

History 238-01
The American West
T/TH 1:00-2:20

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789-1234

Office Hours:
MW 2-3 (Social Sciences Annex 112)
Tuesday 10:30-12
(Center for Academic Advising)

Description:

No other part of the country is so surrounded by myth, historical misinterpretations, and hype as the American West. In this course, we will seek to understand the West as it was and how it has come to be known. Central to our understanding is the concept of regionalism – we will examine the West as both a place and as a process. Through the longer lens of time, we can more carefully determine the role of history and myth on the way the region has developed in the twentieth century.

This is not a class on “frontier” history; consequently John Wayne will share equal footing with George Custer, Ralph Lauren with John Fremont, and Santa Fe style with Santa Fe. We will study the Indian wars and the Cold War; the Battles of Wounded Knee of 1890 and 1973.

In addition to our examination of western mythology, we will study how that mythology has influenced the political cultures of the region --- from the Spanish monarchy to the theocracy of Utah, from the Farmers' Alliance to California Progressivism, and from the Freak Power Party of 1970s Aspen to the cowboy conservatism of Ronald Reagan.

Goals:

- A working comprehension of the historical narrative of the American West
- A fundamental understanding of the skills of historical research
- The ability to find, analyze, and process both primary and secondary sources
- The ability to read critically a variety of sources and apply your analysis to larger historiographic trends
- The ability to put your skills to work in a historical research paper
- To ability present your ideas in both formal and informal settings

College Policies:

Academic Integrity:

The College's understanding and expectations in regard to issues of academic honesty are fully articulated in the Code of Academic Integrity and form an essential part of the implicit contract between the student and the College. The Code provides a framework to help students develop their own personal integrity.

While you are a student at this college, you will be treated as adults. You are expected to know and abide by the rules of the institution as described in the *Handbook of Selected College Policies*. Particular attention should be directed to the appropriate use of materials available on-line through the Internet. It is important that you read and understand the College's policy on the ethical use of information. Whether intentional or not, improper use of materials can be considered a violation of academic honesty.

Cheating in any of your academic work is a serious breach of the Code of Academic Integrity and will result in an F for the entire course. Such violations include turning in another person's work as your own, copying from any source without proper citation, crossing the boundary of what is allowed in a group project, and lying in connection with your academic work. You will be held responsible for your actions.

Conflicts between Academic Responsibilities and Co-curricular/Extra-curricular Activities:

This College's fundamental purpose is to stimulate its students to reach the highest standard of intellectual achievement, one that will support their development as independent, responsible, and creative human beings. As a result, students are expected to give the highest priority to their academic commitments.

The academic program is complemented by other opportunities that are designed to broaden and enrich the development of each student. These complementary programs include athletic, cultural, educational, and volunteer activities. Sometimes conflicts arise for students between academic commitments and co-curricular/extra-curricular activities. Students, faculty, staff, and administrators all share the responsibility of recognizing, minimizing and resolving these conflicts.

Recording Classroom Activities:

No student may record or tape or photograph any classroom activity without my express written consent.

If a student believes that he/she is disabled and needs to record or tape classroom activities, he/she should contact the Office of the Secretary to request an appropriate accommodation.

The Learning Center

If you are a student with a documented learning disability in this course, please register with the Director of the Learning Center (ext. 1234). The Learning Center is located in Building A and is the office that will assist you in developing a plan to address your academic needs and adjustments.

Course Policies:

Attendance:

You are expected to faithfully attend this class. You are further expected to be on time. Showing up late is a sign of disrespect to the class.

Classroom:

Turn off cell phones and other personal electronics before entering the classroom. Do not be late. Go to the bathroom before class. Try to be professional. Use appropriate language. Treat everyone in class with respect.

Due Dates:

The due dates for all assignments are listed on this syllabus. No late papers will be accepted.

Office Hours:

One of the great values of a small liberal arts college is the personal contact between faculty and students. If you have a problem in class: you are falling behind, you will have to miss a class, an assignment has you vexed, you have missed class and want to find out what you missed, email is **NOT** the best way to communicate. Come see me during my office hours. Too often what might take 4-5 back-and-forth messages (and several days) through email, can be resolved in one five-minute conversation. That said, and with the full understanding that email is **NOT** the best way to resolve pressing issues, my email address is jjames@college.edu.

Falling Behind:

I follow an absolute “open-door” policy. If you have *any* questions, any questions, or find yourself falling behind in this course (or in your semester), contact me immediately. I can meet with students any day of the week at any reasonable hour of the day. Do not dig yourself into a hole that could impact your entire collegiate career.

Texts:

White, *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own*
 Milner, Butler, and Lewis, *Major Problems in the History of the American West*
 Barth, *The Lewis and Clark Expedition*
 Calloway, *Our Hearts Fell to the Ground*
 Stoll, *U.S. Environmentalism since 1945*

Assignments/Grades:

1) Plagiarism Workshop: Go to the web page below and complete the entire plagiarism assignment. As you finish each section print it off. This includes all the assignments on notetaking, knowing which sources to acknowledge, documenting sources, and avoiding plagiarism. Bring your work to class by September 4. <http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/plagiarismtutorial/>

D/A/Ws	30: 5 points each
Final Exam	20 points
Professionalism	20 points
Brief History with Documents	<u>30 points</u>
Total	100 points

Assignment Descriptions:

D/A/W: Throughout the semester, we will become historical actors. Through an analysis of primary materials each student will create their own historical document and make an argument or offer advice. Each student will be responsible for turning in their D/A/W before discussion begins. These assignments, 2-3 page position papers based on the documents contained within that chapter, will serve to lead our discussions. In each case, you will act as an advisor to a historical figure and recommend a course of action given particular scenarios. The first D/A/W assignment is on this syllabus the others will be posted to the Discussion List.

Final Exam: At the end of the semester you will be given a cumulative take-home examination. The exam will be in three parts: a short answer section in which you will take a position and provide a short response using appropriate details and examples from the texts and lectures, a question asking you to compare and contrast some of the readings, and a longer essay in which you offer a more-detailed historical explanation for a particular problem. Each student will sign a pledge promising that the work they do will be their own. The penalty for academic dishonesty is instant and automatic failure for the course.

Professionalism: Each student is not only expected to attend class regularly, but also to intelligently participate in class discussions. You will have the opportunity to demonstrate this professionalism each meeting as you address the class question of the day. This will require prior preparation and the willingness to speak up in class. There is no easier way to improve your grade than to come to class prepared and willing to take part in a discussion. What this means more than anything is keeping up with the readings. Your grade will absolutely depend upon your comments on our shared readings and the ability to share those thoughts with others. Bring in notes, have something to contribute, be willing to listen and apply what you know with your classmates.

Brief History with Documents Paper:

Each student will prepare their own version of a "Brief History with Documents."

We will take a more recent event and using one of our three supplementary texts as a model, prepare a mock Bedford St. Martins text. I will hand out a sheet of potential topics later this semester, but your ideas are always encouraged.

Schedule:

August 28: Introduction and Introductions:
The West - The view from New Mexico:
Coronado
Juan de Onate
Robert J. Oppenheimer

August 30: Discussion: Cradle of Democracy or Legacy of Conquest: The Historian's West
Reading: Turner, "Significance of the Frontier in American History"
Limerick, et al on Electronic Reserves
White, 3-4
Milner, 1-39

To consider: Where to begin? Well first digest and be able to offer pithy summaries of each argument. Try to understand why each historian reflects their own times. What might each view as the larger purpose of history? Underline important passages and let's discuss them. These are important articles; have something to say.

September 4: Discussion/Lecture: The Archaeological West – 40,000 b.c.-800 a.d.
Due: Plagiarism Workshop

To consider: The importance of cooperation, trade, and water in these societies. How does this differ from what's going on in other parts of the world.

September 6: Lecture/Discussion: Pueblo Culture
Reading: Horgan, Electronic Reserves

To consider: What role does the physical environment play on the creation of culture. How different are the Pueblos than your previous ideas about Indians?

September 11: Lecture/Discussion: Contact
Reading: White, 5-26
Milner 42-81

D/A/W – You are either a Spanish soldier who fights with Coronado writing home to your parents or a young boy from Zuni Pueblo sent running to the next Pueblo to warn them about the Spanish. Describe the initial contact between the two cultures.

September 13: Lecture/Discussion: The Spanish Southwest
Reading: White, 27-53

To consider: From what you remember from American history, how would compare contrast the colonization of the Southwest with that of the East Coast. Think broadly about the differences in society, culture, environment, economics, and social structures of both the colonizers and the colonized. How might these initial distinctions impact what would come next?

September 18: Lecture/Discussion: American Explorations

Reading: Barth, *Lewis and Clark*
Milner, 82-155 (Pick 1 of the 4 historical essays and be prepared to discuss it in detail)
White, 57-64, 119-136 (Think like a historian and ask yourself why White organized this section of his book this way)

To consider: In addition to the above, let's think about the differences in American vs. Spanish exploration. Let's begin to change the way we think about these initial contacts and how they each represent a new era in Native and Anglo cultures. How do these far-flung places in much larger empires take on such importance?

D/A/W – Historiography Assignment posted to Discussion List

September 20: Lecture/Discussion: The War for Mexican Independence and the Crisis of the Spanish Southwest

Reading: Milner, 156-181 (Read the Hietala essay first)

To Consider:

- 1) Cathy Paulson, who wrote her I.S. on Hawaii last year, argued that the acquisition of Hawaii was the logical extension of what she described as Continental Imperialism. Consider the readings in Milner and review the appropriate sections of White and be prepared to argue for against the Paulson Thesis.
- 2) In what ways was the War for Mexican Independence tied to the legacy of the Spanish Southwest?

September 25: Lecture/Discussion: The Americans (Oregon, Mormons, and Manifest Destiny)

Reading: White, 61-84, 163-169

To consider: Consider your own experience playing the Oregon Trail Game. How accurate do you think the games makers recreated some of the decisions and outcomes of those decisions. Who would pack up everything and move across a continent? Why? Is wanderlust part of the American character or are there larger cultural forces at work here?

D/A/W – The Way West – posted to Moodle

September 27: Lecture/Discussion: Texas and the Mexican-American War

Reading: Review White, 64-69, 77-84

To consider: The Mexican Government asking Americans to settle in Far Eastern Mexico as a strategy to prevent American aggression – worst foreign policy ever?

October 2: Lecture/Discussion: The Indian Wars

Reading: White, 85-108
Calloway, *Our Hearts Fell to the Ground*

To consider: Go back and review Turner and Limerick and be prepared to discuss the Indian Wars in the context of the Turner Thesis and the Limerick Thesis. Pick out appropriate passages from Calloway and share why you think they are important.

October 4: Lecture/Discussion: Vanishing Americans

Reading: White, 108-118
Calloway, *Our Hearts Fell to the Ground*

To consider: The sole philosophy of the United States' Indian policy from 1789 to 1933 was the elimination of the Indian.

D/A/W – Conflict between Native peoples and whites – posted to Discussion List

October 9: Lecture/Discussion: Ranchers and Farmers: Texas

Reading: White, 137-154
Milner, 238-267

To consider: Think about the classic conflict in western films where the ranch owner fights the settlers for control over the range. Review Worster and think about what these conflicts reveal about the nature of the western economy.

October 11: Lecture/Discussion: The Johnson County War

Reading: White, 155-178

To consider: With what you have learned about the structure of territorial government, were events like the Johnson County and Lincoln County Wars inevitable? What was the larger legacy of the long territorial apprenticeship?

October 16: Fall Break

October 18: Lecture/Discussion: Billy the Kid and Wyatt Earp: What Western Heroes Tell Us About Americans

Reading: Milner, 195-247

To consider: Why have generations of Americans (and others) glorified western violence.

October 23: Lecture/Discussion: Buffalo Bill and the Origins of the Mythic West

Reading: Electronic Reserves Readings: White, Athearn, Nash Smith

To consider: Whose portrayal of the West Turner's or Cody's has had the most lasting legacy? Be prepared to debate the topic.

D/A/W – The origins of the Mythic West – posted to Discussion List

October 25: Lecture/Discussion: Western Miners and Mining

Reading: White, 179-211
Milner, 303-340

To consider: In what ways does an extractive economy and a strained infrastructure impact the social and cultural development of the American West.

October 30: Group Exercise: The Racial West

To consider: How does one's race and gender limit their world?

November 1: Lecture/Discussion: Western Politics – Suffrage/Populists/Progressivism

Reading: Review White, 155-178
White, 353-457

To consider: How did western states' territorial experience allow/make necessary the political reforms that came out of the West?

November 6: Lecture/Discussion: Selling the Myth: Western Tourism

Reading: Electronic Reserves, Athearn,

To consider: Is this the point when The West jumped the shark?

November 8: Lecture/Discussion/Screening: Depression, Dust, and the New Deal

Reading: Milner, 379-415
White, 461-495

To consider: What is the message of *The Plow That Broke the Plains* (which we will watch in class) how does it contradict or reinforce ideas about western history and western heritage

November 13: Lecture/Discussion: World War II

Reading: Milner 416-453
White, 496-533
Electronic Reserves, Nash Selections

To consider: Historian Gerald Nash has argued that it is World War II and not the closing of the frontier that marks *the* turning point in western history; is he right?

November 15: Lecture/Discussion: The Cold War West

Reading: Selections from Fernlund White, 576-612

To consider: Historian Lisa McGirr argues that the dominance of the military-industrial complex in the western states created a political climate that made it ripe for the rise of modern conservatism. She relies primarily on Richard White's *It's Your Misfortune* to inform her argument. What do you think?

November 20: Lecture/Discussion/Screening: The Western

Reading: Electronic Reserves: Selections Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*
Aquila, *Wanted Dead or Alive*
Tompkins, *West of Everything*

To consider: How have westerners served as social touchstones and reactions to changes in American culture?

November 24: Thanksgiving Break

November 27: Lecture/Discussion: The Environmental Movement

Reading: Stoll, *U.S. Environmentalism since 1945*

To consider: Why is it that the environmental movement is so associated with the American West?

D/A/W – The Western Environment – posted to Discussion List

November 29: Lecture/Discussion: Sprawl: The Urban West

Reading: White, 537-612
Milner, 454-525

To consider: What have been the effects (social, economic, political) of urban sprawl? What are the connections between technology and sprawl? Can you think of an eastern city that is western in character?

December 4: Lecture/Discussion: Western Myth in American Culture

Reading: White, 613-632
Milner, 526-556
Electronic Reserves: Readings from *Cowboys and Indians* and *Wild West*

To consider: Why have Americans settled upon the western experience as the crucial explanation for the American character?

December 6: Discussion: The Contemporary West

Reading: Electronic Reserves:
Selections from *The New Western Politics*
Timothy Egan, selected articles
Ian Frazier, selections

To consider: Is the West a region? If so how has it survived in a post-frontier century? If not, then why are we still talking about it?

Final Exam given according to Schedule of Classes