

[Home](#) ► [My courses](#) ► [HST 209 W15 \(Escobar 32063\)](#) ► [January 11 - January 17](#) ► [Forum 1](#) ► [Meet Ken Burns](#)

« Forum 1

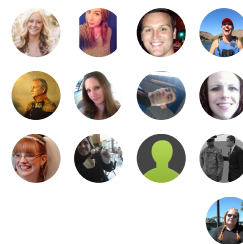


Joe Escobar

Meet Ken Burns

70 days ago

47 replies



Last 70 days ago



After studying the required materials, address the various questions. Make your initial posts by the Wednesday deadline (if not sooner) in order to start the discussion. Then, continue your discussions until the Sunday deadline.

To make your POSTS, click the reply link in this, MY post. To reply to another student's post, be sure to click the reply link within in THEIR post.

IMPORTANT - SUBJECT LINES

BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post. Do NOT simply leave it RE: Meet Ken Burns

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#)

Sum of ratings: -

47 replies

1



Post by Agina Hale

Very skeptical

67 days ago

After reading both of the articles I do have a lot of concerns about Ken Burns movie. The list is overwhelming on how many important pieces of information are left out. I had already had a feeling it was going to lean towards the "the civil war was because of slavery" because that seems to be the accepted modern summary.

There are a few bullet points of what I'm concerned with.
James Buchanan doing nothing. That's not the best way to put it.

Harper's Ferry. I know it might not sound like a big deal to some, but sometimes the details do actually mean a lot. The two points couldn't be more diametrically opposing. The slaves didn't rise up, but the towns people did vs The towns people were subdued, took little part in the fighting and felt somewhat kindly to the liberators.

I don't know if it's stating that the movie doesn't talk about the 1850 Compromise, or if it's just something that isn't well represented. It needs to be mentioned, in depth..

Ostend Manifesto. Crucial. What about leading into bleeding kansas?

No mention of the fire-eaters. This is strange to me. It also brings up the point that is fascinating about how small of a northern population and a small population in the south brought the two sides into battle.

Nullification on the tariffs, Wilmot Proviso and the compromise of 1850 were crucial political elements. The Wilmot Proviso alone could have changed things quite a bit if we took the territories from Mexico.

Not mentioning that Lincoln wasn't on the ballot in the election of 1860. Which is something that to this day, many southerners feel bitter about.

Overall I've decided that the Ken Burns movie shouldn't be weighted as it is a truth. The hard part about using this in academics (even college) is it becomes more memorable. Even if we watch it thinking about all the inaccuracies, it's hard to separate because of the half truths. When a movie has a high production value, it sucks you in. Visuals and music bring up emotion. This was the same reason I was very upset with the movie *Inglorious Bastards*. I had already heard teenagers discussing that they didn't know that Hitler died in a movie theatre. I understand the desire for historical fiction, but our society is too easily persuaded into believing it's fact. Just like the History Channel and all of their alien and bigfoot shows.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)



Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

2



[Reply to](#) [Agina Hale from Edgar Rodriguez](#)

65 days ago

Interesting facts

I had a blast reading your post on this forum, you made many great points about history and the inaccuracies that most people just assume are correct. Many people that don't know too much about history in my opinion assume what the movies they see in movies i what actually happened in real life. I think of it as a damn shame that our society today has too much faith in how Hollywood portrays the past, mainly war movies. My main concern with whole Ken Burns documentary on the Civil War is that it is from 1990 and very outdated. I think we should have some newer material for this class when it comes to documentaries and such. Great post and it was very informative.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)



Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

3



[Reply to](#) [Edgar Rodriguez from Agina Hale](#)

65 days ago

Re: Interesting facts

I can understand your concern with it being from 1990. However think of it this way. The subject matter is almost 150 years old. Having material that is over 20 years old might not make much of a difference unless there is some new information in this field in that time. In my opinion, the last 20 years have been worse. I've noticed in my lifetime that people have reinvented a lot of things in modern perspective such as Lincoln himself. The farther away from the truth, the harder it is to tell it. In my opinion. But I understand what you are saying!

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)



Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

4


 Reply to  Agina Hale from Edgar Rodriguez

65 days ago

You make a good point.

Here is my concern about history and correct me if I'm wrong here but I think that the prior generations of white and black Americans seem to tell a different version of the Civil War. I see now as we have progressed that many things that have to do with the past are being included in the text that wasn't even written about that much, for instance how the French armies were already in Mexico making plans to help the **Confederacy** defeat the Union. I read that in newer book and I didn't even know about the French being in Mexico trying to make it up to Texas anyways point taken and well thought out.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)

 Sum of ratings: 2 (1)


5


 Reply to  Agina Hale from Sherry Althaus

63 days ago

To much info to put into one film

I was impressed by your amount of knowledge of the civil war you have to be able to point out the discrepancies of the video series. I agree with you that many viewers take what they see on the TV and believe it to be the truth. However, I think for a general audience this series provides more information than the public would normally be exposed to. When I watched the first episode, I thought it was really in depth and very long for a first episode. However, after reading the chapters in the book I see how much they left out. I am sure they could not have included all the facts or it would be way to long and lose its appeal to many viewers. I am glad that we have both materials to use in this class as the book has filled in the gaps that the movie created.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)

 Sum of ratings: 3 (1)


6


 Reply to  Sherry Althaus from Agina Hale

63 days ago

Re: To much info to put into one film

Yes there are facts missing. Some are big gaps while some are just a minor role. My overall problem is more about the big picture. The episode that we just watched was "the cause", so that should have talked more about how radical the idea of war really was. The explanation of the cause is very myopic. I'm having a hard time putting it into diplomatic words.

As far as the other chapters, we will just have to see as the chapters unfold.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)

 Sum of ratings: 2 (1)


7



Reply to Agina Hale from Opal Burdge

62 days ago

Re: To much info to put into one film

So many gaps! The fact that it's called "The Cause" and only talks primarily of one fraction of the cause of the civil war.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)

 Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

8



Post by Edgar Rodriguez

66 days ago

We should sources other sources!

I don't have much to say about Ken Burns because I have not heard of him nor seen any of his works. So no I don't admire or like Ken Burns or the message that his presented in the video clip. I do know that it is required to watch his documentary on the Civil War and that his documentary will be the main source of video reference. I still felt the same way after reading the second article I am here to learn and getting all of the information for one source seems a little narrow minded in my opinion. I do think that we should integrate other documentary concerning the Civil War because this is only one person's opinion on the facts and not to mention that this documentary is from 1990. I really don't know about confidence concerning this person but what I do know is that it is a required material for this class so I'm going to watch and learn per se. I'm not here to complain I'm here to learn and if I want more information I will look for it.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)

 Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

9



Reply to Edgar Rodriguez from Jal Rial

64 days ago

Your response

Edgar I know you don't know much about mr burns or his works because I don't know much either until I read the articles and watched the video provides. I do think that you should give him a chance and maybe do a little research in the man. He is very unique in how he does his film making and also how he thinks. He strives for the best and that alone is a special characteristic. Me burns does leave plenty of facts out but once again who doesn't. You stayed your here to learn and if need information you will look for it and I think you should do just that on me burns. I found out he is not half bad. Lastly I do want to say I agree with you about how getting information from once source and one source only is narrow minded because it is. That is why I encourage you do look more into me burns and see what you find because I found a lot that actually made me like his work more. I think the same night happen to you my friend.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)

 Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

10



Reply to Edgar Rodriguez from Opal Burdge

62 days ago

Yes yes yes

I loved the fact you brought up how narrow minded this topic will be with Ken Burns being our main reference topic on the war. So much more happened and was happening than just the issue of slavery. If you find some more info on the war you prefer I would be game to read it, so definitely post it on moodle! I mean Burns made good points, but he could also broaden his horizons more on this topic.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)


Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

11



Post by Jal Rial

Jal rial on Ken Burns

66 days ago

Not only did I find myself liking mr.Burns after watching the video,I also found my self very impressed by his works ,and his self motivation to do very well in filming and even finding out the best objectives for his films.I do think that mr.Burns leaves out a ton of facts which definitely should be touched when filming or even talking about the civil war topic.A very important bulletin was the whole deal of mr.buchana not doing much(which is false).I personally feel that he just leaves out to much facts .The slaves didn't ignite the civil war themselves nor did the north therefore I think he should touch some of the basic bases.Ken burns missed or just chose not to add a lot of important facts.

After reading the second article my only concern would be how scholars and film makers would positively callaborate to help one another.I just don't see it happening because film makers are more all about there work vs stating facts about the topic and that is all scholars want to hear especially when it come to something to important in history.A great example was in the article when professor Natalie Davis from Princeton states that film makers would recreate debates from ancient Rome by puting words in the princes mouths that where never said in order to make there film or works that much better.

I think the most critical was the video with burns and pbs.My level of confidence in this civil war series would be more the high end just because of what I already know vs what is left out.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)



Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

12



Reply to



Jal Rial from Edgar Rodriguez

64 days ago

The Point

I might have gone a little to far on that and you might be correct but the only reason I don't really like Ken Burns is because all of the information provided comes from one source. I will most likely be looking for more information in other texts and videos. This is only the second week and we have much more information to go over. Thanks for your feedback.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)



Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

13



Reply to



Jal Rial from Katelyn Rasmussen

62 days ago

Re: Jal rial on Ken Burns

I agree that filmmakers making films about history should definitely stick to the facts, and leaving out important facts regarding what happened in history is very misleading to those just learning about the civil war and not having read any other facts on the subject. Perhaps films are not a good way to learn about history and we should considered a well made documentary on the subject that is an effort from historians and filmmakers together.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)



Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

14



Post by Jordan Hevern

Hit and Miss

66 days ago

Coming into watching this video I was not sure what to expect, and I was not sure if this short film on Ken Burns would be actually talking about the Civil war or on him, so after watching the seven minute film, I realized that I don't think that I necessarily admire Ken Burns, I can respect him. I think being a historian is not an easy task and finding all the information is hard because of the lack of technology, and on top of making an accurate film is something that is not always an easy task. After reading both articles on Ken Burns, they both left me wondering on if the critics are biased. On one hand you got them vamping up Ken Burns and how he made a handbook for schools, and then on the other hand you have them saying he leaves out important and vital information. I still believe that he does know what he is doing and what he goes through to get his information is critical.

My confidence in this Civil War Series is as it has been the whole time. I think that its going to be a fair amount of information that will be in depth but not to the point of getting into the horrific detail of the brutal fight. I do think this will be biased in leaning toward slavery and it will be narrow minded in that sense, but I am willing to learn and give it the respect it deserves.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)



Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

15



Reply to



Jordan Hevern from Katelyn Rasmussen

62 days ago

Re: Hit and Miss

The Civil War was such an important and pivotal point in our countries history that EVERY detail we know to be true and accurate should be in print and on film for everyone to read or watch however horrific it may be. It is the history that has made our country what it is today and everyone should know the facts.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)



Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

16



Post by Sherry Althaus

A series made to capture the audience of non history buffs!

66 days ago

Watching the Ken Burns intro video opened my eyes to how much work goes on to create a movie series like this. I definitely found myself admiring how much work he put into making the series. It would appear from the video that Ken elicited the help of many historians and researchers to make the video as accurate as possible. He seemed to try to weave historical facts, music, and drama into a show that a broad audience could watch and enjoy. From watching the intro, I felt like he would present a very informative and historically correct video series.

After reading the first article, I still felt the same way because Ken seemed to defend his reasoning for putting in or leaving out different facts quite well to me. I gather from reading the article that he really wanted to be able to tell the civil war history to people who would not normally watch such a show. According to the article: "History on the screen: who speaks for the past? Ken Burns' fans and critics have their say" (Bedford, May 3, 1993) he achieved just that: "Some 39 million people tuned in when film debuted on PBS in September 1990, and rebroadcasts continue to draw large audiences. Home video sales topped 1 million nationwide, and attendance at Civil War battlefields increased markedly."

Upon reading the second article, I realized that this series is highly disputed among researchers and scholars and some even appear to be downright against it. I was shocked at the amount of discrepancies there was between the movie and the article. It most definitely makes you take a second look at the series and doubt that it is historically accurate. For me personally even knowing that it may not be the most accurate series I feel the amount of knowledge and understanding I will gain from watching this series outweighs any discrepancies it may have. My confidence in having a good learning out-

come is still high. Sadly, I have barely any knowledge of history and feel like I have already learned so much in this class and we have just started. I love that we are watching this video series along with reading the text; this will make a great impact on my ability learning the information.

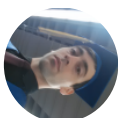
Bedford, K. E. (May 3, 1993). History on the screen: who speaks for the past? Ken Burns' fans and critics have their say. *Current*.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)

Sum of ratings: 3 (1)



17



[Reply to](#)  **Sherry Althaus** from **Matthew Wymore**

62 days ago

Re: A series made to capture the audience of non history buffs!

Sherry,

Although Ken Burns is somewhat controversial because many historians feel that he leaves out a lot of the history in his films, I have to admit that his films do look pretty well done. I feel like at one time in my life I have viewed one (or maybe more) of his films, perhaps on PBS or in a previous class. After reading the reviews on his films however, it does raise a few red flags. I just hope that for this class, he can provide us with a new outlook on history, while still providing us with a reliable outlet for information. 😊

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)

Sum of ratings: 2 (1)



18



[Reply to](#)  **Sherry Althaus** from **Micah McJunkin**

62 days ago

Re: A series made to capture the audience of non history buffs!

Hi Sherry-

I agree with you that because I have such a little depth of knowledge about the civil war, it doesn't feel right for me to be critical about Burns work. In the short introduction video about the series by Burns, he claimed he used multiple historians in the making of the series, and I believe he did. So if historians were used by Burns then I dont know who to believe, them or the critics. So I think I will watch the series the way it was intended to be watched by viewers like me, willing to learn and appreciative of the extensive time and effort that went into making it.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)

Sum of ratings: 2 (1)



19



Post by Heather Reed

Review of Ken Burns

66 days ago

I did I find myself admiring Ken Burns after watching the short video. I like the fact that he is a hands on producer yet, he involves numerous historians in his film making process. To me he seems like a very intelligent and creative man. After reading the first article I found myself admiring him even more. He was "trying to reach the public and get them excited about history and make them want to explore and even debate the issues". I would have to agree with Toplin who said "it can't be wallpaper history; it cannot cover everything".

Even after reading the second article I don't really find myself with too many concerns. One thing that could bother me would be that I may not have all the information about the Civil War in this one film. I think that like with anything we need to look at other views and other options before we think we have all of the correct facts. Even though Ken's film is extremely long there isn't enough time for him to tell us everything. If this film was the only source of information on Civil War for a classroom to learn then I might be a little more skeptical. It even says in the second article that films tend to simplify history and are rarely an effective substitute for book-based teaching. At one point in the article it says that "the most important contribution of the historian is to interpret the meaning of the past events, not merely to chronicle them". Yet nowhere do Ken Burns claim to be a historian. I do wonder who Michael A. Morrison and Robert E. May are, I didn't see anywhere in their review on their credentials.

Even after reviewing the two articles I still have a high confidence level in this video that we will be watching throughout the term. I do know though that it is not our only source on the Civil War and that I need to take both sources into consideration. I think that the video will help us get the basics of the war and help keep us wanting to learn more and to ask questions.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)



Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

20



[Reply to](#) [Heather Reed from Katelyn Rasmussen](#)

62 days ago

Re: Review of Ken Burns

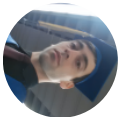
I agree that exploring many different sources regarding the Civil War is the only way to get a board and informative education on the subject. There is a lot of information out there on the Civil War and I look forward to learning more.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)



Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

21



[Post by Matthew Wymore](#)

66 days ago

The Series that Captivated America

Personally it sounds as though Ken Burns is trying to make a piece of art of historical events. I'm sure Burns views history as important, and that he was only trying to portray history in a way that American's can view as entertaining. But after reading the reviews that have mostly negative things to say about his work, leads me to believe that he put a little too much effort into the development of the film, and not enough into the research and delivery of historical events.

The first article kind of reassured those feelings, that he was more concerned in the production side of the video than the actual history behind key events. The second article also makes me question what material from the films I can trust to be true. A direct quote from the second article states that it is not accurate history (pg. 39).

Currently I don't feel very confident with the video do to both of these articles. I do hope however, that this quickly changes as we go through the term and progress through the films as a whole.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)



Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

22



Reply to  **Matthew Wymore** from **Jessica Ballestrazze**

63 days ago

A springboard to investigation

I understand your concerns about the series being a reputable source of information based on the poor reviews we read. I share similar sentiments, and would obviously be happier with a blameless piece of historical filmmaking. Unfortunately, that doesn't exist. I think we can take solace in the fact that though there are several problems with Burns' series, it really has, as your title describes, "captivated America." I think there will always be negative backlash from historians over any sort of political or historical retelling. But there are also many historians who endorse this as a great jumping off point, to light the spark of curiosity for people who will hopefully continue to deepen their knowledge of the Civil War.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)



Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

23



Reply to  **Jessica Ballestrazze** from **Jal Rial**

62 days ago

Reputable?? how

How is the series a reputable source?? please get into detail with that because I don't think it is at all. Its not all about reputation!! and to be honest if it was reputable don't you think a lot more individuals would know more about the series or about the work?

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)



Sum of ratings: (1)

24



Post by Roxanne Lindquist

66 days ago

reviewing Ken Burns

After watching the video i cant say that i liked Ken Burns, but i do admire his enthusiasm about film making. It seems that he was trying to make it so that it would capture a bigger and more variate of audience but like Toplin said "it can't be wallpaper history; it cannot cover everything".

After reading the first article i felt that it was giving more praise to the film making but not really the history side of it. in the second article it states "Although Burns' TV epic may well represent the finest film yet produced about the American Civil War, it has severe limitations as a teaching device." It gos on to point out the incorrect information starting from the introduction of the film regarding the date Lincolns speech was given and other dates that are historically inaccurate along with saying Buchanan "did nothing", along with several other things that were inaccurate or just left out.

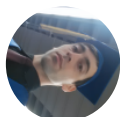
So over all after reading the articles and watching the video i feel i may learn some new things and may be entertained, but also will feel like i will second guess what is said in the film weather it is actually accurate.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)



Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

25



Reply to  **Roxanne Lindquist** from **Matthew Wymore**

62 days ago

Re: reviewing Ken Burns

Roxanne,

I feel the exact same way. It's hard to say that you "like" something after reading a couple of reviews on something. Only by watching the film can we actually get a feel for what Ken Burns is trying to accomplish. The reviews that we read made it sound like Burns was trying to make a visually appealing movie, but forgot to add the history piece into it.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)



26



[Reply to](#)  **Matthew Wymore** from Jal Rial

62 days ago

AGREED

Roxanne and Matthew,

I couldt agree more with you two. I think that yes its very difficult to agree or like something that you've read a complete review on. You would have to watch the film or get more detail to really see or find out where Mr. Burns is coming from or trying to get at. The best thing I heard all forum was Matthew saying "mr. burns trying to make a visually appealing movie, but forgetting to add the history piece into it". That is completely right.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)



27



Post by Samuel Moffenbier

Johnny Reb and Billy Yank: Myths in History

66 days ago

After watching the video introduction I was more interested than before in beginning the series. It was an advertisement so surely this was the intention. Ken Burns seemed to enjoy what he was doing and enthusiasm for a project, if it is earnest, usually translates into a higher quality product. They briefly touched on the issue of bias to which the audience was assured that a team of academic historians was on hand for consultation. Given the limitation the class has in time and material, bias would be a difficult thing to always be aware of.

I think the intention of these last exercises is to illustrate that at some level a bias will exist in any work. Even if it's just a bias by omission. Time is limited and every story or source can't be shown. This will undoubtedly translate into a less complex overview. I think the a greater issue exists in why a group or source is omitted. In the second article, Morrison and May caution against the modern moralist "anti-slavery myth" and I think it is easy to retrospectively view the Civil War as a black and white (or Grey and Blue) war of righteous abolitionists against the wicked slave owning planters. It's a neat and tidy box to place something that is monstrously more complex. Painting complex groups of people as monolithic caricatures does more to mythologize than provide real insight. I do have concern that these foibles will be perpetuated and that was reinforced by the second article. The issues of historical bias and oversimplification is something that has to be resolved by the reader. Ultimately, it's the responsibility of the viewer/student to seek as many sources as possible. Contrasting one narrative of history with another to get a better understanding. A writer or director only has a limited time to get their message across but the people being informed have the agency to go out and seek another source.

There certainly seems to be enough of a positive response to both the text and Ken Burn's series to warrant a viewing. Thankfully additional resources are provided that will contrast the narrative presented in Burn's documentary.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)

Sum of ratings: 3 (1)



28


[Reply to Samuel Moffenbier from Roxanne Lindquist](#)

65 days ago

Re: Johnny Reb and Billy Yank: Myths in History

I enjoyed reading your post. I feel that i agree with you on your thought with this subject. especially that it is up to the person to seek out other information and compare what they read and see, other wise your going to be as biased as what you read and have limited knowledge.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)

 Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

29


[Reply to Samuel Moffenbier from Micah McJunkin](#)

63 days ago

Multiple Sources Makes for Better Understanding

I think you brought up some good points in your post. I agree with you in that it is difficult to not express a bias in any kind of historical work, especially a video series due to the small amount of time available to touch on certain subjects. We as students, and people in general have a tendency to believe the first things we hear when it comes to learning about a new subject. It is up to us to remember to keep a skeptical eye and to seek out more information from multiple sources. I am grateful for the fact that we are using two sources of information in this class, both the video series and the book should be able to provide whatever the other one doesn't.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)

 Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

30


[Post by Jessica Ballestrazze](#)

66 days ago

Not on Fire for Burns

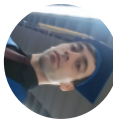
After watching the "Meet Ken Burns" video, I was not completely impressed, nor completely turned off. I felt that at times his approach seemed to be a little wishy-washy and superficial. With quotes like, "we have a joyful relationship with the process of learning something new," it seemed a little contrived. I feel conflicted regarding his attitude toward research and discovery. On one hand, I can respect that they want to, "...approach our projects with ignorance and curiosity. This allows us to have a process of discovery." I think that it is important to ingest historical facts free of outside interpretation before forming our own opinions, which is seemingly what Burns and his team have tried to do. On the other hand, in regards to historical data, I think that sometimes it is virtually impossible to find important data or opposing viewpoints if you don't know what you're looking for. In this sense, it probably would have produced a better piece if Burns and his team had utilized more historians and experts.

Based on the few minutes of video I have watched about Burns, I would say that his main focus is on creating something that is visually appealing and palatable to the masses. I think it's possible that this approach makes him a good filmmaker, and a poor historian. I feel confident that this video series will give us a good jumping off point, and as with all history, we will be responsible for filling in the gaps and questioning any discrepancies we may sense.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)

 Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

31


[Reply to Jessica Ballestrazze from Matthew Wymore](#)

62 days ago

Re: Not on Fire for Burns

Jessica,

Your point about Burns being a good filmmaker and a poor historian is what made me nervous about the films. I feel like Burns puts too much emphasis in making the films appeal visually, and takes little to no time to make them informative (which is what we want from a film about history). All we can do is wait and see how the films play out in the class and hope that they aren't as bad as what the critics make them out to be. 😊

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)



Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

32



Post by [Micah McJunkin](#)

Viewership Requires Sacrifice

66 days ago

I must admit that I did find myself admiring the video. However, I am not sure if I was admiring Ken Burns, or the imagery, music, and quotes used throughout the series. Like most Americans, I am a person who learns the most through visual displays. The video clip about the making of the series certainly did a great job displaying the massive amounts of time and effort that went into the making of *The Civil War*, and I do admire Burns for his film making skills. However, it did not raise my confidence level in the historical validity of the content used in the series. The main part of the video I will remember is when Burns himself said that he and his crew go into the making of a film with their own opinions and interpretations, and then they challenge the historians to either change their minds, or validate those opinions. Burns said that in the video, but he never said whether or not the content in the series was his own original interpretation of the civil war that had been validated by historians, or if it was changed by the professionals.

What stood out to me from the first article was the opinion of Leon Litwack and Daniel Walkowitz, that the film was "superbly produced, but limited." I agree with them that the series was obviously produced very well, but I must take them for their word about the "limited" part. Of course I do not have the historical background that these men do, so I do not feel I am capable of making that kind of criticism of the series. I will say this, the purpose of a video series like the one Ken Burns created is to peak the interest of the public about a subject that the general public knew about, but had little depth of knowledge. As I said earlier, most people learn effectively through the use of visual aids, and Burns certainly achieved that. There absolutely must be strong and emotional images throughout the video that capture the audience's attention. In relentless pursuit of viewership, Burns may have sacrificed some depth in the context of the video in order to use those images.

I have very mixed feelings about the video series. While I am certainly in awe of the imagery and production, I am struggling to appreciate the chosen context of the series. I have no doubt in my mind the context is true, but after reading the reviews and criticisms, I don't believe it was always appropriate for inclusion in the series. I agree with the third review that said there was too much focus on the military movement of the war, and not enough on the cause of the war itself: human motivation. I believe that the single most important part of the study of the civil war should be the emotions of the people and the motivations that caused the tensions on both sides, and then once that has been covered, the military movements can be connected to the emotions of the people.

Bedford, K. E. (May 3, 1993). History on the screen: who speaks for the past? Ken Burns' fans and critics have their say. *Current*.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)



Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

33



Reply to  Jessica Ballestrazze from Micah McJunkin

64 days ago

McPherson compensates for Burns?

In addition to your point that Walkowitz and Litwack dubbed the film, "superbly produced, but limited," Ken Burns himself admits that, "We were trying to speak to a very large audience...and excite them and not be the last word or the first word." I relate to your feeling that I am ill-equipped to determine where the series is limited, and this concerns me. But I think that the best way to approach a series like this is with the knowledge that there are bound to be discrepancies, and there are no final words or absolute answers when it comes to politics in general. As we have done with both of the main sources in this class, it's important to understand that they are all flawed in various ways, and try to piece together the best understanding that we can. Also, it seems that where the Civil War series lacks, in causes and build-up to the war, McPherson's book excels.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)



Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

34



Reply to  Jessica Ballestrazze from Micah McJunkin

62 days ago

Re: McPherson compensates for Burns?

Thank you, Jessica. I didn't think about the fact that whatever the video series lacks, the book will make up for it, and visa versa. This forum has really made me realize just how daunting making a video series about the civil war would be. How could a war, that was fought in as many as 10,000 different places possibly have its content covered enough so it satisfies all historians? Of course it is physically impossible to do that, so there will always be critics no matter what is covered.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)



Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

35



Reply to  Jessica Ballestrazze from Heather Reed

62 days ago

Re: McPherson compensates for Burns?

Jessica,

Your comment was very well put. Ken burns did say that this film is for a large audience. There is no pleasing everyone about history. I would agree that for the most part dates of historical events would be agreed upon. Yet, reasons why or what truly happened can't be absolute. History comes for the past and there is no way of asking those people questions about it now and even if we could would it even be all correct. People have their own opinions and stories. I think that Ken was trying to get people excited and interested about the Civil War. To give every single detail of the war would have taken even more time. I think he was trying to give an overall blanketing of the war. I can not say that this film is the only way for people to learn about the Civil Way. However, I hope it is a great starting point. Along with McPherson's book I hope we can all get a better more entailed "history" of the Civil War.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)



Sum of ratings: 2 (1)



Post by Opal Burdge

The battle of "Who said it better."

66 days ago

I like many people do enjoy a film that can nicely summarize the long chapters and articles I'm assigned to read on the subject. Cause hey sometimes all the words(especially when talking history) can just blur together on the page of a textbook after a while of reading.

I wouldn't say I was all that impressed with the video though. Sure it covered some key points, but I really felt like it only focused on the fact that slavery was a big deal. Not to say it wasn't, but in actuality the Civil War is way more complex than slavery. My hope is that throughout the films he will dig a little deeper than just the surface history of the war.

With those critiques I was fond of of the information given, much of it was on point, and found the photos and music to fit nicely with it all. He put a ton of work into that, so hopefully he put more into re-researching the history of it. Scholars are very big critiques from what I saw on this to, yet they're always a tad harsher than the every day person.

I'm intrigued to see how the rest of this plays out. Maybe the text will summarize better, but maybe I'm too critical right off the bat with this; and he will cover more than just the basic 'South wanted slaves, and the North didn't, so they went to war.'

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)



Sum of ratings: 2 (1)



[Reply to](#)  [Opal Burdge from Agina Hale](#)

65 days ago

Re: The battle of "Who said it better."

I think of us as junior scholars though. I don't think there is anything wrong with being critical of something that is presenting itself as a educational interpretation of a very important time in history.

I agree with you on your statement of how the Civil War was more complex than just slavery. There is a sentiment there that goes with something i'm trying to find the words for. When the 2nd article critiques Ken Burns for just showing every slave only on the cotton farm, I think he does us a disservice. I want to see every aspect.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)



Sum of ratings: 3 (1)



[Reply to](#)  [Agina Hale from Heather Reed](#)

64 days ago

Re: The battle of "Who said it better."

Angina,

I completely agree with us being junior scholars if we anything higher we wouldn't be in this class. I also think that we as students should be critical of something presenting it's self as educational. The thing is we are just "junior" scholars as of now. How do we know what is correct in history and what isn't? This is why we are taking this class. I believe Ken Burns did the best he could in his time constraints. If the film was all we watched to learn about the Civil War and that was the only thing out there to learn about it then I think it would be a different story. We all know as students that learning isn't easy and just watching a film would be way to easy.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)



Sum of ratings: 2 (1)



↑ [Reply to](#)  [Agina Hale from Opal Burdge](#)

62 days ago

Re: The battle of "Who said it better."

Sure we may be junior scholars but it doesn't mean I don't know my fair share about the civil war. I just feel like it's the same thing I've been hearing since high school, slavery this and slavery that. The civil war had far more issues than just slavery alone and I feel many people don't know that. Sure Burns went over good information, but if you do a bit more research on him it seems to be his favorite information to go over.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)



Sum of ratings: [2 \(1\)](#)

40



↑ [Reply to](#)  [Opal Burdge from Heather Reed](#)

62 days ago

Slavery being the only issue for war

I think that most of us would agree that the Civil War was not just about slavery but it was an issue. The thing is we can not say that Ken Burns film only says that the war was due to slavery until we see the film in whole for ourselves. Everyone has an opinion every the "historians" that viewed the film. It is very hard for me to make a sound decision on Ken Burns until I have viewed all of the film and have learned more about the Civil War.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)



Sum of ratings: [1 \(1\)](#)

41



↑ [Reply to](#)  [Opal Burdge from Heather Reed](#)

62 days ago

Put a human touch on the Civil War

I have a hard time with just reading a book were all the words just blur together and I enjoy anything that makes it easier to understand or comprehend. It is kinda of hard to give an opinion of someone after only a seven minute video clip. And hearing negative comments on someone tends to sway most people to do the same. I had a high opinion of Ken Burns from the beginning and still do. I watched the first chapter of the video and I admire him even more. He made it very interesting and very compelling. The pictures and the music made me feel as if I was there and had compassion for those who had to go through the horrible time.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)



Sum of ratings: [2 \(1\)](#)

42



[Post by Jessica Ballestrazze](#)

Swiss cheese history

64 days ago

Morrison and Mays claim that, "Burns constructs an interpretive framework that, by mistaking consequences for causes, is more problematic than illuminating." They go on to explain that rather than dispel the myths accepted by the American culture regarding the causes of the Civil War, Burns instead chooses to perpetuate them with "Swiss cheese history." From the viewpoint of someone who has virtually no base of Civil War knowledge, I easily could have watched the series and believed it to be fully factual. So in this way, it raises concerns for me about the potential misinformation it has given to viewers since its debut. I do believe when it comes to history, small things may be harmlessly omitted for the greater purpose of clarity. It could be argued that a simpler story will inspire a larger group of people to investigate further, wherein they would be able to more fully understand the whole story. Therefore, I feel more confident in its use in a classroom setting where other sources will also be uti-

lized. I feel less confident in the knowledge that the Civil War series is being presented to the general public by PBS as a comprehensive view of the Civil War, when it is clearly deficient.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)



Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

43



[Reply to](#) [Jessica Ballestrazze from Opal Burdge](#)

62 days ago

Re: Swiss cheese history

Yes, a thousand times yes. Not knocking this class, but I love what you said about the classroom setting where you (well if you have a good teacher) actually dig into the information given, but with just videos you're going to have to do some digging yourself. It's so easy to just think one sided about this war like so many do because it's the only information they've ever been given on it.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)



Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

44



[Reply to](#) [Jessica Ballestrazze from Micah McJunkin](#)

62 days ago

Great Point

I think you made a great point about the interpretation of the video series in an online class, as compared to a classroom setting. I think when we all watch the videos at home we may all end up with different interpretations of what we watched, which I believe has both positives and negatives. In a classroom setting, the students would usually end up learning and believing the perspective of the instructor, which is fine but of course not always accurate. This is where I think online classes offer up a unique opportunity for every person in the class to make their own interpretation and opinion known, which is not always the case in a classroom setting.

The more I have thought about the content in the video series, the harder it is for me to be critical of Burns. Its easy for me to read the reviews by validated historians that are critical of the series, but did Burns not use validated historians himself in the making of the series? It just seems like both sides are saying I'm right and you're wrong, but of course that will be the case because its human nature to have different opinions. I also think Burns was going to be criticized no matter what content he included in the videos, because its impossible to include everything due to the limited time available.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)



Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

45



Post by Sherry Althaus

Time changes things

63 days ago

I too am glad to have both resources available for us to use. Reading the text can sometimes feel like information overload. It nice to watch the film and have a visual to go with the words you are reading. As far as the accuracy of the film, I sometimes wonder if we ever really know what the whole truth is to something. All of the people involved in the civil war have long since passed, and with them, their firsthand knowledge of what happened on the battlefield. We have all played that game where you say a sentence to someone and then they in return repeat it to the next person this continues until the last person says aloud what they were told. This rarely ever matches what was originally said. This simple game just goes to show how much words are interpreted differently. Therefore, you can imagine how what really happened on the battlefield changed by the time it would get back to camp and then

change even more when written by the press of that time. Therefore, I believe that all history is subject to interpretation. Everyone will look at the same piece of information and describe it the way they see it, based on their life experiences. I am sure you could take one battle and one side would completely tell a different story of how it went down compared to the other side. I guess my point is that as long as we are human, have the ability to think we will put our spin on things, and pass them along as truth. I think we as class should not be stuck on whether or not something is complete truth and instead look at the big picture of the civil war as a whole. Ken burns shared his view of the civil war and there will always be those who criticize it those that will love it.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)



Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

46



Post by Katelyn Rasmussen

63 days ago

Ken Burns Intro

I believe that many people are easily fooled by what they see and hear. We are to quick to judge and believe. For example when you go see a movie that is based on a true story many people walk out of that movie believing that everything in the movie actually happened when in reality they add to the true story to make that movie more. Ken Burns is writing and telling about what he believes to be true and his knowledge on what happened in the civil war and to me that reminds me of the "based on a true story" saying. There may be some things that aren't completely accurate nor 100 percent true but that is to each their own when learning about the civil war and learning the different things you may hear about it. When having long reading assignments and lessons it is nice to have a "summary video" to conclude things and bring it all together visually. I believe this video is a good learning tool to students because many students learn in different ways; some more hands on than others. After watching the video and reading the articles about Ken Burns I concluded that Ken does twist and leave things out about the civil war that aren't accurate. He leaves out lots of detail and mainly only covers the bigger points while I believe that everything about the civil war should be important and included when telling the story.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)



Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

47



Post by Agina Hale

63 days ago

Economics as "the cause".....

The North vs South divide was gaining speed all the time. The South was able to trade to different nations unlike the north, which wasn't able to keep up. The south was exporting more than the North, yet paying the exact amount of tariffs. As we know from "no taxation without representation", that when people feel that things aren't fair, it pushes people to do something about it.

[Reply](#) [Edit](#) [Delete](#) [Split](#)



Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

Add your reply



Your subject

Type your post

☐ Private reply

[Use advanced editor](#)

Move this discussion to ... ↕

NEWER DISCUSSION
[Meet Ken Burns](#)

 [Moodle Docs for this page](#)

HST 209 W15 (Escobar 32063)

[LCC Home](#) | [LCC Student Help](#) | [LCC Faculty Help](#) | [Faculty Moodle Training](#) |

© Copyright 2012 Lane Community College, All Rights Reserved