

History of the American West

Spring 2007

Syllabus for HIS 220

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The first European settlers to the American shores did not want to stay in this land. It was too wild, and far different than what they had come from. This sentiment did not last long, however. Soon Americans were looking westward, always westward, and dreaming of a country that would stretch to the next horizon, always the next horizon. But because the land was not theirs, this is a story of conflict and conquest, both of people and nature. Americans were looking for a place to plant their dreams, and make them come true by removing precious resources: furs, gold, silver, oil, and especially water. The nature of this conquest changed the American West, and the West in turn changed the rest of the country.

As in all classes I teach, an important aspect of this course is that everyone involved has an enjoyable time. For this to happen it is necessary that everyone participate in the class. Please, ASK QUESTIONS. This is a way for all of us to learn.

The question is always asked: What can you do with history? An objective of this class is not only a knowledge of history, but to help the student develop a methodology of examining evidence and learning to report on it in a clear and concise manner. In the future you may have a boss who will ask you for a three-page report on a project you are in the middle of. You will have to examine the files, going through the data and finding the significance. This is what a historian does. So in a way, just about everyone can use historical methodologies on their job.

Course Description

An examination of the region west of the Mississippi River, beginning with an overview of the Native Americans and continuing with each new culture that comes into the region. The major focus of the course will be an examination of the diverse cultures that have come together in the region and made the American West a unique place in American history. The course will also examine such themes as the role of the west in American history, the role of myth in Western history, women in the West, the “frontier,” and the environment vs. the economy.

Required Texts

The following books are available in the bookstore:

The Legacy of Conquest

The American West: The Invention of a Myth

Reading the American West

Fair Land, Fair land

Reading assignments

Method of Evaluation

- 1) Exam – There will be two exams. Material for the exam will come from a combination of lecture, videocassette, the Internet, and your readings.
- 2) You will do one of the two assignments here:
 - a. Book review – for this assignment you need to review, using the attached guidelines, one of the academic texts you are using for your research paper. Check the title with me before you begin.
 - or,
 - b. Journal Assignment – Each student will read a primary source pertaining to the American West. A three- to five-page assignment, which a handout will describe in detail, will result from this reading.
- 3) Research Paper – Each student will research a specific topic of their choice, culminating in a formal paper.
- 4) Good Citizenship – The social component of learning is an important part of the process. For that to happen, you must come to class and be ready to participate. Any absences beyond three will count against you. Class participation is also an important component of this. It is important to be prepared to take part in discussion and then be an active member of your group and class when the time comes.

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Equivalent</u>	<u>Quality Points</u>
A	94-100	4.0
A-	90-93	3.7
B+	87-89	3.3
B	83-86	3.0
B-	80-82	2.7
C+	77-79	2.3

C	73-76	2.0
C-	70-72	1.7
D+	67-69	1.3
D	63-66	1.0
F	0-62	0.0

Civility in the Classroom

Ideally a classroom is a place of learning. In an ideal setting all opinions are heard and respected, although you may disagree. In this class we want to create as safe an environment to learn as possible. To achieve this everyone must be willing to follow guidelines established by the class. Anybody diverging from these guidelines, or disrespecting anyone in the class, will not be tolerated.

College Withdrawal Policy

A student who finds it necessary to discontinue a course MUST complete a withdrawal form obtained from the Registrars Office. Students may withdraw from class anytime during the first ten weeks of the semester without being in good standing or obtaining prior permission of the instructor. After that period, a student wishing to withdraw must obtain written authorization of the instructor to receive a "W" grade for the course. Students, who fail to properly withdraw, and discontinue coming to class, will be assigned an "F" grade. Eligibility for refund of tuition is based upon date of withdrawal when received by the registrar. Verbal withdrawals will not be accepted.

Learning Disabilities Statement

If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact the Disabilities Counseling Services at 383-5240. To avoid any delay in the receipt of accommodations, you should contact the counselor as soon as possible. Please note that I cannot provide accommodations based upon disability until I have received an accommodation letter from the Disabilities Counselor. Your cooperation is appreciated.