

**STUDIES IN AMERICAN HISTORY
AMERICAN FRONTIER
HISTORY 4000**

**Spring 2009
LeConte Hall 320
MWF 2:30-3:20**

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or by appointment**

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will compare and contrast four American frontier experiences: agriculture, fur trading, ranching and mining. The course does not present history as a series of random anecdotes but rather as a process in which institutions and ideas were shaped by the interaction of people with the political, social and economic circumstances which surrounded them. Be prepared to have many myths about the "wild west" dispelled. In a broader sense we will use the information gathered in our study of frontiers to gain a better understanding of how we think and do things today. As we proceed, we will play with questions such as, do people really have free will or are they programmed by the past? In other words does history make people or do people make history?

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory. If you miss four classes your grade be dropped by a 1/3 (Example: B+ becomes a B). If you miss five classes your final grade will be dropped by 2/3 (Example: B+ becomes a B-). If you miss six classes your final grade will be dropped a full letter grade, (B+ becomes a C+). Strong class participation gives me a little wiggle room to adjust the above criteria.

Reading and Discussion

I expect students to do the reading listed below and to be prepared to discuss the material in class. During most weeks, I will lecture two days and set aside one class period for discussion.

Exams:

There will be three exams total which includes the final. The three exams along with the book review essay discussed below will be weighted equally (25% each). By essay, I mean questions that are designed to be written on over the entire class period. I give students a sheet of three to five questions a class period before the exam. On exam day I will choose two of those three to five questions and you will answer one of them. I will ask students to turn in three blue books before the first exam.

Make Up Exams

Make up exams do not come from the same sheet of questions mentioned above and you will have no prior review sheet before the exam. Therefore it would be in your interest to take the exam when it is originally scheduled.

Book Review Essay

Each student will write a 3-5 page, (double spaced, one inch margin, 12pt..font) book review essay comparing two books on the same topic. **I must approve your choices.** A book review **IS NOT** a book report rather it is an exercise in reading books with a critical eye. I will pass out a separate sheet listing the criteria for the book review essay. You cannot use the assigned texts for this course.

Required Reading

Ray Allen Billington, Westward Expansion: (Abridgement)

John Faragher, Women & Men on the Overland Trail

Rodman Paul, Mining Frontiers of the Far West 1848-1880

Robert Utley, The Indian Frontier 1846-1890

January 9

Orientation

Introduction

January 12,14,16

How have historians interpreted the American Frontier/West in the past and how can we use the study of American frontiers to better understand who we are as a people? Or is it all history “one damn thing after another.”

Billington, *Introduction*

Jan 21, 23

January 19, MLK Holiday

Fur Trade, Mercantilism and the accumulation of American colonial possessions

Billington

January 26,28,30

Fur Trade continued

Mountain Men: anti-social delinquents of society or aspiring capitalists

Billington, 4

February 2,4,6

trans-Appalachian settlement: the United States puts its first colonial possession up for sale

The Ordinances of 1785 & 1787; early American Indian Policy and agricultural settlement

Billington 125

February 9, 11, 13

Finish trans-Appalachian settlement

Review, Wednesday, September 24

Exam: Friday, September 26

February 16,18,20

trans-Mississippi West expansion
Manifest Destiny; the Overland Crossing
Billington, 6 & 7,10
Faragher , **Women and Men on the Overland Trail**

February 23,25,27

“The Great Round Up” and the creation of Indian reservations
Discuss, Utley, **The Indian Frontier**
Billington, 14

March 2,4,6

Ranching: opportunity and industrial phases
Cattle Towns, rip roaring dens of iniquity? Flash: Miss Kitty was a prostitute!
Billington, 15

March 9,11,13

SPRING BREAK

March 16,18,20

Ranching cont.
Cowtowns
Cowboy mythology and the American dream

March 23,25,27

Mining
Paul **Mining Frontiers of the Far West**
Billington, 12

March 30, April 1,3

Review Wednesday, April 1
Exam Friday, April 3

April 6,8,10

Mining continued
Discuss, Paul **Mining Frontiers of the Far West**

April 13,15,17

Post Civil War trans-Mississippi Agriculture
The Farmer's Revolt: Populism
Billington, 16,17

April 20,22,24

Post WWII American West

April 27,29