

History 216: History of the American West

Fall 2015

Lectures: Mon/Fri 9:05-9:55, Axinn 109

Discussion X: Wed 12:30-1:20, Warner 506

Discussion Y: Wed. 1:45-2:35, Warner 506

Discussion Z: Wed: 2:50-3:40, Warner 506

Prof. Kathryn Morse, x2436; kmorse@middlebury.edu; Office: Axinn 240

Office Hours, Fall 2015: Mondays 2-4 pm, Thursdays 3-4:15pm except 10/8 & 10/22;

Fridays 10am-12pm, except 10/9 & 10/23

Office hours, syllabus, and other info also on web page:

<https://community.middlebury.edu/~kmorse>

Course Description: In this course we will focus on the history of that part of North America usually defined as the trans-Mississippi American West (with some consideration of the other side of that river as well). Though we will touch on earlier patterns and conflicts, the bulk of the course will cover the period from the mid-1840s to the late 1990s. The central themes of the course include violence, conquest, inter-racial and inter-ethnic conflict over who gets to claim an identity as American and as western, the interactions between humans and the natural environment, and the role of western mythology in both western history and American popular culture more broadly.

Learning Goals: 1) To introduce students to central themes and questions of the history of American West from the 1840s to the recent past. 2) To develop skills in reading and analyzing primary historical documents and using them to make historical arguments in discussion and in formal writing. 3) To develop skills in reading current scholarly work on American history, and thus to see historians practicing their craft as an example of how historians form arguments and draw evidence from primary documents to tell compelling stories about the past. 4) To increase understanding of how mythology and history—as distinct but related forms of storytelling—have shaped and continue to shape historians’ understandings of the past and of the present. 5) To increase understanding of history as a set of multiple, contested stories rather than a timeless narrative of truth. 6) Overall, to increase students’ understandings of how the West developed into the complex and fascinating place it is today.

Assigned Readings: The following books will be available at the college store. The books are also available at various on-line booksellers. All are on reserve at the Davis Library, and may be available to take out from other college libraries through NExpress or Interlibrary Loan. There will be many additional readings provided electronically as well, either on the web through Middlebury’s library subscriptions, on the general web (outside Middlebury’s system), or in our

class share folder through the classes server. See weekly assignments for details. **Please familiarize yourself with our class folders on the server. All registered students will have access to the class folder.**

Books for purchase or loan:

Theda Perdue & Michael D. Green, North American Indians: A Very Short Introduction

Karl Jacoby, Shadows at Dawn: An Apache Massacre and the Violence of History

Donald Worster, Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, & the Growth of the American West

John Steinbeck, Harvest Gypsies: On the Road to the Grapes of Wrath

Not yet ordered, but will be: Rubén Martínez, American Desert: Boom and Bust in the New Old West

Other readings will be made available online or placed in the HIST 216A Share Folder as .pdfs.

Films: Because a major theme of the course is the role of the West in American popular culture, students are required to view four western films during the course of the semester (and can watch many more if they wish. These films constitute basic research for the final paper, and are quite entertaining in their own way, as well. The films are: Stagecoach (1939)—watch by class 10/16; The Searchers (1952)—watch by class 10/26; Cheyenne Autumn (1964)—watch by class 11/16; and Lone Star (1996)—watch by class 11/23. All DVDs will be on reserve at Davis Library. Some are available through streaming services (Amazon or Netflix or iTunes), or on youtube, but youtube is not always consistent or reliable. We will not hold formal class screenings, to allow students maximum flexibility in organizing their viewing time. However, students should see the films by the deadlines indicated in the syllabus.

Requirements: Students must turn in all required assignments to pass the course.

1. Attendance is required at all classes. See attendance policy below under course policies for specifics and exceptions.
2. Reading and discussion: Students are required to complete assigned readings and come to both Monday/Friday lectures and discussion sections on Wednesdays prepared to discuss those with other students.
3. Films: As above, students will view four western films as listed by the deadlines indicated both above and below.
4. Five graded assignments (full details to be announced well before deadlines):

a) **two exams**, divided between in-class short answers and take home essays, on Oct 12 & 14; and Nov. 13 & 16.

b) **one short primary & secondary source exercise** on asking historical questions and finding sources, with flexible due dates depending on student choice; handout in class will explain further. Good due dates for this exercise include 9/28 or 10/26, but others will work as well—details TBA.

- c) **one 3-4 pp. film essay**, with flexible due dates depending on student choice; for Option 1, Stagecoach and The Searchers, due by 8 pm 10/30; for either or both of those plus Cheyenne Autumn due by 8 pm 11/20; for any one, two, or three of those plus Lone Star, due Friday 12/11 by email by 8 pm.
- d) **one 10-12 pp. myth & history paper** due by 5 pm on Friday 12/18. (Further details TBA).

Course Policies:

1) Honor Code: The honor code is in effect for all work in this class, and should be stated and signed on all formal written work (papers, exams, exercises with deadlines). The honor code applies to both exam-related academic integrity (cheating), and also to issues of plagiarism. Plagiarism includes the taking of others' work (language or ideas) intentionally or mistakenly, without direct attribution to the source. It also includes the taking of others' language as and ideas paraphrase, with direct citation, when that language and ideas so closely approximate the source material as to require quotation marks. Any paraphrased material—EVEN WITH A CORRECT CITATION—which TOO CLOSELY approximates the source without quotation marks, constitutes plagiarized material. Take notes with great care and check all of your material carefully before turning in any formal written work.

2) Grades: As the semester progresses, I will provide handouts and further information on specific criteria for grading on specific assignments. Final grades will be approximately determined by the following percentages, though there is always room for adjustment: Attendance: 5% ; Discussion Participation: 10%; Exam one: 20%; Exam two: 20%; Primary document exercise; 10 %; Film essay: 15 %; Myth & History Paper: 20%.

Note on numerical (1-100) vs. letter grades (A, A-, B+ etc.): Grades on exams and some papers may take numerical form, as this allows for a more fine-grained approach to evaluating student work (a B may range from 82-86, for instance). However, numerical grades do not represent a specific point value for any given student answer or response to a given question. Example: There is no specific point awarded for a correct date in an essay answer, so missing a date (or a name, or a place, or an idea) does not automatically result in a specific loss of points. Nor do grammatical or proof-reading errors correlate to a specific loss of points on a paper. Grades in this class take in a wide range of factors for any given answer and thus are not always directly correlated with math. If you have any questions about the general standards for "A" work, "B" work, etc., please feel free to ask.

3) Pass/D/Fail option: Students choosing the pass/d/fail option should note the following: To pass the course (grade of C-/70 or above) students must hand in all the assigned work, take all exams, and attend at least 80% of all scheduled classes.

4) Attendance: Students are required to attend all classes, but given the realities of illness and other demands, students may miss **three total scheduled** classes during the semester without any penalty, but only **one scheduled Wednesday discussion section**.

5) Late Papers and Extensions: Due dates are specified in the schedule below. Final myth and history papers are due by 5 pm on December 18, **without exception**. However, with regard to both take home essays, the primary document exercise, and the film essay, each student has two (2) “extension days” to use or spend to extend paper deadlines without penalty. As a result a student may turn in one assignment two days late without penalty, or two assignments one day late (each) without grade penalty. However, the student is responsible for NOTIFYING the professor when turning the paper in that a free “extension day” is in effect. A day is considered 24 hours, and Friday-Monday will count as one (1) 24-hour period. Students may consider a 12-hour extension a one-half (1/2) day extension.

Beyond those allowed “extension days” any paper turned in after the deadline will be penalized two points (i.e. grade of 80 to grade of 78) for every 24 hours late. Friday to Monday will count as one (1) 24-hour period.

6) Intercollegiate Athletics and Other Activities: If you are a member of a team or engaged in other campus activities, on or off campus, you may, at various times during the semester, have athletic or other events scheduled during our class times. Although **no other activity can require** that you miss class or other academic events, you may need to choose which activity (class or non-class) you would prefer, or have a responsibility, to attend. Those choices are entirely your own, and I will respect them as valid choices. However, be aware that according to college policy such absences are explained rather than excused. It is **your responsibility** to inform me of your schedule, what work you will miss, and how and when you intend to make up that work. I do not regularly check sports schedules or know team departure times, so it is your job to present me with that information, well in advance of the absence itself.

7) Email Policy. Students are welcome to email (or call my office phone) with questions at any point. Please be advised that I do not read and answer email constantly or immediately, and that I usually take an “email sabbath” from college-related email from Friday around 5pm until Sunday around 2pm. Outside of those exceptions, I will attempt to return your email or call within 24 hours, if possible.

I do assume that you read your Middlebury college email on a regular basis, several times a week. If you do not read your email with any regularity, please remember to ask me in class whether I have sent out any information or updates.

BEFORE emailing, ANY professor, ask yourself this important question: Is there ANY other way to gain this information or answer this question without asking a professor? If so, use that other method! NOTE: The above does not apply to true emergencies, such as those involving

serious illness or loss. In the event of such an event, emailing your professors and your dean, with an urgent alert in the email, is always a good choice. I will respond as quickly as possible.

8) Classroom etiquette and technology policy: Cell phones, smart phones, and other small mobile devices must be OFF or silenced and put away in ALL classes. Laptop computers may be used in class lectures and discussions, though when discussing digital readings, it is better to bring printed versions to class, rather than electronic versions, if at all possible.

IF AT ANY POINT the use of laptop computers or tablet computers becomes distracting to myself or others, I will ask you to change how you are using them or shut them off until we can find a good compromise.

Please respect your classmates. Our goal is to critically engage and discuss historical events and ideas, but not to criticize or intimidate each other as human beings. Be kind, be thoughtful, and engage each other as colleagues with respect. If at any time you feel limited by myself or others in your ability to express your ideas openly, please let me know in person or by email.

Disruptive Classroom Exits: Please do not leave and return to the classroom during class time unless in the event of a physical or personal emergency.

9) Accessibility, Accommodations, Abilities:

We all have varying abilities; we all carry various strengths and weaknesses. Some of these might even be “documented” with a place like the ADA Office. If so, please just let me know. With or without documentation, it is my intent to make our learning experience as accessible as possible. With documentation, I am especially interested in providing any student accommodations that have probably been best determined by the student and the ADA Coordinator (Jodi Litchfield) in advance. Please let me know NOW what we can do to maximize *your* learning potential, participation, and general access in this course. I am available to meet with you in person or to discuss such things on email.

The ADA Office is located at Meeker House 003. [46 Porter Field Road]

Jodi Litchfield, coordinator: 802.443.5936; litchfie@middlebury.edu

<http://www.middlebury.edu/studentlife/doc/ada/about>

Weekly Schedule of Topics and Assignments:

THIS SYLLABUS IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE, BUT ALL CHANGES WILL BE TO REDUCE RATHER THAN ADD READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS, AND ALL WILL BE ANNOUNCED AHEAD OF TIME IN CLASS AND IN EMAIL.

Week 1:

Wed. Sept 16: In discussion: introductions, thinking about history and storytelling.

Fri. Sept 18: Frontier history, ca. 1949. For class: read (.pdf in share folder and emailed), Ray Allen Billington, Introduction and Conclusion, to Westward Expansion. Pay particular attention to language, pronouns, identities, and actions, drawing from our Wednesday in class exercise.

Week 2

Mon. Sept 21: For class: Read Perdue & Green, North American Indians: A Very Short Introduction, chapters 1-4 (pp. 1-79). For in-class exercise: As you read, keep a list of things you note from this book which you did not know before (if any), or did not remember from previous classes, study, experience, or from other sources. See if you can get to at least 10 things you didn't know before, spread out over the four chapters (also note a few things you DID already know).

Wed. Sept 23: For discussion: Read primary documents, California: Louise Clappe, Dame Shirley Letters (Share folder for Sept 23); Act to Punish Vagrants, California: 1855 (Share folder for Sept 23); selections (pdf) from Kimberly Johnston-Dodds, "Early California Laws and Policies Related to California Indians." (Share folder for Sept 23).

Fri. Sept 25: Oregon! Excerpts from the letters of Narcissa Whitman and Henry Spaulding from the PBS website (website is more fun, link below, or cut and pasted as .pdf in share folder Readings for Sept 25.

<http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/resources/archives/two/whitman0.htm>

Read Whitman and Spaulding letters at website for:

June 3rd, 1836 ; July 18th-August 7th, 1836; Sept 22nd, 1836; June 25, 1839; May 2, 1840; March 1, 1842; September 29, 1842; October 9, 1844; April 2, 1846; May 15, 1846; April 6, 1848

Week 3:

Mon. Sept 28: Texas! No assigned reading. **A good chance to complete primary & secondary source exercise, if you choose, on California or Oregon documents.**

Wed. Sept 30: Reading: Karl Jacoby, Shadows at Dawn, Introduction and all of Part One (through p. 180). Helpful to explore the author's website at:

<http://brown.edu/Research/Aravaipa/>

Fri. Oct 2: California and Manifest Destiny.

Week 4:

Mon. Oct 5: Civil War I: For class: Listen to podcast (1 hour): This American Life, "Little War on the Prairie," November 2012, streaming at:

<http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/479/little-war-on-the-prairie>

Wed. Oct 7: Reading: Karl Jacoby, Shadows at Dawn, Parts Two, Three, and Epilogue.

Fri Oct. 9: For class: Richard White, "Frederick Jackson Turner and Buffalo Bill," In James Grossman ed., The Frontier in American Culture (Berkeley: Univ of California Press, 1994), 7-65 (but with lots and lots of pictures); pdf in share folder for Oct. 9.

Week 5:

Mon. Oct 12: In class midterm, short-answer questions, details TBA.

Wed. Oct 14: No discussion, take-home exam essay due by 10pm, details to be announced.

Fri. Oct 16: Introduction to western film: Before class: watch Stagecoach (dir. John Ford, 1939)

Week 6:

Mon. Oct 19: Railroads, Labor, Land & Water

Wed. Oct 21: Reading, Perdue & Green, North American Indians, ch. 5; AND primary documents on Native Americans, Chinese laborers, and Mormons, all in share folder for Readings for Wed. Oct. 21.

Fri. Oct 23: **No class, fall break.**

Week 7:

Mon. Oct 26: **No class** (Prof. Morse returning from Western History Conference) Start Worster reading for Wed. AND watch The Searchers (1952). **Also, an ideal time to complete the**

primary & secondary source assignment on primary documents from Oct 21 if you so choose! Details TBA.

Wed. Oct 28: For discussion, read Donald Worster, Rivers of Empire, Introduction (Part I), Conclusion (p.VII); and Incipience (Part III).

Fri. Oct 30: Lecture: The Progressive West; **Option 1 for film essay on first two films, due by 8 pm by email (details TBA).**

Week 8:

Mon. Nov. 2: Read Worster, Part IV

Wed. Nov. 4: Read Worster, Parts V and VI

Fri. Nov. 6: No assigned reading; Worster wrap-up; lecture on Great Depression and warfare.

Week 9:

Mon. Nov. 9: Lecture and discussion. By Class time, watch Cheyenne Autumn (dir. John Ford, 1964).

Wed. Nov. 11: Read John Steinbeck, Harvest Gypsies, for discussion.

Fri Nov. 13: In class: Short-answer portion of hour exam, details TBA

Week 10:

Mon. Nov. 16: In class: topics TBD; by 8 pm, **take home essay exam due by email.**

Wed. Nov. 18: Joan Didion, "Trouble in Lakewood," *New Yorker* 69 (July 26, 1993): 46-65, in share folder for Nov. 18; and Rubén Martínez, Desert America (chapters TBA).

Fri. Nov. 20: : Blazing Saddles and race in the postwar West; **option 2 for film essay so far; 2-3 of films so far (plus Blazing Saddles if you would like to include it).**

Week 11:

Mon. Nov. 23: Borders: Lecture and discussion, Read Martínez, chapters from Desert America, TBA

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Wed/Fri: THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 12:

Mon. Nov. 30: Tourism and the New West

Wed. Dec. 2: Martínez, Desert America, chapters TBA.

Fri. Dec. 4: By class time, watch Lone Star (dir. John Sayles, 1996). Read Martínez, chapters TBA.

Week 13:

Mon Dec. 7: Toxics, Energy, Wastelands. Read chapters from Voyles, Wastelands and Needham, Power Lines (.pdfs in share folder for 12/7).

Wed. Dec. 9: : Perdue & Green, North American Indians, ch. 6 & 7; Ari Kelman, A Misplaced Massacre (one chapter, TBA, as .pdf in share folder for 12/9).

Fri. Dec. 11: Conclusions: Stories and Meanings. **Option 3 for film essay on 2-4 of films watched in class, due by 8 pm by email.**

Friday Dec. 18, 5 pm, Final Myth and history paper due. **No extension days may be applied to this deadline.**