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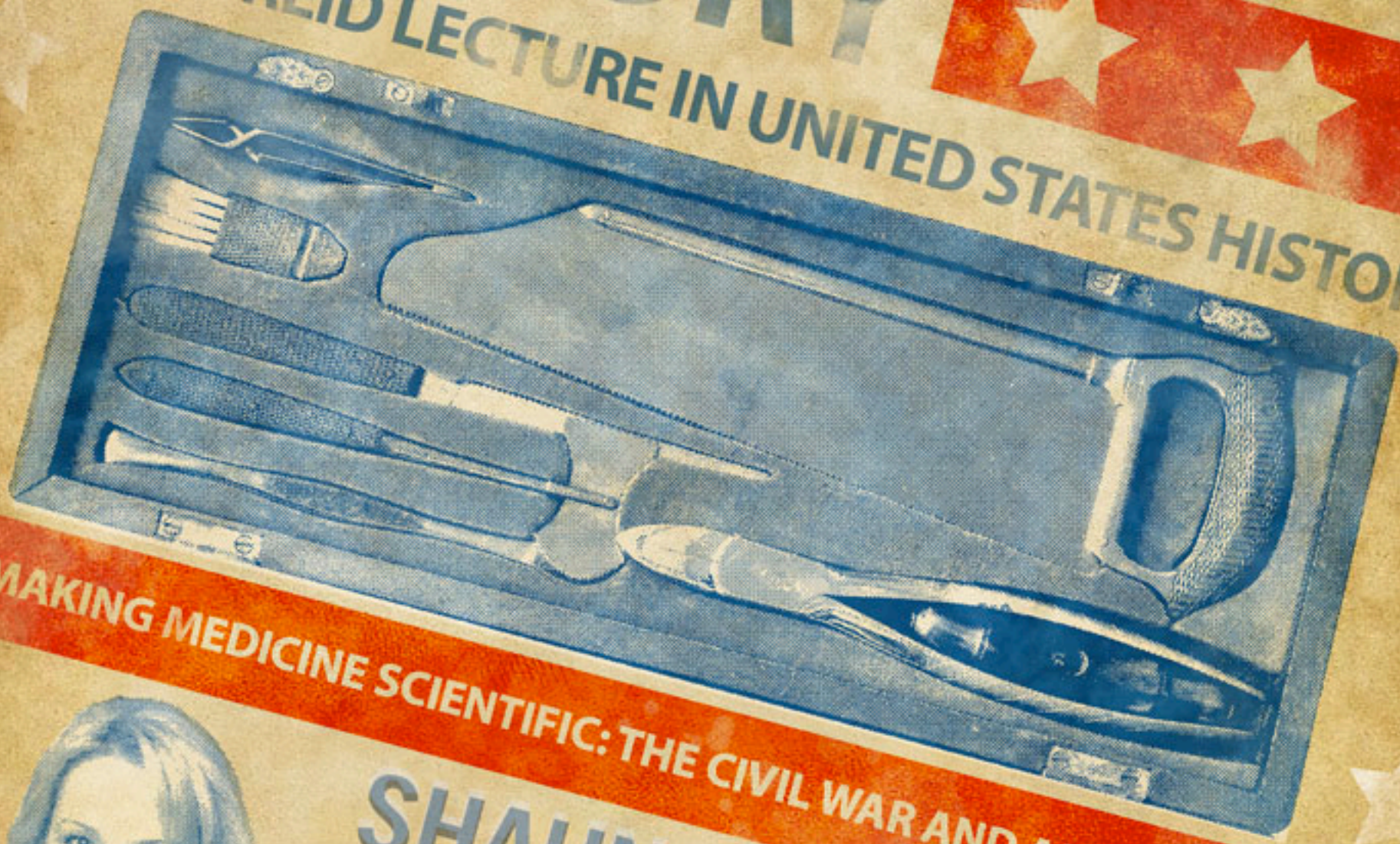

MAKING MEDICINE SCIENTIFIC: THE CIVIL WAR AND AMERICAN MEDICINE

SHAUNA DEVINE, PH.D

In popular conceptions of the American Civil War, medical scenes as depicted in movies such as Gone with the Wind or Dances with Wolves has helped perpetuate the myth that the Civil War was a medical disaster. Many have imagined inexperienced physicians and surgeons hacking off limbs with un-sanitized medical equipment while patients clamped down on bullets trying to suppress the pain. However, as the war raged on, physicians gained experience in dealing with wound trauma and performing difficult surgeries; they studied diseases in detail and developed new management strategies. Through a series of never before published medical photographs from Civil War hospitals and laboratories, this lecture explores the ways in which during the war American medical practice was transformed.

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