HIS 606B: U.S. West Since 1849

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Class Time: TTH, 11:30-12:45     Office Hrs: TR, 10-11
Class Location: BEH 221      Location: WRI B325
Credits: 3        Phone: 895-5255

Description:
This course examines the Trans-Mississippi West in the period from the Mexican-American War right up to the very latest political and cultural developments in the region in the early twenty-first century. We will consider the West as the edge of an empire in our coverage of the war against Mexico and the wars against Indian nations. We will also consider the West as an arid and fragile region and examine the connections between environment and political, economic, and cultural developments. While home to many of the nation’s largest “open spaces” the nation’s most environmentally fragile region is also its most metropolitan one and we will examine the role of the West as a metropolitan trend-setter. In addition, as we explore political developments in the region from the Progressive Era to the present, we will consider the West as a region of ideological extremes—from the 1960s and 1970s counterculture to Sunbelt conservatism and the more recent extreme right wing militias. Lastly, we will examine the role the West plays in the national and international consciousness through analysis of representations of the region in art, literature, film, television, and advertizing.

Objectives: The course is designed to provide an understanding of the contemporary U.S. West in deep historical context and an appreciation for regionalism as a category of analysis. In addition, the course is designed to nurture effective writing and critical reading skills.

Required Reading: There are five required books for the course; a novel (Steinbeck), a biography (Worster), a synthetic study (Abbott), a single-authored essay collection (Limerick) and an edited collection (Roche, ed.). Much of the course revolves around discussion of these readings and at least one of these books will become the starting point for your research paper. Please keep up with the course readings assignments; they are clearly outlined in the Course schedule. In addition to the five required books, you will read one more book by one of the authors or contributors to those readings.

Carl Abbott, How Cities Won the West: Four Centuries of Urban Change in Western North America (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008). Abbott’s recently published synthesis of western urban history makes a strong case for the primary importance of cities in the history of the western region, for the distinctiveness of the western urban experience, and for the impact of modern western urban models on the nation. We will read sections of How Cities Won the West throughout the semester. Abbott is generally recognized as the leading historian of western cities.
Patricia Nelson Limerick, *Something in the Soil: Legacies and Reckonings in the New West* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000). Limerick’s collection of essays covers a wide range of topics from Mormonism and the Gold Rush to modern environmentalism. We will read selected essays from the book throughout the semester. Limerick, recipient of a MacArthur Foundation Genius Award, is also the author of *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1987, 2006), which is generally considered to be the seminal text of the New Western History.

Jeff Roche, ed., *The Political Culture of the New West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008). Roche’s collection includes a wide range of essays on the various political arenas—racial, environmental, ideological, economic, etc.—of the contemporary West. Included among the contributors are two members of the UNLV History Department. This book will be our core reading for Part III of the course.

John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath* (New York: Penguin 20th Century Classics, 2006; 1939). Arguably the greatest American novel of the twentieth century, Steinbeck’s masterpiece examines the impact of economic depression and ecological disaster on the Southern Plains, the mass exodus of residents of that region to California, and the terrible conditions they faced in the “Promised Land.” The theme of the “myth of the West” is one of the “five layers” of the novel and one that we will pay special attention to. *The Grapes of Wrath* will be our core reading for Part II of the course.


**Requirements:** There is a midterm (in-class), a final, two book reviews (3 pages, 1000-words maximum, each), and a review essay (5 pages, 1500 words).

Midterm: 10%   Final 25%   Discussion 25%
Book Reviews: 10% each   Review Essay: 20%

Discussions will center on the required course readings. All class members will be responsible for leading at least one discussion of a chapter from one of the course books.

**Grading:** The +/- grading system will be used. The grading scale is as follows:

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Attendance: Attendance is expected in this class. If you do not attend you will not be able to participate in interactive lectures or discussions, and thus will be unfamiliar with the topical coverage provided in class, and this will lead to poor performance on exams and paper assignments. If your unexcused absences exceed more than twice the number of weekly meetings (i.e. four absences) you can be administratively dropped from the course; at the very least your discussion grade will be lowered significantly by poor attendance. All legitimate absences (e.g., medical, family emergencies) are excusable.

Discussion: You should come to each class prepared to discuss the assigned readings. There is a direct causal relationship between the ability to discuss the readings intelligently and actually having read them. I may, on an impromptu basis, call on individuals to introduce us to the key themes of any particular chapter; please be prepared for this and expect, as graduate students, to be called on regularly. You will deliver a brief presentation on your short research paper and your performance will be factored into your discussion grade.

Midterm & Final Exams: The midterm is an-class exam (75 minutes) comprised of 7 TRIAD sets; you will write on 4. You will not do the take-home essay portion of the exam (a requirement for students in HIST 406B), but your first book review or your review essay will be due the same day as the undergraduates’ take-home exam. The final consists of an essay on course readings, 2 TRIAD sets and 2 “Reading Comprehension” (RC) sets; you will have 4 TRIADS and 4 RCs to choose from. The final is not comprehensive; it covers just the themes and readings studied since the midterm.

The exams are designed to gauge your understanding of and reflection upon the material, not merely your memorization skills. The essay on the final requires you to reflect carefully on the readings and arrive at conclusions of your own. TRIADS require you to identify each of the three items in the set, explain their significance and connections. RC’s are each comprised of 3-4 questions on a passage from the course readings: the first questions ask you to identify the passage and its historical context; subsequent questions ask you to analyze the passage’s meaning and relate it to broad course themes.

Book Reviews and Review Essay: You will write two short (3-page, 1,000 word maximum) book reviews of required course books (excluding The Grapes of Wrath) and a short review essay (5-page, 1,500 words maximum) review essay covering one course book and your additional book. Reviews must be typed (in 12 point Times New Roman font), double-spaced, grammatically sound, and carefully proofed. Direct quotations, and/or paraphrasing should be cited in footnotes or endnotes. The review essay must have a title that reflects the key theme/s or question/s that it addresses. Please take a look at the journal Reviews in American History for examples of review essays. Also, see Appendix 1: Guidelines for Writing Book Reviews, and Appendix 2: Guide to Effective Paper Writing. Also take a moment to read “Limerick’s Rules of Verbal Etiquette.”

Active Reading: Take the time to read assigned materials carefully and actively. It is often helpful, for example, to make marginal comments in the books. If you disagree with a particular point that an author is making, then make a note to that effect in the
margin. You will find it helpful to write a brief summary of each chapter as you complete it. Consider the following questions:
1) What major points is the author trying to make?
2) What kinds of evidence does the author use to support his/her arguments?
3) What are the author's biases, preferences, and viewpoint?
4) How does the author's coverage compare with class coverage and with other readings?

**Academic Misconduct:** “Academic integrity is a legitimate concern for every member of the campus community; all share in upholding the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility and professionalism. By choosing to join the UNLV community, students accept the expectations of the Academic Misconduct Policy and are encouraged when faced with choices to always take the ethical path. Students enrolling in UNLV assume the obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with UNLV’s function as an educational institution.”

An example of academic misconduct is plagiarism: “Using the words or ideas of another, from the Internet or any source, without proper citation of the sources.” See the “Student Academic Misconduct Policy” (approved December 9, 2005) located at: http://studentlife.unlv.edu/judicial/misconductPolicy.html.

**Copyright:** The University requires all members of the University Community to familiarize themselves and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. **You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. The university will neither protect nor defend you nor assume any responsibility for employee or student violations of fair use laws.** Violations of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability, as well as disciplinary action under University policies. To familiarize yourself with copyright and fair use policies, you are encouraged to visit the following website: http://www.unlv.edu/committees/copyright/.

**Disability Resource Center (DRC):** The Disability Resource Center (DRC) coordinates all academic accommodations for students with documented disabilities. The DRC is the official office to review and house disability documentation for students, and to provide them with an official Academic Accommodation Plan to present to the faculty if an accommodation is warranted. Faculty should not provide students accommodations without being in receipt of this plan.

UNLV complies with the provisions set forth in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, offering reasonable accommodations to qualified students with documented disabilities. If you have a documented disability that may require accommodations, you will need to contact the DRC for the coordination of services. The DRC is located in the Student Services Complex (SSC), Room 137, and the contact numbers are: Voice (702) 895-0866, TTY (702) 895-0652, fax (702) 895-0651. For additional information, please visit: http://studentlife.unlv.edu/disability/.
**Religious Holidays**: If you miss a class assignment because of observance of a religious holiday you will have the opportunity to make it up. To be assured of this opportunity, please inform me of anticipated absences by Tuesday, January 20.

**Extracurricular Activities**: Students who represent UNLV at any official extracurricular activity shall have the opportunity to make up assignments, but the student must provide me with official written notification no less than one week prior to the missed classes.

**Teaching and Learning Center**: [http://tlc.unlv.edu/student_success.htm](http://tlc.unlv.edu/student_success.htm)

**Rebel Mail**: According to university policy I will only e-mail your Rebel Mail account. You are responsible for checking your Rebel Mail account.

**Additional Meetings**: We will meet 6-7 times as a group to discuss additional readings.
Tentative Class Schedule and Reading Assignments

Part I: 1840s-1900: From Empire to Empire

Wk. 1: T, Jan. 13: Course Introduction: Where’s the West?
Reading: No Reading!
Wk. 1: R, Jan. 15: The West & America: Empires, Frontiers, Regions, and Memory
Reading: Limerick, “Introduction.”

Wk. 2: T, Jan. 20: Indian Wars and the Making of the West
Reading: Limerick, “Haunted America”; Worster, Prologue & Ch’s. 1 & 2
Wk. 2: R, Jan. 22: Gold Rushes & Consequences
Reading: Limerick, “John Sutter” and “The Gold Rush”; Worster, Ch. 3

Wk. 3: T, Jan. 27: Imagining the West into Being: Promoting Settlement
Reading: Abbott, “Introduction;” Worster, Ch’s. 4, 5 & 6
Wk. 3: R, Jan. 29: Remembering the Western Past: Mythology and Collective Memory
Reading: Abbott, Ch. 1; Roche, ed., Ch. 12; Worster, Ch. 7

Wk. 4: T, Feb. 3: The Growth of A Region: Western Development, 1862-1900
Reading: Worster, Ch. 8, 9 & 10
Wk. 4: R, Feb. 5: Consequences of Western Development, Pt. I: John Muir Discussion
Reading: Worster, Ch. 11

Wk. 5: T, Feb. 10: Western History Sources in Lied Library
Reading: Worster, Ch’s. 12, & 13
Wk. 5: R, Feb. 12: Consequences of Western Development, Pt. II: John Muir Discussion
Reading: Worster, Ch. 14 & Epilogue

Part II: 1900-1945: New West to New Deal & World War II

Wk. 6: T, Feb. 17: Midterm Exam, in-class portion
Reading: No Reading!
Reading: No Reading!

Wk. 7: T, Feb. 24: The Progressive West, & The Urban West, I: Abbott Discussion
Reading: Abbott, “Transitions” & Ch’s. 3-7
Wk. 7: R, Feb. 26: The Urban West, II: Abbott Discussion
Reading: Abbott, Ch’s. 8-9, “Transitions” & Ch. 10

Wk. 8: T, Mar. 3: The Reactionary West: Alien Land Laws, the Klan & Eugenics
Reading: Steinbeck, “Introduction” (by DeMott)
Wk. 8: R, Mar. 5: Great Depression & New Deals: We Have a Plan
Reading: Steinbeck, Ch’s. 1-7
Wk. 9: T, Mar. 10:  *The Grapes of Wrath*, I: Discussion  
Reading: Steinbeck, Ch’s. 8-16  
Reading: Steinbeck, Ch’s. 17-20; Roche, ed., Ch. 5

Reading: Steinbeck, Ch’s. 21-26  
Reading: Steinbeck, Ch’s. 27-30; Limerick, “Disorientation & Reorientation”

**Part III: 1945-Present: Cold War West to Contemporary West**

Wk. 11: T, Mar 24: The Modern Urban West, I  
Reading: Abbott, Ch’s. 11-14  
Wk. 11: R, Mar. 26: The Modern Urban West, II  
Reading: Abbott, Ch. 15 & “Conclusion”  
**Book Review or Review Essay Due**

Wk. 12: T, Mar. 31: The Cold War West: Nevada Test Site Oral History Project  
Reading: Roche, ed., Ch’s. 3, 4 & 8  
Wk. 12: R, Apr. 2: Library Research  
Reading: Reading pertinent to your research paper!

**April 6-11: Spring Break**

Reading: No Reading: Research Paper Abstracts Due  
Wk. 13: R, Apr. 16: The Radical West, II: Berkeley in the Sixties, Part II  
Reading: No Reading: Western Universities in the Sixties: Submission of two images with accompanying text for class film. Abstracts returned.

Wk. 14: T, Apr. 21: The Conservative West  
Reading: Roche, ed., “Introduction” & Ch’s. 1 & 2  
Wk. 14: R, Apr. 23: Race & Ethnicity in the Contemporary West  
Reading: Roche, ed., Ch’s. 6-8; Limerick, “Peace Initiative”

Wk. 15: T, Apr. 28: The Contemporary Western Environment  
Reading: Roche, ed., Ch’s. 2 & 9-11; Limerick, “Mission to the Environmentalists”  
Wk. 15: R, Apr. 30: Reflections on a Region  
**Book Review or Review Essay Due**


**Finals Week: May 4-9:** Date of final TBA
Appendix 1: Guidelines for Writing Book Reviews

Introduction
A book review needs to do two things: first, you need to provide sufficient coverage of the content of the book in question for potential readers to decide whether or not they should read the book. Second, you need to critically assess the book’s thesis/es and the evidence used to support it/them. As you go through the steps outlined below, please consider these two crucial goals of your review—content overview and critical assessment.

Steps
1. Your review must include a title that reflects the theme of your review of the book, or the main theme of the book under review. You do not need to provide a separate title page; just place the title at the top of the first page. Following the title, you must provide a full citation to the book, e.g.,
   “Where Seldom Was Heard a Discouraging Word: Television and National Self Congratulation in America’s ‘Happy Days.’”

2. Your review should be approximately three typed, double spaced pages in length (1,000 words maximum). You should use 12-point font.

3. You will have only 5-6 paragraphs in which to describe and assess the content of the book. In your first paragraph you should provide the reader with a clear sense of the broad scope of the book. For example, your essay might begin:
   “Karal Ann Marling examines the role of television and other forms of visual representation in shaping American culture in the 1950s.”
   In this same opening paragraph you should next provide a brief overview of the book’s structure or specific chapters. You do not need to mention every single chapter, but you should give readers a good clear sense of how the book has been put together. For example, you might write:
   “This highly readable and quite provocative book includes chapters on “Disneyland,” Autoeroticism: America’s Love Affair with the Car in the Television Age,” “Betty Crocker,” and “Elvis.”
   Next, you should conclude this opening paragraph with a key quotation from the book that sums up the author’s thesis. For example:
   Marling notes that “Life in the 1950s imitated art—as seen on TV.”

4. In the next paragraph or two of the paper you should provide fuller, more detailed coverage of the content of the book. You might decide to focus on just two or three of the book’s chapters, or might provide coverage of most or all of the book’s major topics. However you choose to construct these paragraphs summarizing the content of the book, be sure that a reader would be able to decide from your summary whether or not to read this book. If you are reviewing a collection of essays by a single author, or an edited
essay collection with multiple contributors, you cannot provide extensive coverage of all of the essays, so make a mention of all, but focus your attention on four to six of them.

5. In the next two paragraphs you should assess the argument/s of the book and comment on the evidence provided in support of it/them. Are you convinced by what the author has to say? Has the author effectively supported his/her arguments with appropriate evidence and/or logical reasoning? What topics, issues, or themes has the author left out that might lead us to different conclusions or interpretations?

6. In your final paragraph you should provide a strong summary of the book’s merits and shortcomings. Who would want to read this book? Is it an important book? Do you recommend it highly, only lukewarmly, or not at all? Could the book have been any better; and if so, how?

7. In the course of your review be sure to provide a few poignant quotations that help illustrate the author’s perspective or key arguments. Do not quote excessively and avoid long block quotations.

Finding Scholarly Reviews
8. Finally, either in the opening paragraph or in the closing paragraph, you should provide some discussion of book reviews of the work under consideration written by professional scholars. These book reviews can be found through an electronic database search. Follow the steps below:
   a) Go to the Library Home Page
   b) Click on Find Articles and More
   c) Click on the letter J
   d) Click JSTOR Fulltext
   e) Click on Search
   f) Type in the book title (in quotation marks) or author name
   g) Click on History and/or other pertinent disciplines from the list provided
   h) Under the section called Limit by Type, click on Reviews
   i) Click on Begin Search

In addition, you can search for reviews in the Book Review Digest, which is also available in electronic form. The Book Review Digest “provides citations and excerpts of reviews of current English-language fiction and nonfiction books for children and adults. An abstract of each book is also provided. To be indexed in Book Review Digest, a book must have been published or distributed in the United States or Canada. A work of nonfiction must have received reviews in two or more of the periodicals on the Book Review Digest selection list. A work of fiction must have received reviews in at least three of the periodicals. Reviews of textbooks, government publications, and technical books in law and the sciences are excluded.”

To get to the Book Review Digest follow the steps below:
   a) Go to the Library Home Page
   b) Click on Find Articles and More
   c) Click on the letter B
Lastly, you can find citations to the major reviews of scholarly books in a reference work titled *Book Review Index*. These yellow and blue colored volumes are in the Lied Library reference section. Go to the volume for the year the book was published and for the year after the book’s publication. Then look up the book title and/or author. You will find a listing of the journals where reviews of the work have appeared. These citations will include the title of the journal, the volume number, and the page number/s of the review.

Please note that non-scholarly reviews of books from sources such as Amazon.com are not acceptable sources. Also, please bear in mind that you should read the book and write your review prior to consulting the published scholarly reviews; otherwise, you may be influenced by the published reviews to the point where your own review loses any originality. Also, please be aware that you must be sure to place any quoted material from those scholarly book reviews in quotation marks. You are required to attach to your paper a printout of the reviews you have consulted.

**Appendix 2: Guide to Effective Paper Writing:**

**I: Theme Development (Pre-writing):** Papers need to be driven by a key theme or argument. Effective theme construction becomes possible only after reasoned reflection on the topic. As part of this reflective process consider the following guidelines:

1) Consider what you want to say before you begin; do not “make it up” as you go along.

2) Consider developing a paragraph-by-paragraph outline for the paper.

3) Think of an appropriate title. Thinking about titles can assist in theme construction and development.

4) Do not worry if there are loose ends in your thought processes before you begin writing; writing is part of the creative process, too, not just a mechanical exercise.

**II: Draft Writing:** Having reflected on the theme of your paper and the appropriate content to be covered, and having constructed a fairly detailed outline, you should begin writing a first draft. Consider the following guidelines as you write this draft:

1) Make sure your opening paragraph clearly outlines both the scope of your paper (the general content/issues to be covered) and its theme or argument.

2) If your essay draws on the work of other scholars, then make sure you demonstrate to the reader that you understand the themes/arguments presented in those works.

3) The bulk of your paper should present the relevant information/evidence necessary to flesh out the theme, or lend weight to the argument that you are making.
4) This presentation of evidence may include quotations from sources. Effective quotation is a delicate matter that requires great care. To quote a few lines from a source simply because they sound good, without fully comprehending their meaning or context, is very unwise. Instead, you should quote material that provides a sure indication of the point of view, or of some key point, or integral element of the author’s argument. Avoid long block quotations whenever possible. Short quotations, interspersed into your own narrative are effective and do not break up your narrative flow.

5) As you write the final paragraphs of your paper, make sure you have developed a strong conclusion. A concluding paragraph is most successful when it succinctly summarizes the information presented in the paper without sounding repetitious, and then closes with a strong, even memorable, sentence or two.

III: Rewriting: Having reflected on the paper's theme and content and written a draft, you may be halfway through the assigned task. Consider the following guidelines as you turn your draft into an effective paper:

1) Set aside your first draft for a day and then come back to it. Distancing yourself from the paper (for a day or two, even an hour or two) will help you to assess its merits.

2) Read through the draft and check each of the guidelines under section II (above): Is your opening paragraph clear and effective? Have you demonstrated an understanding of the sources you draw on? Have you presented sufficient evidence/information to support your argument/develop your theme? Does the quoted material serve its proper purpose, i.e., does it illustrate key points/arguments(points of view)? Does the paper’s conclusion seem convincing to you the as you read it the next day?

3) If you find any shortcomings in the draft (and you almost certainly will) then correct them. This redrafting process may include a thorough rewriting of the whole paper, or rewriting of a few sections, or the re-ordering of certain paragraphs. You may even find that you need to reconsider your title. Remember: you are correcting a draft, so be hard on yourself, find every shortcoming you can.

4) Also check the draft carefully for grammatical shortcomings. Use the spelling and grammar function on the computer, but remember that computerized spelling and grammar checks are far from perfect; you should also proofread a printout of your paper. Are your tenses consistent? Is your sentence construction effective, i.e. do your sentences read smoothly and make perfect sense? Have you carefully divided material into paragraphs? Do you have strong transitional sentences to lead the reader from one paragraph to the next?

5) Now you should have in front of you a complete second draft of your paper. Whether you submit the second draft of you paper, or continue to go through the process outlined above, is your decision. Generally, the more drafts a paper goes through, the more effective the work becomes.