

Abe and Me: The Enduring Legacy of Abraham Lincoln and His Times

IDH 4036 | University of West Florida

Fall 2023 | 3-credit hours

Building 76A | Room 103

Instructor: Dr. Jamin Wells

Office Hours: Tuesdays 9:30-11am, Fridays 11-11:30am, and by appointment

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Overview:

Abraham Lincoln is an icon. He regularly tops lists of “best” US presidents, and politicians and commentators on both sides of the political spectrum frequently invoke and claim President Lincoln, or “Abe,” as he has long been called. Only Jesus has had more books written about him. You might ask: Why Lincoln? Who was he? How has his legacy changed over time? And what does his story tell us about living—and thriving—in a country with deep political and cultural divisions?

This seminar offers an incredible opportunity to explore the lasting influence and legacy of Lincoln and the contentious period of American history and politics during which he rose to prominence. Through a series of talks and discussions led distinguished guest lecturers and faculty from across the university, we’ll “see” Lincoln, his time, and his legacy through the lens of their different perspectives, including music, communications, cultural studies, art, political science, government, and history. We will also have the unique opportunity to examine a bronze casting of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC, which will be on campus this semester. As a capstone to this immersive honors seminar, we’ll create a public museum exhibit to share what we’ve learned.

Catalog Description:

Specific Topics will vary; see Director of the University Honors Program for current offerings. Enrollment in Honors Seminars is by permission of the Director of the Honors Program only.

Student Learning Objectives:

- Identify and critically evaluate key people, places, events, and contexts shaping the life and legacy of Abraham Lincoln
- Identify and critically evaluate different disciplinary perspectives on the life and legacy of Abraham Lincoln
- Conceptualize and design a museum exhibit

Topics: Abraham Lincoln, American History, Civil War, Memorialization, Rhetoric, Supreme Court, Enlightenment, Museums, Exhibit Design, Curation

Required Texts:

- All readings will be provided via eLearning/Canvas

Important Dates:

- **October 15:** Exhibit Review due
- **November 15:** Concept Brief due
- **November 29:** Draft Exhibit Script due
- **December 5:** Exhibit due
- **December 7:** Final Reflective Essay and Peer & Self Evaluations due

Course Requirements:**Attendance and Active Participation (15%)**

- Given the nature of this course, attendance is essential. You are allowed ONE unexcused absence this semester. If you accumulate more than one unexcused absence, then you earn an F for the course. Out of fairness to our guest speakers and your classmates we will adhere strictly to this policy.
- Our sessions will vary widely this semester, from seminar-style discussions to lectures and performances. You will also be working collaboratively to conceptualize and design a museum exhibit. For you to get the most out of this experience, your active participation is paramount. In our first session, we will create a rubric of expectations and measures for what this will look like in our class and how to evaluate it.

Weekly reaction posts (25%)

- Every week, you will encounter new ideas from new speakers about a fascinating array of topics. This assignment asks you to write a brief reflective piece that describes your understanding of the session and your initial reaction to it. We will have 11 different guest speakers and you may write reaction posts about any of them. These posts are due @ 11:59 pm the Wednesday after the talk. Your highest 9 scores will count towards your final grade. Detailed directions and rubric are provided in Canvas.

Exhibit (40%)

- As a class we will conceptualize and design a museum exhibit based on our shared intellectual journey. We will begin with an introduction to museum and museum exhibits, before transitioning to the design and conceptualization process. By the end of the semester, the class will present a full exhibit script that will be realized in Spring 2024. Graded components include individual submissions [*Exhibit Review* (10%) and *Peer & Self Assessments* (30%)] and group submissions [*Concept Brief* (10%), *Draft Exhibit Script* (20%), and *Exhibit* (30%)]. Detailed directions will be posted on Canvas, and we will spend plenty of class time talking through all requirements and expectations.

Final Reflective Essay (20%)

- At the end of the semester, you will have the opportunity to write a substantial critical essay that articulates and reflects upon your learning experiences in this course. Detailed directions will be posted on Canvas.

Course Schedule

(subject to change)

Friday, August 25

- Welcome and Course Overview

PART 1: CONTEXTS

Friday, September 1:

- Scott Satterwhite and Dr. Jamin Wells, “Lincoln and His Times”
 - Read for this meeting:
 - [The Gettysburg Address](#)
 - [Chapter 14: The Civil War, *The American Yawp*](#)

Friday, September 8

- Dr. Jack Giddens, “The Emergence of Metaphysical Religion in Lincoln’s America”
 - Read for this meeting:
 - Robert C. Fuller, *Spiritual But Not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America* (2001), chapters 1-2.

Friday, September 15

- Dr. David Ramsey, “Lincoln, Taney and the Search for Prudence”
 - Read for this meeting:
 - Lincoln’s Lyceum Address
 - Taney opinion, *Ex parte Merryman*
 - Lincoln’s July 4, 1861 address to Congress

Friday, September 22

- Richard Cohen, “Lincoln: The Supreme Court’s Post-Civil War Betrayal”
 - Read for this meeting:
 - TBA

PART 2: RHETORIC

Friday, September 29

- Dr. Kelly Carr, “Revisiting Lincoln in Rhetorical Context”
 - Read for this meeting:
 - Angela G. Ray, “Learning Leadership: Lincoln at the Lyceum, 1838,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 13, no. 2 (2010): 349-388.
- Introduction to Museums (Wells)

Friday, October 6

- Dr. Adam Blood, “The Lincoln-Douglas Debates”
 - Read for this meeting:
 - David Zarefsky, “The Lincoln-Douglas Debates Revisited: The Evolution of Public Argument,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 72 (1986): 162-184.

- Exhibits 101 (Wells)

***Honors trip to New Orleans, Saturday, October 7 (highly recommended!)* **

PART 3: INTERPRETING LINCOLN

Friday, October 13

- Alan Manning, “Lincoln the Father”
 - Read for this meeting:
 - Alan Manning, *Father Lincoln: The Untold Story of Abraham Lincoln and His Boys—Robert, Eddy, Willie, and Tad* (2016), introduction

Exhibit Review Due: October 15

Friday, October 20

- Corey McKern and April Kocher, “Remembering Lincoln Through Music”
 - Read for this meeting:
 - TBA
- The exhibit design process (Wells)

Friday, October 27

- Dr. Jocelyn Evans, “Memorialization of Lincoln”
 - Read for this meeting:
 - TBA
- “Big Idea” Workshop

Friday, November 3

- Dr. Greg Tomso and TBA, “Interpreting Representations of Lincoln”
 - Read for this meeting:
 - Gregory Tomso, “Lincoln’s ‘Unfathomable Sorrow’: Vinnie Ream, Sculptural Realism, and the Cultural Work of Sympathy in Nineteenth-Century America,” *European Journal of American Studies* 6, no. 2 (2011).

Friday, November 10

- NO CLASS – Veterans Day

Concept Brief Due: November 15

Friday, November 17

- Don Partington, “Daniel Chester French and the Lincoln Bronze”
 - Read & watch for this meeting:
 - “[French and the Lincoln Memorial](#),” including interactive timeline, Chesterwood.org (2023)
 - Eduardo Montes-Bradley, “[Daniel Chester French American Sculptor](#)” (2022)
- Exhibit Brief Workshop

Friday, November 25

- NO CLASS – Thanksgiving Break

Draft Exhibit Script Due: November 29

Friday, December 1

- Exhibit Workshop

Due December 5 @ 11:59pm: Exhibit

Due December 6 @ 5 pm: Final Reflective Essay and Peer & Self Assessments

The Fine Print

Grading Scale

A	93-100	C+	77-79
A-	90-92	C	73-76
B+	87-89	C-	70-72
B	83-86	D	60-69
B-	80-82	F	0-59

Important Information and Updates

Faculty members must sometimes update course elements such as schedules or assignment details in response to student needs and external events (e.g., severe weather or public health emergencies). If updates become necessary as the course progresses, students will be notified through Canvas Announcements and/or email.

Additional information regarding key policies and processes relevant to all courses at UWF can be found on the [Additional Syllabus Statements](#) page.

Course Note

History is hard work. It's hard to talk about, think about, write about. It's filled with violence and pain, hope and healing. It's emotional. It's terrifyingly complex. It's America. It matters.

At times this semester we will be discussing historical events that may be disturbing, even traumatizing, to some students. If you are aware of particular course material that may be traumatizing to you, I'd be happy to discuss any concerns you may have with it before it comes up in class. Likewise, if you ever wish to discuss your personal reactions to such material with the class or with me afterward, I welcome such discussion as an appropriate part of our coursework.

If you ever feel the need to step outside during one of these discussions, either for a short time or for the rest of the class session, you may always do so without academic penalty. You will, however, be responsible for any material you miss. If you do leave the room for a significant time, please make arrangements to get notes from another student or see me individually to discuss the situation and get you caught up to speed.

UWF offers an array of free resources to help you learn, thrive, and flourish. [You can find them here.](#)

Course Disclaimer: Students are encouraged to employ critical thinking and to rely on data and verifiable sources to interrogate all assigned readings and subject matter in this course as a way of determining whether they agree with their classmates and/or their instructor. No lesson is intended to espouse, promote, advance, inculcate, or compel a particular feeling, perception, viewpoint, or belief.

Acceptable and Unacceptable Use of AI: The use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Dall-e, etc.) is permitted in this course for the following activities:

- Brainstorming and refining your ideas;
- Fine-tuning your research questions;
- Finding information on your topic;
- Drafting an outline to organize your thoughts; and
- Checking grammar and style.

The use of generative AI tools is not permitted in this course for the following activities:

- Impersonating you in classroom contexts, such as by using the tool to compose discussion board prompts assigned to you or content that you put into a Zoom chat.
- Completing group work that your group has assigned you unless it is mutually agreed upon that you may utilize the tool.
- Writing a draft of a writing assignment.
- Writing entire sentences, paragraphs, or papers to complete class assignments.

You are responsible for the information you submit based on an AI query (for instance, that it does not violate intellectual property laws or contain misinformation or unethical content). Your use of AI tools must be appropriately documented and cited in order to stay compliant with university policies on [academic honesty](#). ***Any assignment that is found to have used generative AI tools in unauthorized ways will receive an automatic zero with no option for resubmission.*** When in doubt about permitted usage, please ask for clarification.

Late Work Policy:

No late submissions of weekly reaction posts will be accepted (keep in mind that only the 9 highest grades count towards your final grade). I cannot accept any late submission of these assignments, unless you provide documentation for a university-approved absence on either the day the assignment was due or a significant number of days from the relevant module.

For other assignments – there will be a 10% deduction for every 24-hour period it is late. Exemptions (for individual assignments) require submission a university-approved absence for the day the assignment was due.

Out of fairness and equity for your classmates, I strictly follow these guidelines and cannot offer exceptions. Please plan accordingly, as technical glitches and other perfectly valid excuses invariably thwart last-minute submissions. To avoid those issues – and the frustration of suffering the consequences of this late-work policy – I highly recommend that you submit your work early.

Course Attendance Policy:

Given the nature of this course, your attendance is essential. You are allowed ONE unexcused absence this semester. A list of university approved excuses can be [found via this link](#). Subsequent unexcused absences will result in a letter grade deduction on the final grade for every session missed. Out of fairness to our guest speakers and your classmates we will adhere strictly to this policy.

