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**Course Outline for ENG 44**  
**LITERATURE OF THE AMERICAN WEST**  
**Effective: Fall 2008**

**I. CATALOG DESCRIPTION:**

ENG 44 — LITERATURE OF THE AMERICAN WEST — 3.00 units

Critical analysis of the cultural and historical experiences of diverse people of the American West as expressed in their literatures, including the novel, short story, poetry, autobiography, memoirs, as-told-to-narratives, and secondary works. Exploration of interrelationships among peoples and cultures of the West, considering place and community, gender, and ethnicity as given voice in literature. Study of the works of at least three of the following groups: African Americans, Asian Americans, European Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans. Emphasis upon techniques of critical review of and response to literary works, including gaining understanding of one's identity as a Westerner and an American. Prerequisite: English 1A completed with a grade of "C" or higher. 3 hours.

3.00 Units Lecture

**Grading Methods:**

Optional

**Discipline:**

	<b>MIN</b>
<b>Lecture Hours:</b>	54.00
<b>Total Hours:</b>	54.00

**II. NUMBER OF TIMES COURSE MAY BE TAKEN FOR CREDIT:**

**III. PREREQUISITE AND/OR ADVISORY SKILLS:**

**IV. MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES:**

**Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to:**

- A. Demonstrate an appreciation of various cultural and historical perspectives of the American West as reflected in literature drawn from at least three of the following groups:
  1. African Americans
  2. Asian Americans
  3. European Americans
  4. Latinos
  5. Native Americans
- B. Demonstrate familiarity with the various functions of literature (social, historical, personal, and to make cultural commentary and insights)
- C. Analyze and recognize various forms and structures of literary expression
- D. Reason logically about the evidence presented in a literary work
- E. Demonstrate ability to write both objective critical analyses of an subjective responses to literary works
- F. Demonstrate ability to review (describe, analyze, and assess) extra-literary presentations of the American West, whether memoir, nonfiction essay or full-length work, museum exhibit, film, or painting, and relate such "narratives" of the American West to literary/fictional narratives
- G. Respond to human experiences expressed in literature and relate those experiences to own identity and experience as Westerner

**V. CONTENT:**

- A. Reading of literary works that explore the variety of perspectives and experiences of the diverse peoples of the American West and their interrelationships;
- B. Examination of the diversity of cultural, ethnic, and gender perspectives in the American West and of American Western histories and landscapes;
- C. Study of connections between reading, writing, and thinking about literature;
- D. Evaluation of diction, form, and structure of literary works and how these elements of fiction contribute to the writer's purpose;
- E. Exploration and assessment of social, cultural, and rhetorical uses of literary works;
- F. Definition and subsequent practice of appropriate research techniques for obtaining both primary and secondary sources for further study;
- G. Reading of selected sources with a mind to using sources to support small "research project" (oral presentation and/or review);
- H. Connection of content and themes to own life as a Westerner or to knowledge of histories and life experiences typical of the American West.

**VI. METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:**

- A. Quizzes
- B. Small group activities

- C. Films, videos, recordings, guest speakers
- D. Reading of four full-length works, both fiction and nonfiction, as well as shorter works which may include stories, poetry, memoirs, autobiography, as-told-to narratives
- E. Frequent focused reading responses
- F. Writing of two 3-5 page essays and at least one review
- G. Retrospectives of themes from of course, preferably of a finite number of weeks or of a course "unit"
- H. **Discussion** - Guided discussion
- I. In-class writing, whether informal or more focused, as in a midterm or final short answer or essay question response
- J. **Lecture** -

## VII. TYPICAL ASSIGNMENTS:

A. Class activities: 1. Guided discussion: a. Using reading log for today's reading, share passages that intrigued you and discuss what makes them so engaging b. Using Leslie Marmon Silko's "Language and Literature from a Pueblo Indian Perspective" and your text annotations, discuss the Native American relationship to language and storytelling as reflected in N. Scott Momaday's "The Priest of the Sun," from *House Made of Dawn* 2. In-class writing: a. Write an in-class response comparing the "hired girls" to the native-born Americans in Willa Cather's *My Antonia* b. Write an in-class response to the class speaker's presentation of her culture and her personal experience as a Native American, comparing it to Native American stereotypes or misconceptions you are familiar with 3. Small group activities: a. Deliver an oral presentation on a cultural or historical aspect of the American West—curanderos, Japanese internment, cowboy poetry, the railroad—that you and your group have researched b. Discuss an extra-literary text that you and a fellow student are both reviewing, assessing its most important ideas and relating it to what the class has already read 4. Reading: a. Read Jack London's "All Gold Canyon," paying special attention to how nature is treated in each of these stories as you make textual annotations b. Read *The Life and Adventures of Nat Love, Better Known in the Cattle Country as "Deadwood Dick"* and do some Internet research on this story and on black cowboys, making brief handwritten notes on what you find (and avoiding plagiarism). Be prepared to discuss the role of African Americans in the West and how the debate over the veracity of his "true story" does or does not impact your reading of his tale c. Visit the Oakland Museum's California History room and take notes on its presentation of vaquero, farming, and religious cultures of the Southwest. Decide whether its presentation confirms, contradicts, or largely avoids the type of presentation of those cultures in Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima* 5. Writing: a. Write an essay-length analysis of the delineation of Chinese immigrant characters in Bret Harte's "The Heathen Chinese," Wallace Stegner's "The Chink," and Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men* b. Write a book review of William Kittredge's *Who Owns the West?* c. Write a retrospective reflecting on the themes of the first four weeks of class and connecting them to the readings and to your life as a Westerner d. Write a reading log summarizing and responding to "The Grandfather of the Sierra Nevada Mountains" chapter in Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men* e. In preparation for your group's oral presentation on Japanese internment, read the primary and secondary sources your group has identified and write an annotated bibliography of your sources. Be sure to use correct MLA style

## VIII. EVALUATION:

### A. **Methods**

1. Quizzes
2. Class Participation
3. Other:
  - a. Close reading might be evaluated based on:
    1. Performance on quizzes
    2. Depth and frequency of participation in class discussion
    3. Level of detail in textual annotation and post-reading notes
    4. Depth and specificity of response to a passage or idea in a text, and significance of connection of that passage or idea to themes of course, in a reading log
    5. Command of material presented and demonstration of that material's connection to course themes in group oral presentation
    6. Completeness and brevity of summary and sophistication of source assessment in annotated bibliography
  - b. Writing might be evaluated in various ways, depending on the purpose and context for it:
    1. Informal in-class writing might be evaluated based on comprehensiveness of summary of a text or presentation, depth of reflection on it, general fluency
    2. In-class writing for a midterm or final might be evaluated based on depth of reflection on text, mastery of themes of course, synthesized discussion of multiple texts in support of a controlling idea, general fluency and coherence
    3. Take-home essays, reviews, and/or retrospectives should be evaluated more rigorously, with more attention to form. In addition, reviews might be evaluated based on comprehensiveness of summary of extra-literary source material, analysis of its components, and assessment of writer/director/artist/curator's "argument" about American West, general fluency and coherence, command of standard written English

### B. **Frequency**

1. Reading logs or other close reading and response activities (this might include quizzes) should be completed for each class session
2. Three essays, whether literary critical, reviews, or retrospectives, should be spaced evenly throughout course
3. Group oral presentation should be delivered once in semester, at a time to be determined by group and instructor
4. Final exam/project should occur/be submitted at the end of the semester

## IX. TYPICAL TEXTS:

1. Alexie, Sherman *Reservation Blues*, Warner Books, 1996.
2. Anaya, Rudolfo *Bless Me, Ultima*, Warner Books, 1994.
3. Cather, Willa *My Antonia*, Broadview Press, 2003.
4. Doig, Ivan *This House of Sky*, Harcourt Brace, 1987.
5. Kingsolver, Barbara *Animal Dreams*, Harper Collins, 1991.
6. Kingston, Maxine Hong *China Men*, Vintage, 1989.
7. Lyons, Greg, ed. *Literature of the American West*, Longman, 2002.
8. Watts, Edward and David Rachels, eds. *he First West: Writing from the American Frontier, 1776-186*, Oxford UP, 2002.
9. Work, James C. *Prose and Poetry of the American West*, U of Nebraska Press, 1991.

## X. OTHER MATERIALS REQUIRED OF STUDENTS: