

**A Review:
The Civil War and Reconstruction Era
Spring, 2008
Professor Blight**

The final exam will consist of two essay questions and some identifications. The essays will be equally weighted; you can plan to write approximately one hour on each. The first essay will be on a question covering the whole of the course; the second will deal only with the Reconstruction era. You will have choices in each category.

Essay Topics

I. The following are sample ideas for the comprehensive questions.

- A. Why couldn't the United States create or sustain a democracy/republic in the 19th century without civil war?
- B. The Civil War, in its causes, course, and consequences, is a distinctive example of how *Progress* is the central theme of American history. Defend? Criticize?
- C. Analyze the Republican Party and its significance in the causes, course, and consequences of the Civil War.
- D. How did the causes of the Civil War shape the military conduct of the war, and in turn the great issues and consequences of Reconstruction?
- E. "The South was the problem." The tragedy of the Civil War era stemmed from the South's "peculiar" relationship with the rest of the nation. Defend? Criticize?
- F. The Civil War as "turning point" in American history: the relative weight of military, political, constitutional, social, moral, economic explanations?
- G. How did debates over or interpretations of the U. S. Constitution shape the causes, course, and consequences of the Civil War?
- H. In our study of the Civil War we have used several kinds of sources – primary documents, fiction, autobiography, historical scholarship, and film. What are the merits or problems of each in conveying knowledge and interpretation of the Civil War era?

II. The following are sample ideas for questions on the Reconstruction era.

- A. The consequences of the Civil War interpreted as the "Second American Revolution." Consider Foner's use of the term "revolution" as a framework for interpreting the Reconstruction era, 1863-1877.
- B. Was Reconstruction a "failure?" Why do we ask that question? How should we ask that question? What are the criteria for assessing this question?
- C. Should Reconstruction best be viewed through the historical lens of *politics* or *economics*? Both? Separately? Together? Neither?
- D. Should Reconstruction best be viewed through the historical lens of *race* or *section*? Both? Separately? Together? Neither?
- E. How or to what extent were African Americans the makers of their own fate during Reconstruction, and to what extent were they the "problem" about which everyone else struggled?

- F. Some have argued that the coming of the Civil War was “irrepressible” or inevitable by the late 1850s. Was the “retreat” from Reconstruction in the 1870s equally inevitable?
- G. Why did the Reconstruction years bring about unprecedented levels of political terror and violence?

Sample IDs

The IDs will be chosen from the entire course and we will try to distribute them over the three chronological parts – antebellum, war years, and Reconstruction. *The following are merely samples to give you a sense of what to expect.*

Republican Party
John Brown
Fugitive Slave Act
Kansas Nebraska Act
Honor
Slave society
Secession commissioners
Election of 1860
New York City draft riots
Election of 1864
Battle of Antietam
Louisa May Alcott
Contraband
Loss of Will thesis
Southern lady
Election of 1868
Sharecropping
U.S. v. Cruikshank
“state suicide”
15th Amendment
Southern Redemption
Ulysses S. Grant
The Lost Cause

Exam and Review Info

Review sessions:

- final class and review session with Professor Blight – Tuesday, April 29, 10:30 a.m.-noon, SSS 114
- review session with TAs – Monday, May 5, 1:00-2:30 and 7:00-8:30, LC 102

Final exam is on WEDNESDAY, MAY 7, at 9:00 a.m. in SSS 114 and DAVIES Auditorium.