

Syllabus History 356G – The US West in the Twentieth Century  
Spring Semester 2012

Dr. Erika Bsumek

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Office Hours, Monday, 2-4 or by appointment.

Unique number, 39500

Class meets in Tuesday and Thursday in GAR 0.102 from 2:00-3:30

In 1979 a San Francisco based punk band, the Dead Kennedy's, released a song called "California Uber Alles." The politically biting song immediately tapped into not just the contemporary angst felt by a subset of America's young people, it can also be seen as part of a running commentary about the American West. This class explores the history of the American West from the mid-nineteenth century forward. It examines, to name only a few events, the lives of those who battled the newcomers who made their way across trails by foot or in Conestoga wagons; the rise of the film industry in Hollywood; the advent of a innovative aerospace industry; the various political movements who fought for their rights and challenged "consensus" America; the culture of those surfers who slapped wheels on the bottoms of their boards and invented a whole new sport; and the actions of the ranchers who attempted to rest control of the land away from the federal government during the Sagebrush Rebellion. Along the way, students will learn about many of the diverse groups those who inhabited the region as well as how the region has been defined, mapped, and portrayed over time. We will explore the region's boundaries and how its identity has changed over time.

This course will examine the history of the trans-Mississippi West with a special focus on the concepts of myth-making, economic development, and region. Beginning in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, we will follow a loose chronological narrative as we try to learn more about the people, events, images and forces that have shaped our understanding of life and culture in the region and the nation as a whole. The course will cover migration and immigration of various peoples in the West, the development of state and federal power, the place of the West in film, literature and popular culture, and the often-contentious politics surrounding tourism, environmentalism, race, ethnicity, and gender in the region.

This syllabus should be viewed as your general guide to the class. On the rare occasion I need to revise the syllabus, I will post a revised copy of the syllabus on Blackboard and send out a general class announcement indicating that an updated version of the syllabus exists. I will not add new reading material nor will I change the course requirements.

### **Required Books**

**The following books are available at the Co-op or for purchase on-line.**

1- Scott Zesch, *The Captured: A True Story of Abduction by Indians on the Texas Frontier*

2 – John McPhee, *Encounters with the Arch Druid*

3- Walter Nugent, *Into the West: The Story of Its People*

4-Linda Gordon, *Impounded: Dorothea Lange and the Censored Images of Japanese American Internment*

**Blackboard:**

5- Additional course readings for the class will be posted on Blackboard in the course documents section. If you wish, I can also make those readings available at Speedway Copy Shop in the Dobie Mall.

**Some class resources are available via the links provided, you may need your UT EID to sign into the library for some of the following articles.**

6- Online resources: periodically you will see links to online resources on the syllabus. These are required reading.

“He Loved to be in our Face. Still does, no doubt” by Terry Tempest Williams

<http://outsideonline.com/outside/magazine/1097/9710edward.htm>

Louis Warren, “Cody’s Last Stand: Masculine Anxiety, The Custer Myth, and the Frontier of Domesticity in Buffalo Bill’s Wild West,”

<http://www.historycooperative.org.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/journals/whq/34.1/warren.html>

All books are available at the University Co-op. All articles are listed on Blackboard under the documents section. Most of these are relatively short documents (from 2-4 pages) but there are few longer articles. If requested, I can make those articles available at Speedway Copies.

Teaching Assistant: Neel Baumgardner, Office hours 1 hour prior to class outside classroom or by appointment. [Neelbaumgardner@aol.com](mailto:Neelbaumgardner@aol.com)

**Requirements:**

Students are expected to complete the assigned **readings by the beginning** of each class. Attendance and **class participation will be taken into account** in determining course grades. Students will turn in a take home midterm and a take home final exam, take 3 quizzes, and will complete one 3-5 page paper assignment. You will also get credit for in-class group work assignments.

Participation and Writing Assignments: This class involves a combination of lectures, written work, group work, exams, and discussions.

Do not ignore the readings; spend some time analyzing what you have read. Questions to consider for in-class discussions: What is the author’s main point? Do you agree or disagree with the author? If so, why? If not, why not? What personal experience, history, or outside knowledge can you draw on that relates to the readings and/or lecture material? Is there a particular aspect of the reading that stood out? Why? To succeed in this class you will need to read all assignments and come to class ready to discuss them.

There will be documentaries and films shown in class. You should take notes when these are shown as you will be tested on their content or expected to analyze them on exams. We will watch parts, if not all, of at least two films in class. Films are subject to change.

Films:

- 1) The Searchers
- 2) Lone Star

**Short Papers: Choose one topic, and write a short 3-5 page paper. 50 points.** Papers should include page numbers and footnotes. All sources must be clearly noted as per *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

**Paper 1: *The Captured: A True Story of Abduction on the Texas Frontier***

Author Scott Zesch uses the story of Indian captives to open a window into the experiences of Texas pioneers. For this paper you must place the stories of Adolf Korn and the others who were taken as captives within a larger historical context. What do their experiences tell us about Native American culture? What do they tell us about pioneer culture? Why did the Comanches take captives? Assess how the stories of the captives and their captors fit into larger patterns in the history of the United States West. Conclude your paper by explaining what *The Captured* tells us about the American frontier.

You should use the Zesch book and two additional scholarly sources for this paper. That means you must find books or articles about the Texas Frontier, Native Americans, captives, or the American West to use as additional source material to help you answer the questions above.

**Due date: 2/16**

**Paper 2:** Authors Linda Gordon and Gary Y. Okihiro present both an assessment of Japanese internment and Dorothea Lange's photographs of those Japanese who were interned. You will use both written and visual sources for this paper. First, examine at least 3 photographs in this book with great care. What do you think the individuals photographed were feeling and how did they respond to being photographed? Compare at least one photograph to evidence presented in Gary Okihiro's section of the book and to that of at least two other authors (outside sources). What do Lange's photographs of the internment experience tell us about that experience? What, if anything, surprised you about the photos? Why were her photographs kept from public view for so long? You must use evidence or specific examples to answer the above questions.

**Due: 3/20**

**Paper 3: *Encounters with the Archdruid***

In *Encounters with the Archdruid* author John McPhee goes on the road with environmentalist David Brower. In three different sections: A Mountain, An Island, and a River, McPhee chronicles the hardening of positions along two separate ideological lines: that of the

environmentalists and the developers. McPhee discusses the symbolic and real importance of both natural and man-made structures. In this paper you must discuss how the environmentalist position presented? How is the position of the developers presented? Are such ideas regionally specific? Compare and contrast the ways in which the individuals profiled in *Encounters with the Archdruid* talk about the different regions they explore. Use this book and two outside sources to explain the emergence of environmentalism and a renewed sense of regionalism in the 1960s and 1970s. Finally, explain the impact of the different ideological positions on the importance of nature.

**Due: 5/3**

### **Grades**

Grades will be figured on a scale of points divided as follows: 100 points for the midterm, 150 points for the final exam, 50 points for the paper, and 50 points for participation and attendance for a total of 350 possible points.

Participation and attendance grade breakdown: 50 points.

Your grade will be determined by attendance, quiz scores, and your in-class participation (i.e. in-class writing assignments, group work, and discussion). Attendance and in-class participation will be worth 30 points. Quizzes: I will give 3 quizzes, each will be worth 10 points. You can drop your lowest score. 20 points.

Student responsibilities: You should attend class. You should come to class prepared and ready to speak about the readings, lectures, and issues presented in the course. You are expected to participate in both smaller group work and larger class discussions. You will also be completing a number of “in class” writing assignments. These are designed to prepare you for exams. Your participation will be assessed by me and the Teaching Assistant.

We will utilize a plus/minus system in determining grades along the lines of the following scale.

Students will be graded based on the percentage of points they earn in the class.

93-100 = A  
90-92 = A-  
87-89 = B+  
83-86 = B  
80-82 = B-  
77-79 = C +  
73-76 = C  
70-72 = C-  
67-69 = D+  
63-66 = D  
60-62 = D-  
Below 60: F

**Group Work/In-class assignments and Discussions:** On days when group work, in-class assignments or discussions are scheduled, you should **bring your books or course packets to class.**

## Course Policies

The dates for the exams and the paper assignments are clearly marked on the syllabus. I will accept late papers only in cases of verifiable emergency. I will also consider requests for make-up exams in cases of emergency.

**ACADEMIC HONESTY:** Academic honesty is very important. You are expected to complete your own work. You may use web resources but must cite them as per *The Chicago Manual of Style*. If you have any questions about quoting or using the internet, feel free call me, 475-7253, or email me. I will also follow University guidelines regarding plagiarism and student conduct. For further information see:

<http://uwc.fac.utexas.edu/~virgil/essay/research/plagiarism.html>

**All cell phones should be turned off or to silent during class. Please respect the classroom environment and your fellow students. This means: do not check your email or browse websites during class time. Students may use computers in class, but if you are using them for non-class purposes (i.e. note taking) you will be asked to stop. I will issue three class warnings regarding such behavior. After the third warning, I will not longer allow computer use in the classroom.**

## Class Schedule

### Week 1:

1/17 Introduction to class.

Discussion: What does the West mean to you?

1/19: What is the West?

Real and Imagined space and the importance of a region to national identity.

- [http://www.gutenberg.org/files/22994/22994-h/22994-h.htm#Page\\_1](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/22994/22994-h/22994-h.htm#Page_1)

**Read the first chapter:** Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Significance of the West in American History* p. 1-39

- Nugent, Ch. 1

### Week 2:

1/24: Lecture: myth making and regional development

Reading:

- "Quantifying the Wild West: The Problematic Statistics of Frontier Violence"

Robert R. Dykstra

Use your UTEID to log into the library website to read the following article.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40505651?seq=2>

-Nugent, Ch. 2

-Zesch, 1-40

**Discussion**

**1/26:** Lecture: Developing ideas and economies

Reading:

-Nugent, Ch. 3

-Zesch, 41-116

**Week 3:**

**1/31:** Lecture: Westward expansion: wagon trains, settlers, and struggles

Reading:

-Nugent, Ch. 4

-Zesch, 117-157

**2/2:**

Lecture: Indian wars, the American bison, and contested homelands.

Reading:

-Anonymous Pine Ridge Sioux, "The Ghost Dance." And, Luther Standing Bear, "A First Buffalo Hunt." BB

-Zesch, 158-236

**Discussion/Group work**

**Week 4:**

**2/7:** Lecture: Wide Open Spaces: National Parks and the Beginning of Conservationism

Reading:

-John Muir, "The Wonders of Yosemite." BB

-Nugent, Ch. 5-6

-Zesch, 237-262

Group work.

**2/9: Lecture: On the Trail of Tourism: Navajo and Puebloan People**

Reading:

-Bsumek, Ch. 1, "Creating the Navaho," BB.

-Zesch, 263- end of book

**In class discussion.**

**Week 5:**

**2/14: SCREENING: THE SEARCHERS**

**Discussion (time permitting)**

**2/16:**

**\* Zesch Paper Due**

Lecture: Western politics: Lecture on Suffrage and Janette Rankin

Reading:

-"The First Woman's Suffrage Victory, Dec. 10, 1871" BB

### **Week 6:**

2/21: Lecture: The diverse West

Reading:

- Flammang, "A Westerner in Search of 'Negro-ness,'" BB.
- Pascoe, "Race, Gender, and the Privileges of Property: On the Significance of Miscegenation Law," BB
- Nugent, Ch. 7

### **Group work**

2/23: Cowboys: Real, Imagined, and Acted

Reading:

- William S. Hart, "A Cowboy Star is Born," and "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid Rob the Union Pacific" in Course packet.
- Louis Warren, "Cody's Last Stand: Masculine Anxiety, The Custer Myth, and the Frontier of Domesticity in Buffalo Bill's Wild West,"

<http://www.historycooperative.org.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/journals/whq/34.1/warren.html>

### **Week 7:**

**2/28: Mexican Life and Labor in the Southwest.**

Reading:

- Deverell, "Plague in Los Angeles, 1924"

### **Take Home Mid-term handed out**

**3/1: The West and the Great Depression: Lecture on the 1930s.**

Reading:

- Gordon: *Impounded*, p. 1-47 and examine the photographs in ch. 1 and 2, pp. 85-132

Blackboard:

- Matsumoto, "Japanese American Women and the Creation of Urban Nisei Culture in the 1930s,"
- Edmund Wilson, "Boulder Dam," 1935
- Dorthea Lange, "Migrant Mother, March 1936."
- John Steinbeck, "The Migrants." 1936

### **Group work**

### **Week 8:**

**3/6: Take home exam due.**

Lecture: The West mobilizes for war.

Reading:

- John Garcia, "World War II in the West: Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941"
- Maya Angelou, "World War II in the West: Changing of the Guard, 1942."John Gunther, "World War II in the West: Henry Kaiser's Liberty Ships, 1942-1945."

### **3/8: WWII and the West**

Lecture on World War II and the people of the West

Reading:

-Gordon, Okihiro, 47-80, photographs on pp. 133-end of book.

Blackboard:

- Dr. Yoshiye Togasaki, "World War II in the West: Manzanar, 1942-1945."

-Al Waxman, "The Zoot Suit Riot, 1943."

-Navajo Code Talker, "World War II in the West: Navajo Code Talkers, 1942."

**Group work.**

### **Week 9: Spring Break: 3/14-19**

**Week 10:** Consensus in the West: The 1950s

**3/20:**

***Impounded Paper Due today (Paper 2)***

**War and social change** Film: Atomic Cafe

**3/22:** Economic Growth, and Community Organization in the post-War era.

Readings:

-David Beers, "Blue Sky Dream, 1957-1976" BB

Begin reading John McPhee, 1-35

-Nugent, ch.8

**In-class writing/Group work.**

**Week 11:**

**3/27:** The Beat Generation

Reading:

-McPhee, 35-77

-Steve Fox, "From the Beat Generation to the Sanctuary Movement: Cold War Resistance Cultures in the American West." BB

Discussion

**3/29: The 1960s: The Beat Generation and Beyond**

Reading

-McPhee -77-100

-Jack Kerouac, "Going on the Road," 1951 BB

-Aldous Huxley, "Tripping, 1953-1954." BB

**Group work.**

## **Week 12:**

### **4/3: Brown Power, Black Power, Red Power**

#### Readings:

- McPhee – 101-150
- Nugent, Ch. 9
- Mel and Eldridge Cleaver, “Watts, 1965.” BB

#### **Discussion**

### **4/5: Radicalism in the West**

#### Reading:

- Tom Hayden, “State of Emergency at “The Peoples Republic of Berkeley”” BB
- Mary Crow Dog, “Siege at Wounded Knee,” in course packet
- McPhee, 151-200

## **Week 13:**

### **4/10: Lecture on Recreation and Environmentalism in the West**

Land use and conservation: Example: Glen Canyon Dam/Lake Powell

#### Readings:

- “He Loved to be in our Face. Still does, no doubt” by Terry Tempest Williams  
<http://outsideonline.com/outside/magazine/1097/9710edward.htm>
- Richard Stayton, “Disneyland, 1961-1974.” BB.
- McPhee, 201-245

### **4/12: Reconfigurations of land, politics, and people**

#### Reading:

- Mike Davis, “Ecocide in Marlboro Country,” BB.
- Terry Tempest Williams, “A Clan of One Breasted Women,” BB.

#### **Group work**

## **Week 14 - GUEST LECTURER WEEK**

### **4/17: The Rise of Western Conservatism.**

In class: Film Barry Goldwater.

#### **Watch clip:**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fdc985gNU8c>

#### Readings:

- Lou Cannon, “Proposition 13,” 1978, BB
- John Wayne Receives a Congressional Gold Medal, 1979, BB
- The Duke: “More than just a hero,” BB

### **4/19: New Right: Ronald Regan’s West**

- Nugent, Ch.10
- Mary Clearman Blew, “Wildcatter, 1982”
- John Keeble, “The Exxon Valdez, Mary- April 1989,”

**Week 15:**

**4/24**

**Late Twentieth Century West: 1970s- 1990s: punks, skaters, and a new western style.**

Readings:

Bill Gates, "The Birth of the Personal Computer, 1968-1983 (course packet

Nugent, ch. 10

**4/26: The West as moving target**

Readings:

-*High Country News* Spoofs Real Estate Development, 1994, BB

**Week 16:**

**5/1: Class conclusion: What is the West?**

**Movie: *Lonestar***

**5/3: Finish *Lonestar*, End of class discussion.**

**Take Home Final passed out to students.**

**Paper 3 due.**

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**Due date of final TBA: In my office.**