

HSTR 310D The American West – Subject to change

“The West is America – only more so.” -Wallace Stegner

This course looks at the historical reality and the myth of the American west. We look at the history of the west in the European imagination and the Spanish, French and English claims; the shifting frontier from the colonial era onward; the frontier hero and the mountain men; the Texas Revolution, Mexican American War and Civil War; the Mormon migration and the Utah war; Oregon and California, exploration, and native displacement. Topics include the frontiersmen, the gunfighter, violence, environmental struggles, resources, politics, identity and the rich paradoxes of this region and of the United States. We will use some film, some discussion and readings to try to capture the subjective reality of what this region is and how it shaped those who settled it and how it shaped the United States.

OR:

History 310 is a survey of the main events and issues of the American West, with a focus on the frontier west of the 19th Century. We will pay considerable attention to the idea of the West, the construction of the frontier hero, the acquisition, settlement and development of the region, its violence and economics. We will look at environmental issues and briefly cover the main issues of the 20th century. We will use some film, some discussion and readings to try to capture the subjective reality of what this region is and how it shaped those who settled it and how it shaped the United States.

Text:

Frontiers: A Short History of the American West Robert V. Hine and John Mack Faragher

As well as the above, there will be additional readings most weeks. They are all links on the course website.

Evaluation

Your choice of a Presentation [or] short essay [or] midterm quiz: 20

Essay: 35

Reading Summaries: 10

Final Exam: 35