Social Science/History Sample Thesis Proposal

Honors Thesis Proposal
Summer 2013
Thesis Director: Dr. Christine Jacobson Carter

I. Thesis Project Summary

During the Civil War, the Confederacy not only suffered the wrath of Union military forces but faced a social divide between the elite planters and the yeomen farmers on the home front. This divide resonated in the growing political disagreements between Confederate Vice President Alexander Hamilton Stephens and Confederate President Jefferson Davis on how to govern the Confederacy in the Civil War. This project will discuss the reasons for the social class divide between the planters and yeoman in regards to the war and describe the growing political division between President Davis and Vice President Stephens on policy after 1863. The project will show that Stephens represented the political interests of the yeoman farmers while Davis and his policies were for the benefit of the wealthy elite planters. My objective is to demonstrate that Stephens represented the middle class through his resolve for peace negotiations with the Union, his adverse reactions to Confederate policies, and his support for George McClellan against Abraham Lincoln in the 1864 presidential election. I will determine if Stephens was ideologically sympathetic to the predicament of the yeoman farmers or if he was simply an astute statesmen seeking a pragmatic approach to end the war. There will be exploration of the relationship between Davis and the planter class to discover if he did support Lincoln over McClellan as a pretext to further war efforts after the election in 1864. I will also make a further examination of Davis’s efforts to sabotage the peace efforts of Stephens in 1865.

II. Method of Study

The research will consist of primary and secondary sources related to the subjects. I will visit the Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library at Emory University during the 2013 summer semester to examine the Alexander Hamilton Stephens, Jefferson Davis, Joseph E. Brown, and James Thomas collections. I will study the personal correspondence between Alexander Hamilton Stephens and Jefferson Davis from 1860 to 1865. I will examine the correspondence between Stephens and Joseph E. Brown, James Thomas, his brother Linton, and other members of the Confederacy. I will look at secondary sources from respected historians; this includes books and scholarly journal articles on the subjects of Alexander Hamilton Stephens, Jefferson Davis, Confederate political policies, economics in the south during the 1800’s, and the social class division during the Civil War.

III. Bibliography

Manuscripts and Archival Material
Alexander Hamilton Stephens collection, 1821-1935, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

James Thomas correspondence 1862-1864, Manuscript, Archives and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

Jefferson Davis collection 1846-1905, Manuscript, Archives and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

Joseph E. Brown (Joseph Emerson) papers 1821-1894, Manuscript, Archives and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

Books


**Scholarly Journal Articles**


IV. Method of Faculty Assessment
Summer Research Phase 2013:
Weekly Progress Reports (not necessary for first or last week) 30%
These should include progress with secondary and/or primary sources
Research Advisor will give feedback each week.
Student will keep reports and feedback for records.

Primary Source Research Progress Reports (4) to be integrated into Weekly Progress Reports.
At least four of the Weekly Progress Reports should indicate specifically how the primary source and research process is moving, and which letters in which collections are likely to be at the center of the paper. 20%

Two-week meetings
These will occur in person or via Skype or phone, as necessary, and will follow the weekly progress reports. 10%

Draft Bibliography due at the beginning of the Summer Semester (week 2) 10%

Revised and Annotated Bibliography due at the end of the Summer Semester
Submitted with a preliminary Outline 30%

Fall Writing Phase 2013:

Two-week meetings 10%
5-10 page sections/outlines (staggered and) due 3 weeks prior to rough draft 20%
Rough Draft due (date TBD) 20%
Final Draft due (date TBD) 50%

V. How Study Fits into Major and Degree Requirements

This research and writing will fulfill six hours of credit towards a B.A. in History and the Research Honors distinction. This study will draw upon the techniques I have acquired through HIST 3000 and other upper level history courses I have taken. Having a time frame of study that allows for research in the summer and writing in the fall will increase my ability to produce a better final paper for HIST 4990 in the spring of 2014. The in-depth analysis of primary source material and subsequent writing of the thesis will also better prepare me for graduate school as I intend to apply following graduation in the spring. This process will ensure that I am more apt for academic work at a higher level of study because I intend to be an asset and contribute to the field.