Call for Papers

International Conference:
“The Transnational Significance of the American Civil War: A Global History”

Conveners: Jörg Nagler (Friedrich Schiller University, Jena), Marcus Gräser (German Historical Institute, Washington, D.C), Ian Tyrrell (University of New South Wales, Sydney)
Location and Date: Friedrich-Schiller-University at Jena, Germany, Sept. 15-17, 2011

This international conference will investigate the transnational significance and ramifications of the American Civil War in a global context. The Importance of the American Civil War for American History is evident, but the conflict between the North and South furthermore can be seen as a primary example of nearly universal structural conflicts that were typical for the nineteenth century: first, the tension between local/regional actors and the ambitious nation state, second, the alternative social, economic, and political models of free labor in industrial capitalism and unfree labor in agrarian societies based on slavery and serfdom. This international dimension of the conflict not only sheds light on previously unrecognized elements of the story, it also helps to cast central, well known aspects of the conflict in a new light as well. The Civil War occurred within some transnational fields of conflict that not only contributed to its outbreak but also influenced its course and had significant international repercussions: the worldwide spread of cotton production as a result of the blockaded cotton export from the South was a significant outcome of the War, and the traditional fixation of the British textile industry on Southern cotton was part of the Southern secessionist’s mindset, insofar as this privileged economic relationship seemed to promise not only economic security but also diplomatic recognition. (That this recognition failed to appear was then part of the story of the defeat of the Confederate States.) Some other interdependencies invite further explorations in the field of global and comparative history: How was the American abolition of slavery related to the European abolition of serfdom? Were there transnational learning processes? How did the European revolutionary experience of 1848-49 inflect the sectional conflict and the nexus of nation and democracy in the United States? What consequences did the Secession, the Civil War and Reconstruction have for the political elites in the fragile, multiethnic empires in Europe?

This conference will promote a variety of explorations in the global dimension of the American Civil War. The following headings might serve as possible topics for panels:

- the Civil War and the explanatory power of transnational history
- nation-building, sectionalism, and Civil War in a transnational context
- the Civil War and the global economy
- slavery, emancipation, and racism in a transnational context
- the transnational impact of the American Civil War on military affairs and the future of
warfare
- the Civil War and international relations
- the Civil War and global transfers of knowledge (through media, congresses)
- contemporary (self-) perceptions and analysis of the American Civil War

Individual paper abstracts (200-250 words) should be specifically directed at one (or more) of the panel topics included in this CFP. Abstracts must be received by April 15, 2011. Participants will be notified by May 5, 2011. All questions and submissions should be sent electronically to: joerg.nagler@uni-Jena.de and graeser@ghi-dc.org Travel expenses (economy), lodging and meals for conference participants, will be covered. We intend to publish the contributions.