Look closely, and you will find that some of the images and symbols you associate most immediately with the United States of America—from the gleaming white-columned Capitol to the engraved portrait of George Washington in your pocket—had their origins in the years before the American Civil War. This course takes you even deeper into the complex visual history of this place, from the first documented artifacts of European and Native American contact to photographs of the dead at Antietam. Through classroom discussions and museum field trips, we will explore paintings, architecture, furniture, prints, quilts, city plans, and more. Readings will be drawn from primary sources and scholarly essays; assignments consist of brief reading responses, take-home exams, and short papers. Previous experience in American art and material culture not required; curiosity a must.