

## LP<sup>2</sup> STUDY GROUP PROPOSAL FOR SPRING 2023

### AMERICA'S CIVIL WAR 1861-1865

**Coordinator:** Tom Sear

Aside from our nation's founding, the civil war between the North and the South has been the most important and influential event in our history. Every American, regardless of their political persuasion, should have an understanding of the forces and factors that led to the war, how it proceeded, how it ended and how it impacted and continues to impact the complex heart and soul of America. We critically analyze all of that and more.

With the benefit of hindsight, we start with the fact that the number of American lives lost in the Civil War is almost equal to the total of all American lives lost in all the other wars America has fought. The Civil War resulted in continued brutal oppression of Black Americans and a bitter divide, indeed hatred at times, between North and South. We consider throughout our analysis whether the leaders of the Union and the Confederacy could have made different decisions and adopted different strategies that might have produced a less horrific result. While complexities and uncertainties abound, one central question emerges – was the preservation of the Union worth what it cost to achieve?

**Tom Sear** was at various times a U.S. Marine, a federal prosecutor, a school law professor and a trial lawyer in private practice. He has regularly coordinated study groups, including ones on Winston Churchill, Theodore Roosevelt, and Franklin Roosevelt.

**Type of Study Group:** Mainly discussion

**Readings and other Materials/Online Services:**

*Battle Cry of Freedom* by James McPherson [*Battle Cry*], (Amazon, used \$6.23; new \$17.00).

We will read 40-60 pages each week;

Coordinator will show videos and slides in class and provide limited additional written materials.

\*\*\*\*\* SYLLABUS - A WORK IN PROGRESS \*\*\*\*\*

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### WEEK 1

**TOPIC:** The United States at mid-century

**READING:**

*Battle Cry*, pages 1-46.

**QUESTIONS:**

In what ways did the North and the South differ in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century? Did the South have a legitimate argument that slavery was an accepted integral part of America? What was the impact of the geographical expansion of the United States on the role of slavery in our country?

### WEEK 2

**TOPIC:** Manifest Destiny and Slavery; Fugitive Slave Laws

**READING:** *Battle Cry*, pages 47-103.

**QUESTIONS:**

How did the Wilmot Proviso reflect a change in the American political landscape? What was Abraham Lincoln's view of slavery and how to deal with it? What was the general view in the North of slavery and the rights of Black men and women in America? What was the significance of the approach of Jefferson Davis and Senator Henry Foote to debate in Congress? What is your evaluation of William Seward's speech on the Compromise of 1850?

### WEEK 3

**TOPIC:** A seismic shift in America's political parties

**READING:** *Battle Cry*, pages 104-144.

**QUESTIONS:**

Was the demise of the Whig party inevitable? What is the significance of William Lloyd Garrison burning a copy of the Constitution on July 4, 1854? What was the impact of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill?

**WEEK 4:** Kansas and Slavery; Dred Scott; Revolution of 1860

**WEEK 5:** Counter-revolution of 1861; Secession

**WEEK 6:** The Upper South's dilemma; amateurs go to war

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**WEEK 7:** Blockades and beachheads; the River War

**WEEK 8:** The realities of conscription, combat, disease and death; too many strategies

**WEEK 9:** We Must Free the Slaves; Antietam; opposition from "the rear"; Gettysburg

**WEEK 10:** Campaign to destroy the South

**WEEK 11:** The end

**WEEK 12:** Final thoughts

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