

**HIST 1979b: The American West
Spring 2014
Tu 4:00-6:20
J. Walter Wilson 503**

***** This syllabus is a work in progress and subject to changes *****

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Course Description:

Lone horsemen. Teepees gathered along riverbanks. Shootouts in dusty streets. Railroad tracks stretching out across the plains. These are common visions of the American West, and they convey many of the myths of America: the frontier spirit, the vanishing Indian, the American dream. This course will examine these myths and the cultural, political, and environmental realities that both informed and undermined them over the course of two hundred years. Readings will range widely across both space and time, moving with communities across deserts, national boundaries, mountain ranges, and plains as they come into various forms of contact with one another.

Texts to buy:

John Muir, *My First Summer in the Sierra* (Dover, 2004)—ISBN: 0486437353
Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (Yale University Press, 2009)—ISBN: 0300151179
Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca, *Chronicle of the Narvaez Expedition* (Penguin, 2002)—ISBN: 0142437077
Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado* (Kansas, 1998)—ISBN: 0700610297
Paul Mapp, *The Elusive West and the Contest for Empire, 1713-1763* (North Carolina, 2013)—ISBN: 1469600862
Thomas Andrews, *Killing for Coal: America's Deadliest Labor War* (Harvard, 2010)—ISBN: 0674046919
[access to e-book via Josiah]
Mark Fiege, *Irrigated Eden: The Making of an Agricultural Landscape in the American West* (Washington, 1999)—ISBN: 0295980133
Jane Tompkins, *West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns* (Oxford, 1993)—ISBN: 0195082680
[access to e-book via Josiah]
Karl Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation* (California, 2003)—ISBN: 0520239091

All other texts will be posted in pdf format to the course Canvas site, or available via Google Books or in e-book format through the Brown University library website (as noted).

You will need to access the film *Lone Ranger* (2013) to access on your own, via Netflix or some other movie streaming site.

The above texts are also on Reserve at the Library (Rock). Online password for OCRA: loneranger

Requirements, Percentages:

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|-----------------------------|-----|
| Class Participation | 30% |
| Paper One: Textual Analysis | 15% |
| Paper Two: Précis | 15% |
| Research Paper Proposals | 10% |
| Final Research Paper | 30% |

Requirements, Described:

Class Participation:

Given that this is a small class, there will be no lectures; instead, each course meeting will involve discussions of that day's readings; I will ask you to lead discussion on the day's texts at least once during the semester. Only those who are the most active and engaged participants in class conversational contexts will earn As in this component of the course. No points (or B's) just for showing up.

Papers:

- Paper One: Textual Analysis. 5 pages. Choose one primary source you have read for this course and close-read it as you would a piece of fiction, noting its word choice, sentence structure, and imagery (or in the case of a visual source its framing devices, colors, style, etc.). Argue for the significance of this text as reflective of larger historical events or developments in the American West.
 - Citations: Parenthetical (last name author, page number)
- Paper Two: Secondary Source Précis. 5 pages. In the first part of the paper, summarize one of the secondary sources (an article or book chapter) on the syllabus. Be sure to include its topic, its argument, its approach (political, gender, etc.), its time frame, its methodology (including specific examples of its primary source base), and any scholarly debates it enters. In the second part of the paper, critique the article or book, arguing for its strengths and weaknesses.
 - Citations: Parenthetical (last name author, page number)
- Final Research Paper. 15 pages. You will have the opportunity to research a topic of your own choosing and write a paper analyzing your topic using at least five primary sources and at least five secondary sources. In preparation for this paper, you will write a preliminary and a final paper proposal, and receive feedback from me regarding your ideas, arguments, and sources.
 - Citations: Footnotes or endnotes, Chicago Manual of Style format.
- Extension Policy. Each student will have 48 extension hours in a "bank." You can use these hours, in any configuration, for any of the papers. There will be no negotiations for additional hours.

Course Policies

Attendance: I do not take attendance during class but excessive absences or lateness generally result in a lower class participation grade.

Plagiarism and Cheating

Faculty members at Brown University strive to foster a spirit of complete honesty and high standards of integrity. Any attempt by students to present as their own work any work that is not their own is regarded by the faculty and administration as a major offense and renders the offenders liable to serious consequences, possibly suspension from the university. “Scholastic dishonesty” includes, but is not limited to: cheating (obtaining or attempting to obtain credit for work using dishonest, fraudulent, or unauthorized means), plagiarism (representing someone else’s work as your own), collusion (helping someone else commit an act of academic dishonesty), falsifying academic records, misrepresenting facts, and any act designed to give unfair academic advantage to the student.

Please don’t make me bust you. If you do make me bust you, you will earn a zero on the paper and, as acts of plagiarism and cheating fundamentally undermine the relationship of trust between professors and students, you and I will meet to discuss whether or not you should remain in the class for the duration of the semester. In addition, I will report any cases of academic dishonesty to your dean.

Learning or Physical Differences

Any student who, because of a learning or physical difference, may require some special arrangements in order to meet course requirements should contact me as soon as possible.

Religious Observances

A student who is absent from classes for the observation of a religious holy day will be allowed to complete an assignment scheduled for that day within a reasonable time after the absence. The student must notify me of the absence no later than the fifteenth day after the first day of the semester in order to secure an excused absence and make-up privileges.

Classroom Conduct

This classroom must be an open forum for discussion of historical (and often sensitive) issues. Respect your professor and your classmates by refraining from interruption, denigration, or intimidation.

Technology

You may bring your laptops to class if you wish. Warning: studies have shown that students who take notes on laptops in lecture courses earn lower grades than those who take notes by hand.

Please turn off your cell phones and other electronic communications devices.

COURSE SCHEDULE

- 1.28 First day of class: Introductions
Where is the West? What is the West?
- 2.4 Frontiers, Borderlands, and Western History
Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History,"
"The West and American Ideals," and "The Problem of the West" (1893)
(Google Books)
Cronon, Miles, and Gitlin, "Becoming West: Toward a New Meaning for Western
History" from *Under an Open Sky* [pdf]

EMPIRES

- 2.11 The Native West
Pekka Hämäläinen, Introduction and chapters 1, 4, and 7 from *The Comanche Empire*
George Miles, "To Hear an Old Voice: Rediscovering Native Americans in American
History," from *Under an Open Sky* [pdf]
- 2.18 No Class—University Long Weekend
- 2.25 The Spanish West
Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca, *Chronicle of the Narvaez Expedition* (1527)
Declaration of Josephe, a Spanish Speaking Indian (1681)
Antonio de Otermín, An Account of the Lamentable Tragedy (1680)
Sebastián de Sisitiago, An Account of Mission Nuestro Padre San Ignacio (1744)
Pablo Tac, Conversion of the San Luiseños of Alta California (1806)
Paul Mapp, Introduction, chapters 1-4 of *The Elusive West and the Contest for Empire, 1713-1763* (pp. 1-146)

Friday, February 28: DUE: Paper One: Textual Analysis

- 3.4 The American West
Thomas Jefferson, Secret Message to Congress (1803)
Thomas Jefferson, Letter of Introduction to Lewis and Clark (1803)
Journals of Lewis and Clark, chapters 1-3 (Google Books)
Zebulon Pike, "A Vast Empire in the West" (1808)
Brian DeLay, from *War of a Thousand Deserts* (Chapters 9-10 and Epilogue) [pdf]

MIGRATIONS

- 3.11 The Overland Trails
Read at least six months of diary entries from one Overland Trails diary of your
choice, found in the "Trails of Hope: Overland Diaries and Letters, 1846-1869"
collection at BYU Libraries: <http://overlandtrails.lib.byu.edu>
Sarah Keyes, "Like a Roaring Lion": The Overland Trail as a Sonic Conquest,"
Journal of American History (June 2009): 19-43 [pdf]
Johnny Faragher and Christine Stansell, "Women and Their Families on the
Overland Trail to California and Oregon, 1842-1867" *Feminist Studies*, 2, No. 2/3
(1975): 150-166 [pdf]

- 3.18 Going for Gold
Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado*
- Friday, March 21: DUE: Preliminary Research Paper Proposal
- 3.25 NO CLASS—SPRING BREAK
- 4.1 Migrant Laborers
Lisa Jones, “El Nuevo West” (1996)
California’s Proposition 187 (1994)
Harold Eell, “Enough is More than Enough” (1994)
Jason De León, “‘Better to Be Hot than Caught’: Excavating the Conflicting Roles of Migrant Material Culture,” *American Anthropologist* 114 (September 2012): 477–95. (access via America: History and Life—click on the link for full text in a web doc)
Chad Montrie, Chapter 6 (“‘A Landscape Foreign and Physically Threatening:’ Southern California Farmworkers, Pesticides, and Environmental Justice”) from *Making a Living: Work and Environment in the United States* [pdf]
Lori Flores, “A Town Full of Dead Mexicans: The Salinas Valley Bracero Tragedy of 1963, the End of the Bracero Program, and the Evolution of California’s Chicano Movement,” *The Western Historical Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (Summer 2013): 124-143 [pdf]

Friday, April 11: DUE: Paper Two: Précis

PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION

- 4.8 Mining
Thomas Andrews, *Killing for Coal: America’s Deadliest Labor War*
- 4.15 Farming
Mark Fiege, *Irrigated Eden: The Making of an Agricultural Landscape in the American West*
- Friday, April 18: DUE: Final Research Paper Proposal
- 4.22 Fictionalizing
Gore Verbinski, dir. *The Lone Ranger* (2013)
Jane Tompkins, *West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns*, “Elements of the Western,” pp. 1-131
- 4.29 [reading period] Saving
John Muir *My First Summer in the Sierra*
Karl Jacoby, “The Hidden History of Conservation” and Chapters 4-8, Epilogue of *Crimes against Nature*
- 5.7-5.16 Final Research Paper Due: Date TBA