Stay in one place long enough, or return to the same place often enough, and some interesting ironies are likely to accumulate.

-Larry McMurtrty, *Walter Benjamin at the Dairy Queen*

**Course Description:**
What is the “American West?” The phrase refers to both a place and a process. The American West is a biophysical region characterized by rugged mountains, deep forests, harsh deserts, massive rivers, and other geographical extremes. But the American West also conjures a broad array of ideas about the United States that, for better and worse, have long guided popular interpretations of the nation’s history and political life.

This course explores the American West as a both place and a process. Beginning with the sixteenth-century encounters of indigenous and European empires, we will trace how movement and conquest constitute recurring processes in the history of the American West. We will also study the region’s modern history, paying attention to how human and non-human forces have affected flows of expansion and colonialism, and how the peculiarities of local environments have altered global historical transformations. Beyond the American West itself, this course explores the everyday relationships between historical narrative and the experience of place.

**Course Texts:**


Grading Criteria:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Take-Home Exam #1</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take-Home Exam #2</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion Facilitation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take-Home Final Exam</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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Blackboard:
Electronic course materials will be available as PDF files on the Blackboard Vista website.

Course Policies:

Attendance
Students are expected to attend all class sessions and to complete reading assignments before class.

Classroom Behavior
Electronic devices may be used during class for note-taking purposes only. Cell phones must be powered off or silenced. I will start class promptly at 10:00 AM. Late students are permitted to enter the classroom provided they do so with minimal disruption to their peers.

Discussion Facilitation
There are nine class sessions set aside for the formal discussion of course readings and lectures. During the first half of the class, students will separate into small groups and work on answering a set of pre-circulated questions. The class will then reunite during the second half, and each group will take a few minutes to present their answers. Think of these like informal, oral quizzes. Students will be graded on their preparation, professionalism, and participation in these discussions.

Take-Home Exams
The main evaluation method for this course is a series of three take-home exams. For the first two exams, students will be expected to answer two essay questions, writing 3-5 page responses for each. The final exam will require an additional third essay question. In total, students will write between 20 and 35 pages for this course. The best exam essays will be well written and will offer clear answers grounded with textual evidence from course readings. Late exams will only be accepted in the case of an emergency that conforms to official university policy.

University Policy Statements:

Disability Statement
Any student with special circumstances covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act should register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA), Suite 322, University Union Building (phone 940-565-4323). Students who have registered with ODA should also make an appointment to discuss disabilities accommodation requests with the instructor of this course during the first week of class. Reasonable adjustments will be made to accommodate the special needs of students with disabilities where such adjustments are necessary to provide equality of educational access.

Academic Integrity
Academic integrity is defined in the UNT Policy on Student Standards for Academic Integrity. Any suspected case of Academic dishonesty will be handled in accordance with the University Policy and procedures. Possible academic penalties range from a verbal or written admonition to a grade of “F” in the course. Further sanctions may apply to incidents involving major violations. The official policy and procedure are located online at: http://vpaa.unt.edu/academic-integrity.htm.
Part One:
WILDERNESS AND THE AMERICAN WEST

Week 1:
W, Aug 29  Course Introduction: Place and Process
F, Aug 31  Where is the American West?
READ:

Week 2:
M, Sep 3  NO CLASS  Labor Day
W, Sep 5  Wilderness and the Frontier
READ:
  *Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American
    History,” 1893.

F, Sep 7  Discussion Day #1
READ:
  *William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness; Or, Getting Back to the
    Wrong Nature,” in Uncommon Ground, ed. Cronon (New York: Norton,

Week 3:
M, Sep 10  The Spanish North
READ:
  Andrés Reséndez, A Land So Strange: The Epic Voyage of Cabeza de
  Vaca, 1-68.
W, Sep 12  Ancient Native America
READ:
  Reséndez, A Land So Strange, 69-156.
F, Sep 14  Discussion Day #2
READ:
  Reséndez, 157-226.

*Indicates PDF file available on Blackboard.
Week 4:

M, Sep 17  The Horse and Indigenous Empires
       READ:

W, Sep 19  France, Spain, and Upper Louisiana
       READ:

F, Sep 21  The United States and the Western Expansion of Slavery
       READ:

Week 5:

M, Sep 24  From Treaty-Making to Indian Removal
       READ:

W, Sep 26  Texas, California, and the War with Mexico
       READ:

F, Sep 28  Discussion Day #3
       Begin Take-home Exam #1
Part Two:
REMAKING THE WESTERN ENVIRONMENT

Week 6:

M, Oct 1  
NO CLASS

W, Oct 3  
The Lewis & Clark (and other) Expeditions
   Take-home Exam #1 Due

F, Oct 5  
Grain and the Railroad
   READ:
   *William Cronon, “Pricing the Future: Grain,” in *Nature’s Metropolis*

Week 7:

M, Oct 8  
Meat and Corporate Enterprise
   READ:
   207-262.

W, Oct 10  
Assimilation and Incorporation
   READ:

F, Oct 12  
Discussion Day #4
   READ:

Week 8:

M, Oct 15  
The Power of the River
   READ:

W, Oct 17  
Western Extinctions
   READ:
   White, 89-114.
F, Oct 19  Discussion Day #5
READ:

**Week 9:**

M, Oct 22  **The Dust Bowl**
READ:


**Begin Take-home Exam #2**

*Reservation Slaughterhouse.* James Sherburne, 1905.
Part Three:
THE METROPOLITAN WEST

Week 10:

M, Oct 29  NO CLASS

W, Oct 31  The Allotment Acts
            Take-home Exam #2 Due

F, Nov 2  Privatizing the Wild
            READ:
            *Karl Jacoby, “Class and Environmental History: Lessons from the War in
             the Adirondacks,” *Environmental History*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (July 1997):
             324-342.

Week 11:

M, Nov 5  Manhood, Race, and Wage Dependency
            READ:
            *Gail Bederman, “Remaking Manhood through Race and ‘Civilization,’” in
             *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in
             the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,
             1996), 1-44.

W, Nov 7  Cars and Mass Tourism
            READ:
            *David Louter, “Glaciers and Gasoline: Mount Rainier as a Windshield
             Wilderness,” in *Windshield Wilderness: Cars, Roads, and Nature in
             Washington’s National Parks* (Seattle: University of Washington Press,
             2006, 11-35.

F, Nov 9  Discussion Day #6
            READ:
            *Andrew Isenberg, “The Returns of the Bison: Nostalgia, Profit, and
             196.

Week 12:

M, Nov 12  The Western Homefront During World War II
            READ:
            *Carl Abbott, *The Metropolitan Frontier: Cities in the Modern American
             West* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1993), TBD.

W, Nov 14  The Nuclear West
            READ:

**F, Nov 16**  **Highways and Suburbanization**  
**READ:**  

**Week 13:**

**M, Nov 19**  **Discussion Day #7**  
**READ:**  

**W, Nov 21**  **NO CLASS**  Thanksgiving Break

**F, Nov 23**  **NO CLASS**  Thanksgiving Break

**Week 14:**

**M, Nov 26**  **Termination and AIM**  
**READ:**  

**W, Nov 28**  **Discussion Day #8**  
**READ:**  
Basso, 105-152.

**F, Nov 30**  **The Post-Industrial West**  
**READ:**  


**Week 15:**

**M, Dec 3**  **The New West**  
**READ:**  

**W, Dec 5**  **Discussion Day #9**  
**READ:**  
Krakauer, 172-203.  
**Begin Final Take-home Exam (DUE ON W 12/12 by 10 AM)**