HISTORY 466/566

Nineteenth-Century
American West

LECTURER: Professor Marsha Weisiger
Office: 363 McKenzie Hall
Telephone: 541-346-4824
Email: weisiger@uoregon.edu
Office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 3:30-4:30 p.m., or by appointment (Note: no office hours on Wednesday, Oct. 3.)

Class Schedule:
Mondays and Wednesdays, 2-3:20 p.m., 175 Lillis Hall

Introduction
This introductory survey of the history of the nineteenth-century U.S. West takes us from the Lewis and Clark expedition to the eve of the twentieth century. We will approach our study of the West by tracing five major themes: (1) conquest and colonialism, (2) the federal and corporate role in western development, (3) environmental change, (4) the West as a land of opportunity and hope, and (5) the mythic West. Major topics include cross-cultural encounters, exploration, federal Indian policy, mining rushes, ranching, and homesteading, with particular attention to the ways in which race, class, gender, and culture shaped those experiences.

Course objectives:
- Trace the historical development of the major course themes
- Analyze and interpret “primary” sources of historical information
- Identify an author’s argument or thesis
- Write an analytical essay that develops your own argument
**Readings**
This is a reading-intensive course. The books are available at the Duck Store, and primary sources and journal articles will be posted on Blackboard. Reading assignments are listed at the end of each week but are due on the date of the writing assignment or on the date of the related lecture. Anticipate reading 120 pages per week, though the actual number of pages may be more or less in a particular week.

- James P. Rhonda, *Lewis and Clark Among the Indians*
- James E. Crisp, *Sleuthing the Alamo: Davy Crockett’s Last Stand and Other Mysteries of the Texas Revolution*
- Elinore Pruitt Stewart, *Letters of a Woman Homesteader*

**Grading**
Grading will be based on four components:
- four three-page response papers (200 points)
- a term project (100 points)
- a final exam (100 points)
- participation in class discussions (50 points)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>441-450</td>
<td>A+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>423-440</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>405-422</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>392-404</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>378-391</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>360-377</td>
<td>B-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>347-359</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>333-346</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>315-332</td>
<td>C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>270-314</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;270</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Failure to complete any component of the course may result in failure of the entire course.**

For undergraduates, my grading standards follow those adopted by the history department.
A+: Work of unusual distinction. This grade is rarely awarded.
A: Work that distinguishes itself by the excellence of its grasp of the material and the precision and insight of its argument, in addition to being well executed and reasonably free of errors.
B: Work that satisfies the main criteria of the assignment and demonstrates command of the material, but does not achieve the level of excellence that characterizes work of A quality.
C: Work that demonstrates a rudimentary grasp of the material and satisfies at least some of the assigned criteria reasonably well.
D: Work that demonstrates a poor grasp of the material.
F: Work that is weak in every aspect, demonstrating a basic misunderstanding of the material and/or disregard for the assignment, or work that is plagiarized.

For the department’s official standards, see: [http://history.uoregon.edu/undergraduate/index.php](http://history.uoregon.edu/undergraduate/index.php).

For graduate students: A = work that distinguishes itself by its excellent grasp of the material, the precision and insight of its argument, and good to excellent writing skills. B = work that satisfies the main criteria of the assignment and demonstrates command of the material but does not achieve excellence. Grades of C-F are failing grades.
Final Exam (100 points)
The final exam will have three sections: a matching-identification section, a mapping section, and an essay section. In the matching section, you will match a name, place, or term to the best statement identifying it. In the mapping section, you will identify the location where historic events took place on a map. In the essay section, you will write extended answers to two questions. You will have a choice of questions to answer, and you must write a coherent essay on each, drawing on the lectures and readings for the class. Each essay will be graded on the basis of the argument you make, the evidence you use to support your argument, your demonstrated understanding of the information and historical interpretations provided both in class and in the readings, and the overall coherence of the essay. We will discuss the exam format in more detail during an in-class review session. To help you focus your studying, I will give you a long list of possible questions and a list of names/places/terms from which the actual exam questions will be chosen. I will also give a series of ungraded pop quizzes over the course of the quarter to help you prepare for the objective sections of the exam.

Term Project—Undergraduates (100 points)
In Special Collections at the Knight Library, select three journals or diaries (or similar daily accounts) of people from three different parties who journeyed to Oregon between 1836 and 1869. The three journeys may have been via the Oregon Trail or the sea, but don’t mix the two. (You may also—or instead—use published journals or on-line journals from an archival website, with my advance approval, but I strongly prefer that you do at least some of the work in the UO archive.) Immerse yourself in the three diaries, paying particular attention to the five course themes, differences and similarities among the three experiences, and issues such as class, race, gender, and ethnicity. Then write an 8-10 page history that makes an argument about the history of the Oregon Trail (or the water route), based on the experiences of your travelers. I will provide a handout with additional guidance early in the term. You must submit a one-page proposal that lists the diaries you intend to use, with complete bibliographical citations (including URLs, if applicable), and the question(s) you hope the diaries will answer. The proposal is due Oct. 17; failure to submit a proposal will result in a 5-point deduction from your term-paper grade. The final paper is due by 2 p.m. on Nov. 28, through Safe Assign. (Option 2: You may choose another trail such as the Bozeman Trail, the Santa Fe Trail, the Mormon Trail, the Spanish Trail, the California Trail, or the southern route blazed by the Mormon Battalion, or travel by sea to the California gold fields, written between 1822 and 1870. For this option, you may use published or on-line archival sources. All of the instructions above apply.) Due by 5 p.m., Friday, Nov. 30, through Safe Assign.

►Term Project—Graduate Students (100 points)
This assignment has two parts. Please visit me during my office hours by the end of Week 3 to discuss the books you intend to read. (PART 1) You will write a 750-word critical review of a scholarly monograph on nineteenth-century U.S. western history that has been published within the last five years. I will provide a handout with guidelines for writing book reviews. This book review (hard copy) is due by 2 p.m. on Oct. 17. (PART 2) You will write a 3000-word extended review essay on three books that together focus on any topic on nineteenth-century U.S. western history, but it must be on a topic that’s different from the book you review in Part 1. For help in choosing your topic, consult Richard White’s It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own, Howard Lamar’s New Encyclopedia of the American West, The Oxford History of the
American West, and/or the Western Historical Quarterly. One of the three books must be a classic in the historiography of the American West, and the other two should be scholarly books published since 2000. For examples of extended review essays, consult Reviews in American History. Due by 5 p.m., Friday, Nov. 30, through Safe Assign.

**SHORT ANALYTICAL PAPERS** (50 points each, for a total of 200 points)
For three of the four books we read, you will write a 750-word analytical paper. Analyze a theme or issue you think is important, interesting, provocative, or surprising in the book. The point is to think deeply about one of the issues that the author raises, or perhaps the book’s argument or “big idea,” and analyze it. Please submit your paper through Safe Assign by 2 p.m. on the day that the paper is due. **Tip:** I am not looking for a “book report,” a synopsis of the book, or a discussion of whether or not you liked the book, any of which will merit a C, at best. I want analysis.

**Undergraduates:** For the fourth book, Letters of a Woman Homesteader, we will watch an episode (#2) of the PBS series Frontier House, and you will watch an additional episode of your choice from episodes 3-5 at Knight Library. I will also post several 10-minute clips from episode 1 on Blackboard, so that you can see how experts in 19th-century life tried to prepare them to survive for five months in Montana without the amenities of the 21st century. After reading the book and watching these episodes, you will write a 750-word paper comparing the primary source to the experiences of modern-day families who were part of the televised simulation. I will provide additional guidance in class.

► **Graduate students:** Instead of comparing Letters of a Woman Homesteader to Frontier House, you will watch the c. 1980 movie Heartland, starring Conchetta Ferrell and Rip Torn, available through Knight Library and Netflix. These two representations of history are quite different on the surface, yet they are in essence the same story. Your task will be to explain how they relate to one another.

**CLASS PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE** (50 points)
The participation grade will be based on attendance and discussion in class. I strongly recommend that you complete the readings posted on Blackboard before the beginning of class each week (or the lecture to which the readings apply). I may ask you to contribute to a discussion of some of the issues raised in lecture, and the readings will help you participate in these impromptu discussions. For each book we read, be prepared to discuss the book the day that the paper is due, as indicated in the syllabus.

► **Graduate students:** We will schedule a one-hour group tutorial to discuss the additional readings in week 3, week 5, and week 10.

Additionally, **attendance is required.** Absences will affect your participation grade. **More than four absences may result in an F in the course.** Exceptions will be made only in the event of a documented university-sponsored activity or a protracted illness, at my discretion. On the other hand, if you have the flu or another contagious illness, we would all appreciate it if you would stay home. Email me and count those days among your four absences. Doctor’s appointments—except in the event of an emergency or injury or in association with a contagious or protracted
illness—do not count as excused absences. I do not want documentation of your absences, except in the following instances: (1) you need to submit a late assignment or take a make-up exam; (2) you participated in a university-sponsored activity; (3) you’ve had a prolonged absence due to a protracted or contagious illness or another calamity that you can document. Leaving early or arriving after the lecture has begun will count as an absence.

**Formatting Papers and Citations**
All papers should be double-spaced with one-inch margins and a Times New Roman 12-point font. Indent the beginning of each paragraph by 5 spaces. Do not add a space between paragraphs. (Microsoft’s default format is 1.5 spaces with an extra space between paragraphs, so you need to reset those defaults.)

Citations: If you’re identifying a quotation within an assigned book, you should simply cite the page number in parentheses at the end of the sentence. In all other instances, please use the Chicago Manual of Style citation method (see Blackboard).

**Class Policies**

**Electronic devices:** Please turn off all electronic devices (including computers, except for a documented disability) while in class. Ringing cell phones are my pet peeve; they disturb your classmates and me. Please do not text-message in class. Repeated failure to turn off your electronic devices may result in dismissal from the classroom. I also request that you arrive on time and stay until the end of class.

**Make-Up policies:** I do not accept graded course work after the class period for which the assignment is due, and a missed deadline will result in an F on the assignment. Make up exams and late essays will be accepted only for a documented excused absence due to illness, a documented severe illness or death in your family, or a documented school-sponsored activity in which you are officially representing UO. **No other excuses will be accepted.** The one exception is the final paper; I will accept it up to the date of the final exam, but will deduct 5 points for each day it is late, including weekends. If you anticipate having to miss class, I always accept assignments early, but you must turn in a hard copy. I do not accept emailed assignments; please plan ahead so that you successfully print your work before class.

**I take plagiarism very seriously.** All work that you turn in must be your own. Any work submitted for credit that includes the words or ideas of anyone else must fully and accurately identify your source with a citation. (By the way, submitting the same paper to more than one class for credit is also academic misconduct.) If you are confused about this or do not understand the consequences of academic dishonesty at the UO—or the ethical issues behind these university policies—please read these guidelines: [http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/](http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/)

In the event of an act of plagiarism, I will impose sanctions, as provided in: [http://studentlife.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/StudentConductCode/tabid/69/Default.aspx#Academic_Misconduct](http://studentlife.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/StudentConductCode/tabid/69/Default.aspx#Academic_Misconduct). The minimum sanction will be an F on the assignment, but plagiarism can also merit an F in the course, even for a first offense.
Accommodations: If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please arrange to see me soon. Request a letter from Disability Services that verifies your disability.

“It's the only way to go, Frank. Why, my life's changed, ever since I discovered Stackable Livestock."  
©Gary Larson, Creator’s Syndicate.
WEEKLY LECTURES AND ASSIGNMENTS

Adjustments to the lecture schedule may occur at my discretion and will be announced in class.

Week 1: Looking Westward
M ♦ (Sept. 24): Frederick Jackson Turner and the American Frontier
W ♦ (Sept. 26): The Explorations of Lewis and Clark
Reading Assignment:
Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” (B)
▶️ Graduate students:

Week 2: Rendezvous with Destiny
M♦ (Oct. 1): The Fur trade
W ♦ (Oct. 3): NO CLASS—Explore your term project
Reading Assignment:
▶️ Graduate students:

Week 3: As Long as the Rivers Run
M♦ (Oct. 8): Discussion of Lewis and Clark among the Indians/term project
Paper on Lewis and Clark Among the Indians due by 2 p.m. through Safe Assign
W♦ (Oct. 10): Indian Removal and the Creation of Indian Territory
Reading Assignment:
Rhonda, Lewis and Clark Among the Indians (entire)
▶️ Additional graduate student tutorial, time and place TBA.
▶️ Deadline: meet with me by my Wed. office hours to discuss your final project book selections.

©Bill Watterson, reproduced with permission from Universal Uclick.
Week 4: The Border Crossed Us
M♦ (Oct. 15): Borders and Frontiers
W♦ (Oct. 17): U.S.-Mexico War
Term paper proposal due at the beginning of class (hard copy) (undergraduates)
►Graduate students: Book review due by 2 p.m., through Safe Assign
Reading Assignment:
  John C. Calhoun, “Opposes Incorporating Mexico” (B)
  John A. Dix, “Advocates Expansion onto Mexican Lands” (B)
  Ramón Martínez Caro, “True Account of the First Texas Campaign” (B)
  Randy Roberts and James S. Olson, “The Third Battle of the Alamo,” from A Line in the Sand: The Alamo in Blood and Memory (2001) (B)
►Graduate students:
  Randy Roberts and James S. Olson, “Retrieving the Bones of History,” from A Line in the Sand: The Alamo in Blood and Memory (2001) (B)

Week 5: Outposts
M♦ (Oct. 22): Of Pigs and Peace/Book discussion
  Paper on Sleuthing the Alamo due by 2 p.m. through Safe Assign
W♦ (Oct. 24): Theocracy in a Desert Enclave
Reading Assignment:
  James Crisp, Sleuthing the Alamo: Davy Crockett’s Last Stand and Other Mysteries of the Texas Revolution (entire)
►Additional graduate student tutorial, time and place TBA

Week 6: O Pioneers
M♦ (Oct. 29): Emigrant Trails
W♦ (Oct. 31): Screening: Frontier House
Watch one additional episode of Frontier House on your own
Reading Assignment:
  West, The Contested Plains (this one is long, so get started!)

Week 7: The World Rushed In
M♦ (Nov. 5): Chinese Immigrants
W♦ (Nov. 7): Mother Lode
Reading Assignment:
  West, The Contested Plains
Week 8: Westward Expansion
M ♦ (Nov. 12): Civil War and the West/Discussion of The Contested Plains
Papers on The Contested Plains due by 2 p.m. through Safe Assign

W♦ (Nov. 14): Home on the Range
Reading Assignment:
West, The Contested Plains (entire)
Cowboy ballads (B)

Week 9: Newcomers
M♦ (Nov. 19): Sodbusters and Populists/Discussion of Letters of a Woman Homesteader
Papers on Letters of a Woman Homesteader due by 2 p.m. through Safe Assign

W♦ (Nov. 21): NO CLASS—Work on your final project!
Reading Assignment:
Stewart, Letters of a Woman Homesteader

Week 10: Gunfighter Nation
M ♦ (Nov. 26): Violent Ends/Review
W♦ (Nov. 28): Print the Legend
Reading Assignment:
► Graduate students:

Term projects due by 5 p.m., Friday, Nov. 30.
► Additional graduate student tutorial, time and place TBA

FINALS WEEK ► M ♦ (Dec. 3, 3:15 p.m.): Final Exam

-----------------------------------

DATES TO REMEMBER

Oct. 3 No class
Oct. 8 Lewis and Clark paper due
Oct. 17 Term paper proposal due (undergrads)
1st book review due (graduates)
Oct. 22 Sleuthing the Alamo paper due
Nov. 12 Contested Plains paper due
Nov. 19 Letters of a Woman Homesteader paper due
Nov. 21 No class
Nov. 30 (Fri.) Term paper due, 5 p.m.
Dec. 3 Final exam (3:15-5:15)