**Connor Michael Monson**

Phone: (217) 766-2231

Address: 915 W Park Avenue, Champaign. 81821

UIN: 658557365

Email: connormmonson@gmail.com

**Undergraduate Education**

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign                                 December 2017  *Bachelor of Arts in History (with Highest Distinction)*

| Parkland College                       |   |        May 2015  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *Associate of Arts in Political Science (with Honors)***Graduate Education** |  |  |
| University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign: iSchool  |   |      August 2021  |
| *Master of Library and Information Science***Experience** |  | *4.0/4.0 GPA* |
| Parkland College                   |    |  (October 2018-Present)  |

*Instructor*

Sourcelab Working Group(January 2016-May 2021)

*Vice Chairman/Author/Editor-At-Large*

University of Illinois: History-Philosophy-Newspaper-Library              (Oct 2020-Aug 2021)

*Graduate Hourly Worker*

Museum of the Grand Prairie (May 2021-Oct 2021)

*Project Intern/Museum Assistant*

Champaign County History Museum (January 2022-April 2022

*Museum Manager*

**Course Description:** Pop culture portrayals of the American Civil War often show a peaceful country torn asunder by the arrival of the brutal conflict with the bombardment of Fort Sumter. This course is meant to show how the 1850’s were not a calm before the storm, but a time of deep civil unrest, political violence, and cultural transformation. We will view this period through the lives of the northern abolitionists centered in Concord, Massachussetts: Charles Sumner, John Brown, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Henry David Thoreau. Three men who were ahead of their time, but could not escape the unforgiving world they lived in.

**Course Outline**

***Lecture 1: The Balance of Power***

To understand the political breakdown of political order in the United States before the Civil War we must first understand the nature of daily life in the Antebellum period U.S. While the United States was economically prosperous and removing some property restrictions for voting by white men, it was also a country riven by violent conflict. In this lecture we will also analyze the institution of slavery and why it proved so difficult to dismantle peacefully. The balancing act of political compromise between free states and slave states began to fall apart as the United States instigated a war with Mexico, upending decades of deal making.

***Lecture 2:* *The Mexican-American War and Civil Disobedience***-

The Mexican-American War was among the most polarizing conflicts in American history. Famous figures like Abraham Lincoln and Henry David Thoreau began their political activism by speaking out against the conflict. Many soldiers who would later go on to win renown in the Civil War received their first experiences of combat in places like Vera Cruz and Palo Alto. A war that the United States won sowed the seeds of the civil war less than two decades later.

***Lecture 3: Uncle Tom’s Cabin***, ***The Fugitive Slave Act, and the Underground Railroad***-

Uncle Tom’s Cabin, published in 1852 by Harriet Beecher Stowe was a bestseller in its day. Her book is one of the most influential in American history, and helped to shift the popular perception of slavery in many sections of the North. While a deeply flawed work in some respects, the publication of the book was one of the key events that laid the groundwork for the Civil War. In this lecture, I will also look at the history and impact of the Underground Railroad. We will discuss how the Fugitive Slave Act complicated the escape plans for enslaved persons, and penalized abolitionists who tried to support the escapees.

***Lecture 4: Bleeding Kansas***-

Bleeding Kansas was one of the most disastrous internal conflicts the United States has ever known. Only the massive scale of the Civil War that followed it could match the ferocity of the violence taking place in Kansas during the mid-1860’s. It was during bleeding Kansas that a man named John Brown first came to prominence.

***Lecture 5: The Caning of Charles Sumner-***

Charles Sumner was one of the most prominent abolitionist politicians in the antebellum United States. Through fiery speeches he brought attention to the injustices of slavery. However, he also made a lot of enemies in the slaveholding south. Sumner’s abolitionist views came at a great personal cost, and the consequences of a particular speech would lay the groundwork for the civil war to come.

***Lecture 6: The Dred Scott Decision***-

In 1857 the Supreme Court of the United States published its decision in the case of Dred Scott v Sanford. The court case effectively removed the line between free states and slave states, accelerating the U.S. path to Civil War. In this lecture we will discuss how Scott v Sanford came to be known as the worst Supreme Court decision in our national history, how it emboldened radical abolitionists, and at its core was caused by a political conspiracy and a web of corruption.

***Lecture 7: The Transcendentalists and John Brown’s Raid*-**

Learn how John Brown carried out his famous Harper’s Ferry Raid with financial support from transcendentalist authors. We’ll discuss how a group founded on the principals of self-reliance and pacifism came to support violent revolution against slavery. We will also discuss how this change reflects a growing radicalization in all corners of 1850’s America.

***Lecture 8: The Southern Reaction to John Brown’s Raid and the Path to Ft. Sumter***

In the aftermath of John Brown’s failed raid on Haper’s Ferry in October 1859, and the election of Abraham Lincoln, the South fell into a paranoid spiral. They viewed Brown as proof that abolitionists would stop at nothing to bring an end to slavery. As the nation began to fracture and states seceded Lincoln was given the seemingly impossible task of keeping the country together. At Ft. Sumter he would meet his first great test of the Civil War.

**Instructor Biography**

Connor Monson is a graduate of the University of Illinois with an M.LIS degree and professional training in public history. His undergraduate major was in American History with a focus on the mid-19th century. He has crafted a senior honors thesis and two peer-reviewed articles with the digital history organization *Sourcelab*. All three articles concern American political movements and parties. He served as *Sourcelab*’s Vice-Chairman. Connor also works as the museum manager at the Champaign County History Museum.