THE CIVIL WAR AND AMERICAN LITERATURE

1. How can the ongoing presence of the Civil War in contemporary American literature be explained? Why does this event seem to have maintained a continuous fascination for Americans?

2. What cultural function can be ascribed to current fictionalizations of the Civil War and in which way do they contribute to a re-definition of America and its cultural history?

3. What major fictional perspectives of the war have been constructed in American literature before, during and after the Civil War? How do these perspectives reflect the prevailing interpretations of this event in American society at large?

4. What are the major thematic and narrative paradigms and literary conventions of the Civil War novel in the 20th century? (for instance, the “Southern Lady” and the “Mammy”)

5. What is “parahistorical fiction” and in which way does this sub-genre construct particular versions of the Civil War? What are the reasons for the immense growth of parahistorical fiction in recent decades?

6. What is the contribution parahistorical fiction can make for re-evaluating history and reconsidering cultural memory due to its speculative character?