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. In addition, the University is committed to making all programs and activities sponsored by UNT accessible, as required by the Texas Accessibility Standards and the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines. To this end, all academic units are willing to make reasonable and appropriate adjustments to the classroom environment and the teaching, testing, or learning methodologies in order to facilitate equality of educational access for persons with disabilities.

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access>. You may also contact them by phone at 940.565.4323.

USE OF CANVAS:

The instructor will use UNT's Canvas platform to distribute information throughout the semester. Lecture outlines, exam reviews, and announcements will all be found on the course Canvas page. Students must learn the process of accessing course information and quiz materials on specific dates. The burden of responsibility lies with the students. I independently average your grades and Canvas may not compute your class averages accurately. Please keep track of your own grades based on the grading scale provided in the syllabus.

EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION AND PROCEDURES

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (severe weather, campus closures, and health/public safety emergencies). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans.

RETENTION OF STUDENT RECORDS:

Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after the course completion. Course work completed via the Canvas online system, including grading information and comments, is also stored in a safe electronic environment for one year. Students have the right to view their individual record; however, information about student's records will not be divulged to other individuals without proper written consent. Students are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the university's policy. See UNT Policy 04.008, Records Management and Retention for additional information.

STUDENT COMPORIMENT:

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the class environment and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The University's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including University and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. Visit UNT's Code of Student Conduct (<https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct>) to learn more.

USE OF EMAIL:

Feel free to e-mail me in regard to anything related to the class, the topic, or professional requests. Please do not e-mail me in regard to requests for extra credit. I will not respond to anything I deem inappropriate or unprofessional. I also retain the right to forward all such e-mails to university officials. Please use my university email address listed on page 1 of this syllabus. I do make some requests:

- If you email me, please use a semblance of professionalism.
- Please realize that I have multiple classes so be sure to tell me which class you are in.
- Please use UNT email addresses (our filters may not deliver a private email address)
- Please note that I do not check emails late into the evening or even on weekends.

NOTE TAKING:

You are expected to take notes during lectures, discussions, and, if applicable, videos. Lecture outlines and exam study guides will assist you in this process. However, it is not enough simply to copy the lecture outline—you must take notes in order to do well on exams. If you miss a class, check with your fellow students to see if someone will lend you their notes. The professor does not provide lecture notes.

ADDITIONAL STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES:

- Registrar (<https://registrar.unt.edu/registration>)
- Financial Aid (<https://financialaid.unt.edu/>)
- Student Legal Services (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-legal-services>)
- Career Center (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/career-center>)
- Multicultural Center (<https://edo.unt.edu/multicultural-center>)
- Counseling and Testing Services (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services>)
- First Generation Success Center (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/first-generation-success-center>)

WHAT I EXPECT FROM YOU:

- Keep up with the readings and the due dates.
- Please try not to be late to class. If there is a reason why you must be late, try to be quiet as you come in.
- Take all exams on the scheduled dates.

WHAT YOU SHOULD EXPECT FROM ME:

- My lectures will be well-prepared and organized.
- I will strive to help you succeed in this class.
- I will see that your papers and exams are graded as promptly and accurately as possible.
- I will remain accessible throughout the semester and hold office hours regularly.

POLICY STATEMENT: Please keep in mind that there are no assignments or extra credit opportunities to substitute for poor grades or non-attendance.

Professor Mendoza reserves the right to make changes to this syllabus. All changes will be announced to the class.

Schedule of Lectures and Readings (subject to change)

| Date | Lecture# | Lecture Topic |
|------|----------|---------------|
|------|----------|---------------|

Week One: Course Introduction and the Road to the Civil War

- | | | |
|---------|----|---|
| Jan. 13 | 01 | Introduction & Syllabus and the Territorial Debate of the 1850s Woodworth, <i>This Great Struggle</i> , 1-20 |
| | 15 | “The Deepening Crisis, The 1850s”: A Slave Power Conspiracy? Woodworth, <i>This Great Struggle</i> , 21-24 |

Week Two: Armageddon

- | | | |
|---------|----|---|
| Jan. 20 | 03 | Lincoln Ascendant: The Election of 1860 and Secession Woodworth, <i>This Great Struggle</i> , 25-36 |
| Jan. 21 | 04 | The Battle Lines Form”: Mobilizing for a Great Civil War Woodworth, <i>This Great Struggle</i> , 36-44 |

Week Three: The War Takes Shape

- | | | |
|---------|----|--|
| Jan. 27 | 05 | “On to Richmond! On to Washington!”: The War’s First Battles Woodworth, <i>This Great Struggle</i> , 44-49; 51-66 |
| Jan. 29 | 06 | The Forgotten West Woodworth, <i>This Great Struggle</i> , 75-101; 103-129; 131-142 Discussion 1 Assignment Due |

Week Four: The Scope of War

- | | | |
|---------|----|---|
| Feb. 03 | 07 | The Confederate Highwater Mark: The Fall of 1862 Woodworth, <i>This Great Struggle</i> , 143-160; 165-176 |
| Feb. 05 | 08 | “Blow Ye Trumpet Blow”: Emancipation and its Legacy Woodworth, <i>This Great Struggle</i> , 161-165 Q&A for Exam I |

Week Five: The Grand Spectacle

- | | | |
|----------------|----|--|
| Feb. 10 | | Exam I |
| Feb. 12 | 09 | “A Brutal Stalemate”: Crises on the Battlefield, 1862-1863 Woodworth, <i>This Great Struggle</i> , 176-190; 191-194 |

Week Six: The Pinnacle of War

- | | | |
|---------|----|---|
| Feb. 17 | 10 | “We Should Assume the Aggressive”: The Critical Year—1863 Woodworth, <i>This Great Struggle</i> , 194-222 |
| Feb. 19 | 11 | “By River or Sea”: The Civil War Navies Woodworth, <i>This Great Struggle</i> , 66-71; 105-108; 119-120; 304-306 |

Week Seven: Society

- | | | |
|---------|----|--|
| Feb. 24 | 12 | “The Limits of Conflict”: Wartime Discontent in the North and South Woodworth, <i>This Great Struggle</i> , 223-230 |
| Feb. 26 | 13 | “To Do a Man’s Business”: Women and the American Civil War, 1861-1865 Woodworth, <i>This Great Struggle</i> , 134-135 |

Week Eight: Mountains Left to Climb

- | | | |
|---------|----|---|
| Mar. 03 | 14 | The Guerrilla War Canvas Article: “Was the Civil War a Total War?” |
| Mar. 05 | 15 | “Lincoln Finds His General”: Ulysses S. Grant and the Making of Grand Strategy Woodworth, <i>This Great Struggle</i> , 231-244; 245-253 Discussion 2 Due |

Week Nine: Spring Break

Mar. 09-Mar. 15 No Classes at UNT

Week Ten: A Hard War

Mar. 17 16 “The Darkest Hour”: The Collapse of the Confederacy
Woodworth, *This Great Struggle*, 253-270; 271-295

Mar. 19 17 “The Most Consequential Election in the Nation’s History”: The Election of 1864 and its Meanings
Woodworth, *This Great Struggle*, 295-301

Week Eleven: Ending a Civil War

Mar. 24 18 “The Deep Waters Are Closing Over Us”: Surrender and Defeat
Woodworth, *This Great Struggle*, 303-331; 333-352

Q&A for Exam II

Mar. 26 Exam II

Week Twelve: The Plans of Reconstruction

Mar. 31 19 Challenges: The Legacies of the War, North and South
Woodworth, *This Great Struggle*, 352-359

Apr. 02 Challenges, continued

Week Thirteen: Emerging from the Shadows

Apr. 07 20 “The Flag of Freedom”: The Problems of Presidential Reconstruction
Woodworth, *This Great Struggle*, 361-365

Apr. 09 21 “The Gauntlet is Thrown”: Congress & America’s First Presidential Impeachment
Woodworth, *This Great Struggle*, 365-370

Week Fourteen: Reversals

Apr. 14 22 “The Freedom Sun Shine Out”: African Americans and Reconstruction
Woodworth, *This Great Struggle*, 370-373

Apr. 16 23 “Carry the Election Peacefully if We Can, Forcefully if We Must”: White Resistance to Reconstruction
Canvas Article: “The Rise and Fall of the First Ku Klux Klan”

Discussion 3 Due Date

Week Fifteen: Ending Reconstruction

Apr. 21 24 “Are You for the Nation, or are You for the Rebels?”: The Election of 1876 & the End of Reconstruction
Woodworth, *This Great Struggle*, 373-379

Apr. 23 25 The Lost Cause and the South’s Victory

Research Paper Due Date

Week Sixteen: Summary

Apr. 28 Makeup Day

Apr. 30 Summary
Last Class Day at UNT

Final Exam

Thursday May 7, 2026

(Check the UNT website)