



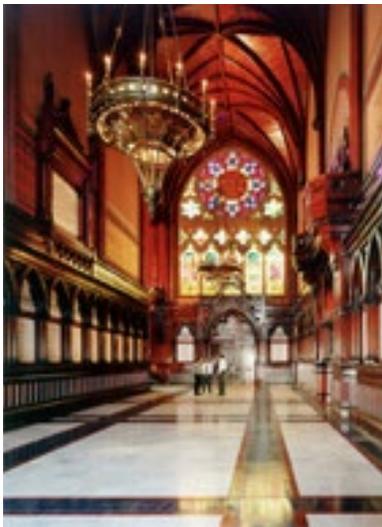
Over the summer, cities across America erupted in protest sparked by the murder of George Floyd. But as the weeks dragged on, they shifted focus. Protesters began to tear down statues. And not just any statues: memorials to Civil War generals. Since the violent protests in [Charlottesville four years ago](#) to the banning of [Confederate flags at NASCAR](#), the Civil War is at the center of American conversations. How did we get here? How is it that in 2020 [symbols](#) and [flags](#) of a war a century-and-a-half old still dominate our political landscape?

One hundred-and-fifty-five years after Lee and Grant shook hands at Appomattox Court House, it is clearer than ever that the Civil War is not part of our past – it is at the very core of our present.

This class will examine the fine line between [history](#) and [memory](#), and examine the history of memory. We will explore where the mythologies around the War came from and try to understand how they affect our current politics and identities. At the end, students will engage in the public, political conversation with a capstone project.

Everything is an argument. Everything is a source.

This course will teach you to read the arguments all around you. Whether they're being made by traditional sources like books and articles, or by buildings, statues, and movies, we're bombarded with arguments all day, every day. We'll focus on evaluating those arguments and on making our own; we will finish with a well-researched op-ed and media presentation for the public.



We will begin the semester trying to understand what makes history and what makes memory. We will use these ideas to think about our own understanding of the past, starting right where you are: at Harvard. We'll look at Memorial Hall, right at the heart of campus. What ideas and arguments are embedded in its stones?

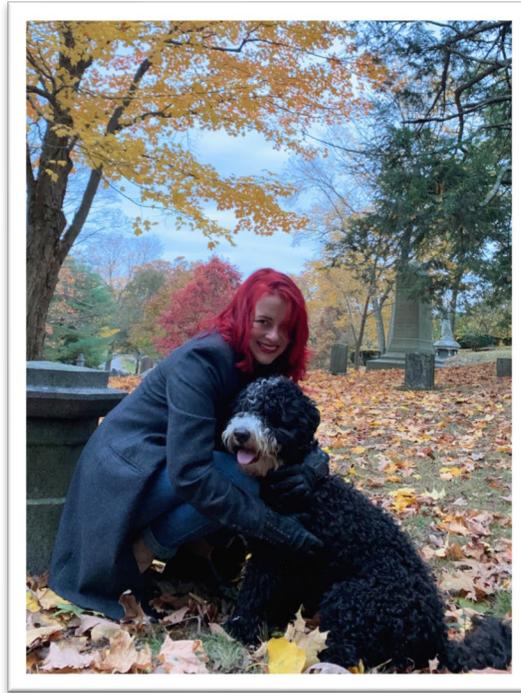
We'll then move on to look at one of the most iconic pieces of Civil War memory ever produced: *Gone With the Wind*. Using the history of the Lost Cause as a lens, you'll have a chance

to see how fictional narratives make political and historical arguments. Also, you'll finally know the context for dramatically declaring ["Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn."](#) Try it out at home – it's fun.



Finally, students will turn to examining their own interests, picking any piece of Civil War memory—from reenactors to museums to flags to statues to movies—and making their own, original, well-researched arguments. You'll then take this research and turn it into an accessible, public argument of your own.

Who am I, and why am I teaching this?



(I'm that person right there, the one that's not a dog)

I'm a historian – not an English teacher. I love expos because it's a moment to move from thinking about writing as an exercise in good grammar and replicating things you've been told to understanding writing as a way of thinking and as an exercise in logic. (It would still be nice if you had good grammar).

I became a historian not because I want to live in the past (the past was, largely speaking, pretty terrible) but because the past is still with us. That simple fact has become urgently clear this summer. But these tensions have been simmering for a long time. I should know: I got my PhD at the University of Virginia and had only been at Harvard a few months when I saw my campus alight with tiki torches, and swastikas outside my old apartment.

Americans learn about the Civil War in school, and teachers strive for accuracy – but people aren't driven by the past *as it was*, we make choices and spark movements based on the past *as we remember it*. Thinking about that divide, grappling with the immense power of history, and working to make reasoned, convincing arguments in a time of shouting matches inspired this course. This is history as civic engagement, as a way of understanding and interacting with the present.

