HIS 345: The American West

Spring 2019

Dr. Hunter Hampton
email: hamptonh@sfasu.edu
Office: LAN 346
Tel: 468-3802
Office Hours: MWF 10am-12pm

Course Description
This course provides a history of the American West. Through this course we will explore the major themes current in the field of Western history today. These themes include, but are not limited to, the articulation of race, gender, class and the environment in shaping the region’s history. This course will introduce students to the processes that transformed control of North America from the fifteenth through the twentieth centuries, blending borderlands and traditional western scholarship. By focusing on the edges of societies and empires, students will develop a more complex vision of the interactions that produced the present-day United States. Viewed through these lenses, we will attempt to form a working understanding of the West and its complex history that transcends the “mythical West” common in US popular culture.

Course Goals and Student Learning Outcomes

1. To provide you with an overview of American West, focusing on culture to understand the development of modern America.
2. To make history more interesting than the regurgitation of names and dates.
3. To encourage creativity by allowing you to answer complex questions with a variety of correct answers.
4. To train critical thinking by reading, analyzing, and discussing documents from the past.
5. To develop clear and concise writing skills.

Texts and Materials

- William Cronon, Changes in the Land
- John Krakauer Under the Banner of Heaven
- Timothy Egan, The Worst Hard Time
- Joy Kasson, Buffalo Bill’s Wild West
- Phillip Deloria, Playing Indian
- Various readings on D2L.
Course Responsibilities

You are responsible for all registration deadlines. All of the assignments are required. To pass this class you must complete and turn in all of the assignments. Also, course schedules occasionally change and all major changes will be announced on D2L. Other than opportunities I provide for the entire class, no extra credit assignments will be offered during the course of the semester, after the semester is over, or on an individual basis. All work must be submitted by the due date. Late work will incur a ten-point penalty for each day past the due date.

Lectures: The lectures are your opportunity to learn the key topics and themes of the class. It is imperative that you take a good set of lecture notes. Taking good quality notes is not easy. It is important that you show up to class rested and prepared to take a few pages of notes in a 75-minute period. I suggest that come see me early in the semester if you have any questions about notes to make sure that you are getting the most important themes.

Readings: Each week, you will be asked to read primary sources, academic articles, primary sources, or some combination thereof. It is essential for you to stay on top of the reading. Without completing the reading, you will not be able to succeed in the course. The readings for the course were chosen carefully in order to enhance your understanding of American history and life. The readings should do a number of things: 1) Teach you something new; 2) Frustrate you. We are dealing with people from the past and, inevitably, one of them will say something that you find offensive; 3) Challenge you to think about American history in a different light.

Discussion: In the discussion sections you will have the opportunity to explore the themes of the lectures by discussing your readings. The discussions are also an opportunity for you to meet and learn from your fellow classmates.

Assignments and Grades

The assignment breakdown for this semester is as follows:

- **Midterm Exam [15%]**
  The exam will consist of short answer questions and an essay question. The midterm will cover lecture material from the first half of the course. Be sure to purchase a blue book (available at the bookstore) for the exam. Please use pen (blue or black ink only please) on the exam.

- **Book Review [15%]**
  You will write one short (750-1000 words) book review over one of the assigned books for the semester. You will sign up for the book you want to review during the second week of class. Specific instructions for this assignments will be on D2L. All papers must be turned in through the D2L dropbox.

- **Film Review [15%]**
  You will write two short (500 word) reviews over *High Noon* (1952) and *Little Big Man* (1970). We will watch both films in class and use them as avenues into the history—and myth—of
the West. Specific instructions for both assignments will be on D2L. All papers must be turned in through the D2L dropbox.

• Quizzes [15%]
  You will take quizzes this semester over the readings. Throughout the semester we will have a number of days on which additional outside articles have been assigned. Any day that we have this type of assignment, be prepared to take a quiz over the readings, and be prepared to discuss the readings. You may use your notes on these quizzes, BUT NOT THE BOOKS/ARTICLES THEMSELVES.

• Research Paper [35%]
  You will a (2500-3000 word) research paper as the main project for the course. Students will read two consecutive weeks’ worth of a daily Texas newspaper published at any point between 1876 and 1990, and write a paper of approximately ten to twelve pages describing what its news reporting, commentary, and advertisements suggest about that town or city’s political, economic, social, and cultural history in that era. They should be particularly attentive to how well the newspaper reflects broader regional and national developments discussed in class and reading assignments. Specific instructions for this assignment will be on D2L.

• Participation [5%]
  This class combines a traditional lecture format with intensive discussions of outside readings. To promote an active learning environment students must participate in class by asking pertinent questions and adding their voices to class discussions.

Program Learning Outcomes:
The SFA History Department has identified the following Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) for all SFA students earning a B.A. degree in History:

1. The student will evaluate the role of the historian in society.
2. The student will assess the significance of historical events/phenomena and analyze their historical contexts.
3. The student will locate, identify, and critically analyze primary and secondary sources appropriate for historical research.
4. The student will interpret evidence found within primary sources and place those sources within their appropriate historical context.
5. The student will effectively communicate historical arguments in support of a central thesis, including the proper citation of sources using the most recent edition of the Chicago Manual of Style.

This course will incorporate to varying degrees each of these PLOs.

Academic Integrity [A-9.1]
Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.
Definition of Academic Dishonesty
Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one’s own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one’s paper without giving the author due credit. Please read the complete policy at http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp.

Students with Disabilities
To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/.

Withheld Grades (Semester Grades Policy, A-54)
Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.
## HIS 345 Semester Calendar

Dates may change at the discretion of the instructor.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/23</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Read: Course Introduction module content, notably syllabus and Semester Calendar.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/28</td>
<td>Old West, New West</td>
<td>Read: Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History;” Worster, “New West, True West;” Nugent, “Where is the American West?”</td>
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<td>1/30</td>
<td>Film: High Noon</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/4</td>
<td>Finish High Noon and Discussion</td>
<td>Read: Changes in the Land, chapters Introduction-4</td>
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<td>2/6</td>
<td>A New World Begins</td>
<td>Due: Film review of High Noon Friday 11:59pm on D2L.</td>
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<td>2/11</td>
<td>Contest of Cultures</td>
<td>Read: Changes in the Land, chapters 5-8</td>
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<td>2/13</td>
<td>Quiz and Discussion over Changes in the Land</td>
<td>Overview of research paper</td>
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<td>2/18</td>
<td>The Struggle of Empires</td>
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<td>2/20</td>
<td>The Land and Its Markets</td>
<td>Due: Book review of Changes in the Land Friday 11:59pm on D2L.</td>
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<td>2/25</td>
<td>From Texas to Oregon</td>
<td>Read: Under the Banner of Heaven, chapters 1, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12</td>
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<td>2/27</td>
<td>War and Destiny</td>
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<td>3/4</td>
<td>Quiz and discussion over Under the Banner of Heaven</td>
<td>Organizing your research paper</td>
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<td>3/6</td>
<td>Mining Frontiers</td>
<td>Due: Book review of Under the Banner of Heaven Friday 11:59pm on D2L.</td>
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<td>3/11</td>
<td>The Power of the Road</td>
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<td>3/13</td>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
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<td>3/18</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
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<td>3/20</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/25</td>
<td>Watch Little Big Man</td>
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<td>3/27</td>
<td>Finish Little Big Man and discussion</td>
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<td>4/1</td>
<td>Open Range</td>
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<td>4/3</td>
<td>The Safety Valve</td>
<td>Due: Film review of Little Big Man Friday 11:59pm on D2L.</td>
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<td>Assignment</td>
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<td>4/8</td>
<td>A Search for Community</td>
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| 4/10 | Quiz and Discussion over *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West*  
Discuss selected newspaper |
| 4/15 | The Urban Frontier |
| 4/17 | The West Transformed  
**Due:** Book review of *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West* Friday 11:59pm on D2L. |
| 4/22 | Plunder and Preservation |
| 4/24 | Quiz and Discussion over *Worst Hard Time*  
Discuss research papers |
| 4/29 | Vacationland (guest lecture Dr. Mark Barringer) |
| 5/1  | Cold War West  
**Due:** Book review of *Worst Hard Time* Friday 11:59pm on D2L. |
| 5/6  | Quiz and Discussion over *Playing Indian*  
Discuss research papers |
| 5/8  | The Frontier and West in Our Time |
| 5/17 | Research Paper Due by 11:59pm |

“Americans are forever searching for love  
in forms it never takes, in places it can never be.  
It must have something to do with the vanished frontier.”  
—From *Cat’s Cradle* by Kurt Vonnegut