



The American Civil War

Gary W. Gallagher

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Professor Gallagher is a leading authority on the Civil War. He is the author of several books and dozens of scholarly articles, most recently, *The Confederate War*. He is a founder and was first president of the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites.

Between 1861 and 1865, the clash of the greatest armies the Western hemisphere had ever seen turned small towns, little-known streams, and obscure meadows in the American countryside into names we will always remember. In those great battles streams ran red with blood, and the United States was truly born.

Leading Civil War historian Professor Gary W. Gallagher richly details the effects of the Civil War on all Americans. You'll learn how armies were recruited, equipped, and trained. You'll learn about the hard lot of prisoners. You'll hear how soldiers on both sides dealt with the rigors of camp life, campaigns, and the terror of combat. You'll understand how slaves and their falling masters responded to the advancing war. And you will see the desperate price paid by the families so many left behind.

The American Civil War Details

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From Reader Review The American Civil War for online ebook

Rita Berk says

Outstanding study of the Civil War concentrating mostly on the battles and generals.

Joe says

This is an excellent series of lectures (48 in all) covering the American Civil War. I "read" it as an audiobook while working out at the gym. Gallagher covers, at a high level the major military actions of the war. But I really enjoyed a review of the events leading to the war, periodic asides to describe what was happening at the home fronts in the North and the South, the political events internally and internationally, description of conditions in POW camps and a review of northern and southern remembrances of the war.

This is a very good Lecture Series and I highly recommend it!

L. Lawson says

very well done audio series. a fellow I knew in Peace Corps got so made when anyone implied the Civil War was about slavery on the Southern side. it was always and only about states' rights. this author fights that rewriting of history by listening to the southern actors of the day--Davis, Lee, etc. they all said it was a war to defend the institution of slavery. this series was about lot more than that, but I appreciated the author focusing on what people said then...not what the historians have rewritten since then.

Elizabeth says

I listened to this Great Course. It was wide and sweeping, but at times I had trouble following aurally because Gallagher included an unclear antecedent. I understand that it is a lecture, and there are probably diagrams and slides and note outlines, but during the time I was listening (vehicular commute), I did not have access to any of these materials.

That said, I have a greater appreciation for the "softer" side of the American Civil War, the intangibles. What people thought before the war, and how they thought it was going to be a few brief skirmishes. How entire towns were decimated, because their young men from the same geographic region were put into the same companies. Women's and black's perspectives on the war. There's so much to talk about, and still yet I feel I could listen to another 48 lectures on the Civil War.

Josephus Brautigan says

Finally finished it! Before this course, the Civil War was a blur to me. All I knew was North v South, Union

v Confederacy, and of course, slavery. Professor Gallagher does a tremendous job of laying out all the major and minor characters of the war. He takes you to the battlefields and the skirmishes, into the halls of congress and the senate, and into the lives of the presidents of the U.S. and the Confederate states of America. He dispels the myths of men like Grant, Lee, Jackson and Sherman. He teaches us about how these men, along with many other commanders and politicians, pulled the strings in what many Americans at the time called the "Rich mans war and the poor mans fight". This course helped me see more clearly the movements of troops throughout these legendary battles and the timelines. I also learned a great deal about Lincoln and his true motives for the Emancipation Proclamation, the 13th amendment, and just how hypocritical Jefferson Davis and Alexander Stephens were from the very start of secession. The American Civil War is a really fascinating history. There are so many great stories that go largely unheard of. Stories of endurance, courage, cowardice, horror, comedy, defeat and victory. I highly recommend this Great Course to any history buff and especially anyone who is fascinated with the history of the American Civil War. If you don't want to trudge through the flourishing language of McPherson's "Battle Cry of Freedom", if you want the facts in a more concise delivery, then this Great Course is for you. I absolutely loved it!

Clif Hostetler says

I found these 48 lectures to be an interesting way to learn about events during the American Civil War. The narrative thread supplied more than descriptions of battles by also including lectures on civilian life, women, politics, and economics. The everyday camp life of the common soldier, fate of prisoners, and African Americans (both slave and free) were also covered.

Additionally the lectures included brief biographical sketches of several dozen key actors of the era as well as occasional stories and quotes of interest. In particular I appreciated Gallagher's emphasis on quotations dating from the time of the war, not quotations from after the war. Often the view of participants were quite different when view from the vantage of years later.

There was limited coverage of the conditions leading to war and reconstruction after the war. Obviously, there isn't time enough for everything to be included.

Here's a trivia question and answer I learned from these lectures:

Question: When and where was the last shot fired in the American Civil War?

Answer: The last shot fired in defense of the South was fired from the deck of the CSS Shenandoah on June 22, 1865 in the act of capturing whalers off the Alaskan coast near the Arctic circle.

Comment: This was over a month later than the last meeting of Confederate executive Cabinet on May 5, 1865 when the Confederate Government was declared dissolved.

Jay says

One couldn't really ask much more out of a macro-level Civil War course than what's here. A fair and detailed overview of the timeline, causes, battles, major players, and sentiments. I bought this course with a desire to learn more about the Civil War and now I know more.

littlemiao says

Excellent overview course of the civil war. Gallagher has an engaging lecture style and manages to deliver a highly digestible balance of historical chronology and battlefield maneuverings together with broader overviews of societal issues and trends. I particularly appreciated his attention to historiographical issues. His lectures are carefully crafted so that they impart a depth of understanding while remaining accessible.

Jim says

Prof Gary Gallagher presents a thorough survey of the American Civil War, concentrating almost exclusively on the period between 1861 and 1865. His lectures (clearly and strongly presented) deal briefly with the causes leading up to this horrendous conflict, including brief bios of some of the key historic figures, from Henry Clay's Missouri Compromise in the 1840's to Dred Scott and Charles Sumner in 1857 and finally the election of Abraham Lincoln. The next 44 lectures deal with the war itself...battles (including strategies, maneuvers and personalities), examination of the economic situations in the North and South, discussions of what the conflict meant to African Americans (both free and enslaved), as well as 2 hours of lectures explaining the views and roles of women in the North and South. The final lectures deal with the implications of this conflict in which more than 600,000 men were killed and nearly 4,000,000 enslaved blacks were freed. Within each lectures the fact presented are supported by letters and journals from generals, soldiers, wives and loved ones that reflect the thoughts and fact (as they knew them) for the cause for and progress of the war. This emphasis on the context of the time eases concerns about any revisionist 'twisting' the facts.

One of my major motivations to review the history of the Civil War was to more clearly understand the bases of current racial controversies that swirl about our country, stemming from displays of flags and statuary from the Confederacy. At the same time I revisited the novels 'A Team of Rivals' and 'Lincoln' (Gore Vidal) as well as Spielberg's film 'Lincoln'. These lectures served to stitch the myriad of stories with the equal myriad of facts. All this lead to an historian Gallagher very frequently cites, James M McPherson, who has written award-winning books about the war ("Battle Cry for Freedom"), and is the considered an (the?) expert on the Civil War. Clearly, the conclusions reached by Dr Gallagher in the last lecture regarding the "Myth of the Lost Cause" are influenced by McPherson's views that he (McPherson) had expressed citing concerns about neo-Confederates in Arlington National Cemetery. I'll go no further here...

These lectures are top notch and very much recommended...a coupon, when on sale, will soften the blow...money well spent.

Wade says

I really enjoyed this lecture series, and it was fairly unbelievably timed. I started it about a week before the protests started for the removal of the statues of Jackson and Lee in Charlottesville. I knew the basics of the

civil war, but Gallagher did an excellent job of going into enough to properly fill in so much of the pertinent information and then tying it all together in a way that was quite enlightening; especially given these current events.

He starts with the build up to war and the sentiments on either side that moved us all in that direction, both on the legislative and popular levels. I found myself regularly surprised by the mixture of complexity and simplicity of what was actually going on; for example, there were so many things that contributed to the beginning of the war that you would be hard pressed to even compile an exhaustive list, all those things were exasperated by the physical and cultural separation between the north and the south so it became easy to villainize and, essentially dehumanise, your opponents to the point where war became palatable, but had the issue of slavery not been there, had there not been this central disunity, there would not have been a war.

Gallagher did a great job of describing many opposing views on the various, more controversial aspects of the war, but then he would err on the side of going with actual writings during the time as opposed to later interpretations, and when there was general uncertainty, he would not put much weight on the topic. He also did a good job of spending time discussing the war itself, intermingled with political impetuses, popular opinions, international opinions, and the impact that the war had on the various aspects of the civilian population as well as on those actually involved.

I highly recommend this series as it was enlightening, engaging, and very apt during our current time.

Spoiler Alert

The North wins, but Lincoln is assassinated.

Sandra says

The topic was fascinating, but the lecturer needed some mic discipline.

Vincent Wood says

This is a great series covering the time right before the start of the United States Civil War on through to the end of the Civil War. The instructor did a wonderful job describing the events leading up to the various battles as well as the events which took place in these battles. He describes the major players on both sides of the war and their overall goals and actions. He explains the logistics of the two sides and the sample lives of those behind the lines. This series of lectures covers a lot of information about a defining and horrific time in the history of the United States.

The instructor did have some annoying reading habits though. He often clears his throat and sometimes will leave long pauses making me think something went wrong with my player.

As my ancestors have lived on this continent since before the Revolutionary War, I know many stories about their actions and their deeds. When it comes to the Civil War however, I know only a little. My ancestors from Texas were very active in the Texas Revolution, but when it comes to the Civil War, I know very little of what they did. The author mentioned multiple times that many Texans in the hill country did not want to

secede. Perhaps my ancestors were among that group. I do know that a brother of a direct ancestor of mine from a line that lived in Georgia at the time was captured by the Union and sent to Camp Douglas where he managed to survive and after the war had to figure out his own way back to his home in Georgia. As for my ancestors in Chicago, I do not have the records in front of me so I do not know if they had immigrated to the States yet by the time of the war, I only know they were in Chicago before the Great Fire in 1871.

Many Americans have ancestors with similar stories. I know my wife's ancestors fought for the Union side in Kentucky. I would recommend this series of lectures for anyone who would like to know more about this war and perhaps get a bigger picture regarding any stories they might know regarding their own ancestors.

Loretta says

Following my curiosity and interest in the American history around slavery leads, of course, to the Civil War, which I felt I knew near nothing about except that it happened. This was an excellent way for me to learn a lot more about it. The military campaigns weren't really my main interest, so I might have zoned out a bit during some of those chapters (the beauty of audiobooks) but the course also covers a lot of fascinating societal and historical context, in both the North and South: the economics, how women fared (white and black, northern and southern), the political context. It also solidly refutes that whole "the civil war wasn't even about slavery! it was about states rights!" argument. The Civil War was about slavery. The South left the Union because it wanted to preserve the institution of slavery.

I also appreciated that the author/teacher didn't exaggerate or glorify either side, and in particular he made quite clear that the North went to war to protect the union; but emancipation was not an easy sell. The North may have defeated slavery but it was also still, overall, a deeply racist place itself.

Now I've gotta find something good to read about reconstruction and how we get from the end of the Civil War to today.

G33z3r says

Good enough overview of the civil war campaigns.

Alison Sullivan says

A long study on the Civil War, narrated by bonafide professors, experts on the subject and excited. I enjoyed it.
