

College of Eastern Utah

HIST 2810
History of the American West

Syllabus
Spring 2007

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Susan Rhoades Neel

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OFFICE HOURS: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 10-12:30 pm

COURSE WEB SITE: <http://asdivision.ceu.edu/history>

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS:

It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own: A New History of the American West

The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction

Buffalo Bill's Wild West: Celebrity, Memory, and Popular History

additional selected readings on library reserve

The West has a strong hold on the American imagination. Say the word "West" and we easily conjure up images of cowboys and Indians, covered wagons crossing the vast open plains, miners plucking nuggets of gold from mountain streams. But the West has a long and complex history that goes far beyond these popular stereotypes. It is, as the great western writer Wallace Stegner once said, a "storied place"--a land rich with a multitude of stories, some sad, some exhilarating, some ordinary and simple, some as grand as the West's exquisite landscapes.

In this course we will examine the history of the trans-Mississippi West from the fifteenth through twentieth centuries. Our goal is to go deep into the region's past, to see how diverse cultures, sometimes in conflict and sometimes in cooperation, forged a distinctive western society. And we will explore how that history has been translated into a mythology that is at the core of America's national identity.

The History of the American West is a 3 credit-hour introductory-level elective course. Classes meet three times weekly for 50-minute lectures, discussions, and films.

There are no prerequisites for this course, but HIST 1700 is strongly recommended.

I. COURSE OBJECTIVES

There are two main objectives in this course. The first is to engage students in a detailed examination of key events and processes in the history of the trans-Mississippi West, focusing on U.S. territorial expansion and on the social and cultural history of the diverse people who lived in the region. The second objective is to examine how the idea of the West has been conceptualized and portrayed in popular culture.

A. Learning Objectives--Historical knowledge

1. Know the basic chronology of the history of the American West from the 15th through 20th centuries.
2. Understand the concepts of “region” and “frontier” as applied to the historical study of the American West.
3. Understand the social history of different races, classes, and genders in the American West from the mid-19th through early 20th centuries.
4. Understand the changing ways in which the West has been imagined and portrayed in American culture.

B. Learning Objectives--Critical thinking skills

1. Engage in historical interpretation.
2. Engage in historical research utilizing primary and secondary sources.
3. Analyze films as cultural documents.
4. Communicate historical knowledge through analytical writing, discussion, and/or multimedia presentations.

II. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

In order to accomplish the course objectives, students will be required to acquire information from a variety of course materials including lectures, readings, and films. Students will be required to demonstrate what they are learning through written and oral assignments, and exams. To complete these requirements students will need to have access to a computer with a connection to the world wide web and the ability to send and receive e-mail.

A. Required Course Materials

1. The required textbook for this course is *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own: A New History of the American West* by Richard White. Students are also required to read *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction* by Linda Gordon and *Buffalo Bill's Wild West: Celebrity, Memory, and Popular History* by Joy Kasson.
2. In addition, students are required to read selected scholarly articles provided at no cost by the instructor. These articles will be used for in-class discussions.
3. Throughout the semester, we will be viewing classic (and not so classic) western films and television shows in class. Whenever possible, copies of these films will be placed on reserve at the library so that students can rewatch and study them.

B. Required Projects and Assignments

1. Movie Review. Students will be required to write a comparative review of at least two of the films shown in class. The review should be 4-6 pages in length. Reviews will focus on films as cultural artifacts which reveal information about society's ideals and beliefs about the West. Detailed instructions for the film review assignment will be handed out in class.
2. Term Project. Students will be required to prepare a term project on a subject of their own choosing. The instructor must approve all term paper topics. Projects may take the form of a traditional written essay or students may choose multimedia formats such as a web site, audio documentary, or digital movie. Detailed instructions for the Term Project will be handed out in class.
3. Field Trip. Students are required to visit the Western Mining and Railroad Museum in Helper. The class will schedule a field trip to the museum at a time that, with luck, will be convenient to all students. If students are unable to join the field trip, they may visit the museum on their own time.

C. Midterm and Final Assessments

Students are required to take a midterm exam and a final exam. Exams will consist of take-home essay questions. Exams will cover lectures, reading, and films.

III. GRADING

Grades will be based on the instructor's assessment of student performance on the required projects and exams.

There will be a total of 1000 points possible, distributed as follows:

200 pts = Movie Review

300 pts = Term Project
250 pts = Midterm Exam
250 pts = Final Exam

The grading scale is as follows:

A	930 - 1000 points
A-	900 - 929 points
B+	870 - 899 points
B	830 - 869 points
B-	800 - 829 points
C+	770 - 799 points
C	730 - 769 points
C-	700 - 729 points
D+	670 - 699 points
D	600 - 669 points
F	0 - 599 points

IV. COURSE POLICIES

A. Attendance. Attendance is required.

B. Communication. Students are encouraged to visit the instructor during her regularly scheduled office hours, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:00 am - 12:30 pm. Students who are not able to visit during these hours are welcome to schedule an appointment for another time. If you schedule an appointment but are not able to make it, please call or e-mail in advance to cancel.

Students are also welcome to contact the instructor via e-mail. The instructor makes every effort to respond to e-mail from students within 24 hours during the week and within 48 hours during the weekends. Students are expected to make timely responses to e-mail inquiries from the instructor. Please include the course and section number in the subject line of your e-mails.

C. Late Materials. All assignments and exams must be turned in at the beginning of class on the scheduled due date. Papers submitted after the deadline will be deducted one-third of a grade for each day they are late.

D. Missing/Rescheduling Exams. Exams must be taken at the scheduled time. In cases of extreme personal or family emergency, students who provide a written excuse and/or documentation may reschedule the exam at the instructor's convenience.

E. Withdrawals/Incompletes. During weeks 3-13 of the semester, students may withdraw from this course with the approval of the instructor and the

student's advisor. The instructor will approve withdrawals only if the student provides evidence of extenuating circumstances such as personal illness or injury, death in the immediate family, or a change in work schedule to secure, maintain or change employment.

Students who have completed a least 75% of the course requirements but are unable to finish the remaining requirements due to documented illness or family emergency may request an incomplete (I) grade. Incomplete grades are granted at the discretion of the instructor.

F. Academic honesty policy. All assignments, projects, and exams required for this course must be the work of the student who submits them. Any course requirement that is the work of someone other than the student who submits it will not be accepted and the student will not receive any credit for the work. Students who submit plagiarized, falsified, or copied work **will not** be given a chance to redo the assignment, project, or exam. In all instances of academic dishonesty, the instructor will follow CEU policies as outlined under "Student Rights and Responsibilities" in the College Catalog. These policies state that students engaged in academic dishonesty are subject to review and sanction including dismissal from the college.

G. Courtesy in class and online. It is expected that students will treat their fellow classmates and the instructor with courtesy during class, at meetings, and in all online communications. Courtesy includes using polite and civil language, being quiet and attentive when others are talking, and maintaining an environment conducive to learning.

Use of rude or offensive language and disruptive or hostile behavior will not be tolerated. Students who engage in such behavior will be asked to leave the classroom and may be subject to disciplinary action under the CEU "Student Rights and Responsibilities."

Students should turn off or mute their cell phones before class begins.

H. Accommodation. Reasonable accommodations are available for students who have a documented disability. If you are a student with a disability or special need, please contact the CEU Disability Resource Center immediately to arrange for accommodations that can assist you with this course. The Disability Resource Center is located in the SAC Building, Room 118. You may also contact the office by phone at (435-613-5670 or by e-mail at DisabilityCenter@ceu.edu.

V. SCHEDULE

Introduction: Looking for the West

(January 10 & 19)

ASSIGNED READING:

* *It's Your Misfortune*, chp. 1

MARTIN LUTHER KING HOLIDAY: Jan. 15

PART ONE: Making the West American: A Legacy of Conquest?

(January 22-February 16)

ASSIGNED READING:

* *It's Your Misfortune*, chps. 2-7

PRESIDENTS DAY HOLIDAY: Feb. 19

PART TWO: Westerners: The Social and Cultural History of Western Peoples

(February 21-March 23)

ASSIGNED READING:

* *It's Your Misfortune*, chps. 8-14

* *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction*

MIDTERM EXAM DUE: Monday, March 5

SPRING BREAK: Mar. 12-16

PART THREE: Making America Western: The Idea of the West in Popular Culture

(March 26-20)

ASSIGNED READING:

* *It's Your Misfortune*, chps. 15-20

* *Buffalo Bill's Wild West*

MOVIE REVIEW DUE: Friday, April 13

TERM PROJECT DUE: Friday, March 20

Conclusion: A Storied Place

(April 23-27)

FINAL EXAM DUE: to be announced