

**History 389:**  
**The American West**  
Spring 2012

Professor D. Michael Bottoms  
Tues., Thurs., 1:30-2:45pm  
Office: Robinson B 375B  
Office Hours: Tues., Thurs., 12:00am-1:00pm (and by appointment)  
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**Course Description**

This course examines the “many wests” contained within the Trans-Mississippi American West from the colonial era to the present. Over the coming semester, we will examine the shape of cultural encounter, conflict, and exchange among competing peoples in the region, paying particular attention to issues of race, class, and gender. We will study the development of regional identities, and look at the relationship between culture, nature, and markets over time in landscapes that have been both celebrated and transformed to an astounding degree. Throughout, we will examine the ways that western experience has been translated into stories, whether in the oral traditions of native peoples, the triumphalist narratives of national expansion, the fictional accounts of writers and filmmakers, and the critical accounts of recent historians and writers who have attempted to rewrite the dominant narrative of western history. Our goal is to understand the role played by the West in American history generally, and specifically to understand how the myths and realities of the American West shape who we are as Americans.

**Course Requirements:**

First Response Essay:	15%
Second Response Essay:	20%
Primary Source Paper:	20%
Cumulative Final:	30%
Participation:	15%

While attendance is, of course, mandatory, *participation* in all discussions is essential to success in the course.

**Written Assignments:**

*Response Essays:* During the semester, you will be required to write two short analytical essays, each 4-pages in length. Each of the papers will ask you to respond to both the readings and lectures over the preceding two weeks and offer your analysis and critical insights. You will be given a “prompt” each Tuesday between week 4 and week 12. You will be responsible for completing two papers based upon the prompts. Papers will be due the Tuesday following publication of the prompt.

*Primary Source Paper:* Primary sources are the fundamental building blocks of historical interpretation. In lieu of a standard midterm, this course will require you to produce a short interpretive essay relying almost entirely on primary sources drawn from the required readings and independent research. Details will be handed out in class. **Due Thursday March 8.**

*Cumulative Final Essay:* Cumulative essay, 8 pages in length. **Due Friday May 11.**

**Rules for Submission and Formatting:**

All papers must use 1-inch margins, and 12-point, Times New Roman font. All written work for this course should be submitted via email attachment to [mbottoms@gmu.edu](mailto:mbottoms@gmu.edu).

**Late Policy:**

Late papers will be reduced by one-third of a grade for each day after the due date (e.g. from B+ to B to B-) including weekends.

**Grading Standards for Writing Assignments:**

An “A” essay contains a clearly stated, concise, argumentative, and original thesis supported by relevant evidence. The argument is developed, and carried through, the entire essay and demonstrates the student’s ability to independently evaluate the ideas presented in the course. Finally, an “A” essay is polished, i.e. it is free of grammatical or spelling errors, and awkward language.

A “B” essay ably summarizes the materials presented in the course, but typically lacks an original, argumentative, or well-conceived thesis. The essay demonstrates understanding of the course materials, but does not quite rise to the level of creative, independent analysis. A “B” essay is relatively free of grammatical errors.

A “C” essay presents information relevant to the essay topic without any clear organizing principle, or contains significant weaknesses in expression.

An essay that earns a grade lower than “C” generally fails to address the thrust of the assignment, contains numerous grammatical errors, and generally lacks coherence.

**Academic Integrity**

This class will follow the rules laid down by the George Mason University Honor Code (<http://honorcode.gmu.edu/>). Students who violate that code through academic dishonesty will face a most unforgiving Honor Committee.

**Students with Disabilities**

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

**Add/Drop Deadlines**

Last Day to Add (Full Semester Course)	Tuesday January 31, 2012
Last Day to Drop (Full Semester Course)	Friday February 24, 2012
Selective Withdrawal Period	Monday February 27-Friday March 30, 2012

**IN CASE OF INCLEMENT WEATHER**

Upon occasion the university is forced to either open late or cancel classes altogether. There are several ways to learn about the status of the university during such times. You may:

- Check the university's main Home Page at [www.gmu.edu](http://www.gmu.edu) for updates
- Check your Mason email account for Mason Alerts and for messages from me
- Call the university's main switchboard at 703-993-2474

In rare instances, I may be forced to cancel class for weather related reasons even if the university is open for classes. In such instances, I will send out a group email at least one hour before class begins.

**Required Texts:**

- Donald Worster, *Under Western Skies: Nature and History in the American West*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).
- Colin G. Calloway, *Our Hearts Fell to the Ground: Plains Indian Views of How the West Was Lost*. (Boston: Bedford St. Martin's Press, 1996).
- (In addition to the required text, brief supplemental readings will be regularly assigned. In all cases, such readings will be available on the course Blackboard page accessible through MyMason.)

\* **Note:** This syllabus is a working document and is subject to change. Any and all changes will, of course, be widely and repeatedly advertised.

**Lectures and Readings:**

**Week I: Defining the West**

**Tues. 1/24**

“Introduction”

*Readings:*

- None

**Thurs. 1/26**

“Defining the West”

*Readings:*

- Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History.” (excerpt)
- Stephen Aron, “Lessons in Conquest: Towards a Greater Western History.” *The Pacific Historical Review*, 1994 63(2): 125-147.
- Donald Worster, *Under Western Skies*, 19-33.
- Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest*. (excerpt)

**Week II: The World of Indian Peoples**

**Tues. 1/31**

“Before Columbus”

*Readings:*

- Alice Beck Kehoe, *America Before the European Invasions*, 163-191.
- William Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 34-53.

**Thurs. 2/2**

“Invasion”

*Readings:*

- Alfred W. Crosby, "Virgin Soil Epidemics as a Factor in the Aboriginal Depopulation in America." *William and Mary Quarterly* 1976 33(2): 289-299.
- William Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 127-156.

<b>Week III: The Spanish Rim</b>
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**Tues. 2/7**

The Spanish Colonial Method"

*Readings:*

- Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relacion* (excerpts)  
<http://alkek.library.txstate.edu/swwc/cdv//book/109.html>
- Bartolome de las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*. (excerpts)

**Thurs. 2/9**

"Religion and Rebellion"

*Readings:*

- Palacios Rubios, "The *Requerimiento*."
- Henry Warner Bowden, "Spanish Misionaries, Cultural Conflict, and the Pueblo Revolt of 1680." *Church History* 1975 44(2): 217-228.
- Fray Sylvestre Velez de Escalante, "The Spanish Archives of New Mexico."

<b>Week IV: Cultural Contact and Colonial Competition</b>
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**Tues. 2/14**

"Colonists and Confederacies"

*Readings:*

- Colin G. Calloway, "New World Diplomacy and New World Foreign Policies."
- Richard White, "The Winning of the West: The Expansion of the Western Sioux in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries." *Journal of American History* 1978 65(2): 319-343.

**Thurs. 2/16**

"Colonists and Captives"

*Readings:*

- Daniel Richter, "War and Culture: The Iroquois Experience." *William and Mary Quarterly* 1983 40(4): 528-559.
- "Bressani's Relation—1653." *Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France*.
- "The Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary

Rowlandson.”

### Week V: The Yeoman Republic

**Tues. 2/21**

“National Expansion”

*Readings:*

- Christian B. Keller, “Philanthropy Betrayed: Thomas Jefferson, the Louisiana Purchase and the Origins of Federal Indian Removal Policy.” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 2000 144(1): 39-66.
- Documents Concerning the Louisiana Purchase.

**Thurs. 2/23**

“Manifest Destiny and Indian Removal”

*Readings:*

- Blackhawk, “Autobiography of Black Hawk” (excerpts)
- Walt Whitman, “O Pioneers”

### Week VI: From Mexican North to American West

**Tues. 2/28**

“The Mexican War”

*Readings:*

- Jose Maria Tornel Y Mendivil, “Relations Between Texas, the United States of America, and the Mexican Republic.”
- John L. O'Sullivan, “Texas, California, and Manifest Destiny.”
- James K. Polk, “Declaration of War.”
- Battle Reports:
  - May 19, 1846: Resaca de Palma
  - August 19-20, 1847: Contreras and Churobusco

**Thurs. 3/1**

“The Gold Rush”

*Readings:*

- “‘California as I Saw It': First Person Narrative of California's Early Years, 1849-1900.” (Library of Congress Online Exhibit)
- Yong Chen, “The Internal Origins of Chinese Emigration to California Reconsidered.” *The Western Historical Quarterly* 28:4 (Winter, 1997): 520-546.
- Malcolm J. Rorbaugh, “Harsh Realities.” from *Days of Gold: The California Gold Rush and the American Nation*.
- Norman Asing, “Letter to Governor Bigler.” *Daily Alta California* May 5, 1952.

Primary Source Paper Handed Out in Class

**Week VII: Women and Men on the Frontier**

**Tues. 3/6**

“Women and Men on the Trail”

*Readings:*

- Margaret Walsh, “Women's Place on the American Frontier.”  
*Journal of American Studies* 1995 29(2): 241-255.

**Thurs. 3/8**

“Defining Family in the West”

*Readings:*

- Rosalinda Mendez Gonzalez, “Distinctions in Western Women's Experience: Ethnicity, Class, and Social Change.”

**Primary Source Paper Due**

**Week VIII: Spring Break**

**Tues. 3/13**

**No Class**

**Thurs. 3/15**

**No Class**

**Week IX: The Capitalist Consolidation of the American West**

**Tues. 3/20**

“The Destruction and Reconstruction of Indian Peoples”

*Readings:*

- Colin G. Calloway, *Our Hearts Fell to the Ground*, 1-28, 102-110, 121-149, 199-203.

**Thurs. 3/22**

“Cowboys and Ranchers”

*Readings:*

- Donald Worster, *Under Western Skies*, 34-63, 79-92.

**Week X: Re-peopling the West**

**Tues. 3/27**

“Miners, Migrants, Mexican Vaqueros, and Buffalo Soldiers”

*Readings:*

- W. Thomas White, “Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Railroad

Work Force: The Case of the Far Northwest, 1883-1918.”  
*Western Historical Quarterly* 16 (July 1985): 265-83.

**Thurs. 3/29**

“Strangers from a Different Shore”

*Readings:*

- Lee Chew, “The Biography of a Chinaman.” *Independent* 15 (February 19, 1903): 417-423.
- Pun Chee, “Appeal to Congress.” printed in William Speer, *The Oldest and Newest Empire: China and the United States*. (Cincinnati: National Publishing Company, 1870).
- “Memorial of Chinese Laborers, Resident at Rock Springs, Wyoming Territory, to the Chinese Consul at New York.” (1885). Reprinted in Cheng-Tsu Wu, ed., *Chink!* (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1972), 152–164.”

<b>Week XI: Environmental Histories</b>
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**Tues. 4/3**

“Environmental Nationalism”

*Readings:*

- Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 67-95.

**Thurs. 4/5**

“The Wilderness Cult”

*Readings:*

- Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 97-121, 141-160.

<b>Week XII: The Urban West</b>
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**Tues. 4/10**

“Boom Towns”

*Readings:*

- Lawrence H. Larson, *The Urban West at the End of the Frontier*, 1-19.
- Documents Concerning Western Cities

**Thurs. 4/12**

“The Modern West”

*Readings:*

- John M. Findlay, “Far Western Cityscapes and American Culture Since 1940.” *Western Historical Quarterly* 1991 22(1): 19-43.

### Week XIII: The Federal West

**Tues. 4/17**

“Manifest Design”

*Readings:*

- Donald Worster, *Under Western Skies*, 64-78.

**Thurs. 4/19**

“The 'State' in the West”

*Readings:*

- Karen R. Merrill, “In Search of the 'Federal Presence' in the American West.” *Western Historical Quarterly* 1999 30(4): 449-473.

### Week XIV: The Postmodern West

**Tues. 4/24**

“The Prickly City”

*Readings:*

- Mike Davis, *City of Quartz*, 223-263.

**Thurs. 4/26**

“The Prison City”

*Readings:*

- Mike Davis, *City of Quartz*, 267-322.

### Week XV: The Pacific Rim and the Wider West

**Tues. 5/1**

“A Wider West”

*Readings:*

- David Igler, “Diseased Goods: Global Exchanges in the Eastern Pacific Basin, 1770-1850.” *The American Historical Review* 109:3 (June 2004): 693-719.
- Robert Gilpin, “International Politics in the Pacific Rim Era.” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 505 (Sept. 1989): 56-67.

**Thurs. 5/3**

“Reading Day”

**Final Essay Due: May 11, 2012 by 5pm.**