

HOUSECS 59.01: Deconstructing the History of the American West

HOUSECS 59.01, Fall 2025
Duke University

Instructor:
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Faculty Advisor:
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Location:
Perkins LINK 088 (Classroom 5)

Class time:
5:15pm-6:45pm on Wednesdays



Course Website

Besides Canvas, this course has an accompanying website that hosts past semester's course content for students to reference for further learning:

<https://zzou21.github.io/AmericanWest/>

Course Description

In U.S. media past and present, the American West has been a symbol of romanticization and individualism. This skewed representation in film, literature, news, and popular culture shadows the American West as a network of complex and multi-lateral interaction among racial, political, economic, industrial, environmental, colonial, urban, and scientific factors. Where was — or is — the West? How much did the Louisiana Purchase actually cost? What was the real motivation when the U.S. and Mexican

governments mentioned Native American communities in the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo? What industries hide behind the theater stages of California's Hollywood? This course reexamines the ways well-known narratives have been taught and told in classrooms and media to peel back the sugarcoats that have engulfed the intricate past of the American West that still affects our communities today.

Land Acknowledgement

A firm understanding of Native American history is the foundation for any U.S. history classroom. This course, and Duke University, takes place on the ancestral land of the Eno, Shakori, Adshusheer, and Occaneechi communities. According to the 2020 Census, Native American communities comprise about 3% of the North Carolina population. Today, Native American people operate businesses, participate in politics, and own lands and homes. This acknowledgement comes with the responsibility of practicing collaborative efforts in learning and respecting Native sovereignty and culture.

Course Summary and Format

For decades, academia and popular culture have been sharing a similar image of the American West. Usually, this image is, in one way or another, a Frederick Jackson Turner-style frontier individualism paired with Buffalo Bill's "Wild West" show. In essence, this is an outdated Anglo-American romanticization founded on ethnocentrism, over-generalization, stereotypes, and masculinity.

This course attempts to reconsider the history of the American West and identify the narratives shadowed by the outdated yet still looming romanticization and exceptionalism. Instead of developing generalizing historical theories, discussions in this course will be centered around case studies of popular narratives. The complication behind the term "the American West" means that our study will include elements from economics, environmental studies, immigration studies, ethnic studies, public policies, Native American sovereignty, and others. Through seminars and interactive activities, each class meeting will be spent covering one of the case studies.

Through interacting with primary and secondary sources — in the forms of text, film, art, and others — we will study history together while developing historical thinking and analysis skills. The field of Western history evolves quickly, and by reading materials from different time periods, we will witness the changing winds in both academic research and public opinions.

Before each class, students will read/watch the assigned materials related to the case study. Each class session will open with a reflection on how American popular culture remembers this narrative followed by the comparison and contrast of it with the parts of this history that are lesser known.

Assignments in this course, as described later on, are highly flexible and will consider suggestions to make customized adjustments to the instructions to fit everyone's academic and artistic interests.

Case studies to be covered:

1. Cost of Louisiana Purchase
2. Greasy Grass/Little Big Horn
3. 18 Unratified Treaties of California
4. Death of Meriwether Lewis
5. Angel Island
6. Chinese Community in Montana amid the Geary Act
7. U.S. Mint in Carson City
8. Wind River Reservation in Wyoming and the Death of Sacagawea
9. California's Oil Industry
10. Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the U.S.-Native American community relations in the Southwest

11. USPS in the West
12. Global West - U.S. in Vietnam and the Philippines
13. The Atomic West

Objectives and Learning Outcomes

- Understand how U.S. history is more than the dichotomy between the North and South, and how this understanding provides new perspectives to approaching narratives in everyday popular media.
- Understanding the difference between “history,” “the past,” and “nostalgia” in the context of U.S. history.¹
- Be able to describe the economic, racial, and political relations between different states, ethnical groups, and industries within the context of the decades.
- Be able to critically evaluate history-related narratives and trends—e.g. literature, educational curricula, social media posts, etc.—using primary and secondary sources.
- Be able to study data, graphs, maps, and other non-textual sources to piece together a narrative.
- Be able to critically analyze primary and secondary sources according to the historical context in which they were created.
- Be able to produce an argumentative or comparative case study of a topic/theme in U.S. history and defend its connection to the American West.

Reading/Screening Materials

This course will consist of a combination of reading and film materials. The goal is to cover as large of a academic and popular cultural spectrum as our case studies allow to visualize how the American West has changed in people’s perception.

Some types of primary sources to be covered:

Court cases, congressional bills/acts, travel accounts, newspapers, films, artworks.

Some scholars to be covered:

Patricia Limerick, Richard White, Erika Lee, Philip Deloria, Mike Davis.

Under the **Class Schedule** section below, “Primary Documents” and “Secondary Sources” will be required reading, and “Further Reading” will be optional.

Course Policy

According to Duke University Trinity College, all House Courses carry **0.5 semester course credit** toward graduation only. HCs follow a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory grading system. To receive a Satisfactory grade in this course, a student needs to follow these criteria:

- **Attendance:** Student needs to attend at least 12 course meetings. Please contribute to the discussion at least once during a meeting. Contribution could be in a variety of formats: speaking, providing a question, requesting a topic for a Guest Speaker to discuss, etc.
 - If you foresee missing a class meeting, please let me know. I totally understand that there will be unforeseeable emergencies and that we are all busy people with fulfilling calendars, so please communicate with me as soon as possible so we can work something out.
- **Assignments:** As listed in the schedule below, there will be a variety of fun and interactive small in-class assignments to initiate and further discussions. Although a part of the class’s grading considers the completion of these assignments, the interactive component renders these assignments more similar to “activities.” There will also be one short scholarly writing assignment and one final assignment which

¹ William Deverell, “Searching for a Redemptive West,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 55, no. 1 (2024): 17.

the student can choose the format to pursue (more details below). These two assignments need to be completed on a timely basis with a clear indication of effort and intellectual processes.

- Please let me know if any questions regarding the deadlines, the assignment guidelines, or any other aspects of the assignment show up.

According to Trinity College policies, a grade of satisfactory in this course requires satisfactory completion of all assignments of this course including written and oral assignments, attendance, and whatever individual other exercises an individual House Course may require.

Assignments

Reading/Screening:

Before each class, there will be assigned primary and secondary sources to read or watch.

Short writing assignment:

Using primary or secondary sources, please examine the history of your home state/region, a state/region of your choice, or a non-U.S. location and write a short, 450-word minimum (~ 3/4 page single-spaced) work in the form of **a letter from the perspective of a traveler to that region writing to their friends back home** arguing whether or not this state/region could be considered as a major agent of the development of the American West.

- This assignment is designed to be very open-ended to give you the maximum intellectual freedom and creativity. You may derive your own definition for terms like "American West," "major," "development," and other terms. You don't even need to define "American West" only in a geographical sense. Consider the economic, racial/ethnical, environmental, political, and other perspectives. You are also free to choose which time period to focus on. The goal is to see whether you can find your own voice in the scholarship of U.S. history.
- You are also free to use existing definitions found in scholarly publications. Regardless of whether you wish to define yourself or use an existing definition, please clearly present the definition (or the source of your definition) in the assignment.
- Again, your argument does not have to come from only a geographical perspective. Consider the economic ties, agricultural contributions, migration patterns, trade networks, policy collaborations, political affiliations, government activities, wars and battles, interactions with Native American communities, contribution to popular culture, appearance in literature or other media, environmental activities, international relations, famous/influential people/organizations from this region, just to name a few approaches. This really is a chance for you to discover all sorts of creative and unique scholarly perspectives.
- Please cite scholarly sources to support your argument.
- **IMPORTANT:** Since the format of this assignment is a letter by a traveler, please have fun with this. You are more than welcome and encouraged to be as creative as you wish with the structure, presentation, and content to include, **as long as your intellectual effort in advancing the definitions and a clear thesis are present.**
 - For example, please feel free to describe what the traveler might see, hear, interact, eat, be amazed by, be disgusted by, be compelled by, be confused by, be distracted by, be annoyed by, be surprised by, etc.
 - You may set your letter in whichever time period you wish, as long as the writing content is not anachronous.
 - Possible points of reference: Alexis de Tocqueville's "A Fortnight in the Wilderness" and "A Visit to Lake Oneida."
- This assignment is due in the middle of the semester at Class 7.

Final assignment:

The final assignment is a space for you to pick a case study, just like the ones we see in class, and create a research or artistic expression of your own in deconstructing our existing or popular perception of this narrative.

Just like the short writing assignment, the topic you choose does not have to be geographically connected to the American West (again, if we could reach a universal geographical definition). You could use philosophical, ideological, economic, political, or other connections both in the physical and intellectual sense to derive your American West.

Sample topics to choose from (not all-encompassing):

- Hollywood
- Sand Creek Massacre
- Alamo
- Native American boarding schools
- Slavery in the West
- Russian influence on the Pacific Coast
- Trans-Pacific connections with Asia
- Pike's Peak gold rush
- Pearl Harbor
- Japanese Internment Camps
- Indigenous art in the American West
- Transcontinental Railroad
- The “frontier” during the Cold War
- Jean Baudrillard’s perception of the United States and Los Angeles
- The Homestead Act
- The building of Las Vegas
- Matthew Perry and Japan
- The Afghanistan War
- The Korean War
- The invasion and planned invasion of Canada
- Purchasing Alaska
- The Hawaiian Kingdom
- U.S. Concession in Shanghai
- NAFTA
- The history of USCIS, ICE, and/or CBP
- German immigrants in Indiana

And many many others. As you can see, the “American West” is never a static term.

This assignment does not have to be a scholarly writing assignment. Some formats to choose from:

- Creative writing (at least 1300 words of writing in addition to an min. 200-word artist’s statement, or a collection of flash fiction with a total word count of min. 1300 words with a min. 200-word artist’s statement);
 - Possible points of reference: Sherman Alexie’s *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (2007); Louise Erdrich’s short stories.
- Personal narrative (min. 1500 words; could take the form of creative nonfiction, travelog, epistolary writing, etc.);
- Journalism (one or multiple news reports/articles written in the context of the time period you choose. If you choose to write multiple, the minimum total word count for all pieces is 1500);
- Photo-journalism (one or multiple pieces including min. 10 photos in total with min. 500 words. Each photo needs to have a photographer’s statement);
- Video creation (at least 2 minutes long);
 - Possible points of reference: Werner Herzog’s videography style.
- Slideshow (you need to present this slideshow in a 4-8-minute class presentation).
- A traditional academic research paper (minimum 1500 words);
- Or another form.

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- Possible points of reference: Sherman Alexie's *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (2007); Louise Erdrich's short stories.
- Personal narrative (min. 1500 words; could take the form of creative nonfiction, travelog, epistolary writing, etc.);
- Journalism (one or multiple news reports/articles written in the context of the time period you choose. If you choose to write multiple, the minimum total word count for all pieces is 1500);
- Photo-journalism (one or multiple pieces including min. 10 photos in total with min. 500 words. Each photo needs to have a photographer's statement);
- Video creation (at least 2 minutes long);
 - Possible points of reference: Werner Herzog's videography style.
- Slideshow (you need to present this slideshow in a 4-8-minute class presentation).
- If you would like to use another format, please discuss it with me.

You may work in pairs or groups, but the minimum word count will be the amount listed multiplied by the number of students in that group.

- i.e.: a two-student group working on a paper will need to meet minimum $1,500 \times 2 = 3,000$ words

The final assignment is due 11:59pm on the day of the last class meeting (December 6, 2024).

For resources for students, please see the [Resource Hub](#) page created by Student Affairs.

Grading

Attendance / Participation: 40%
Assignments: 10%

Short Writing Assignment: 20%
Final Assignment: 30%

According to Duke S/U policies, a 70% or above in a class overall grade earns an S grade.

Class Schedule

August 27, 2025 (Class 1 - Week of August 25, 2025)

Course Introduction; syllabus; course website review; semester schedule review

Assignment #1 (in-class): "Intro Assignment: Drawing and Reasoning the American West."

Required Reading Materials:

Richard White, "*It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own*": *A History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 3-53. (50 pg.)

September 3, 2025 (Class 2 - Week of September 1, 2025)

Cost of Louisiana Purchase

Required Reading Materials:

Primary documents:

Louisiana Purchase Treaty (1803) [archives.gov/exhibits/american_originals/louistxt.html](https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/american_originals/louistxt.html) (~ 4 pg.)

Secondary sources:

Robert Lee, "Accounting for Conquest: The Price of the Louisiana Purchase of Indian Country," *Journal of American History* 103, no. 4 (2017): 921-942 (21 pg.)

Bradford Perkins, "England and the Louisiana Question," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 18, no. 3 (1955): 279- 295 (16 pg.)

Further reading:

William E. Lass, "The Northern Boundary of the Louisiana Purchase," *Great Plains Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (2015): 27-50.

September 10, 2025 (Class 3 - Week of September 8, 2025)

The Battle of the Greasy Grass/Little Big Horn and the Sioux Nation

Planned Faculty Advisor visit.

Discuss Short Writing Assignment and Final Assignment

Required Reading Materials:

Primary documents:

Treaty of Fort Laramie (1868). (11 pg.)

United States v. Sioux Nation of Indians, 448 U.S. 371 (1980). (Do not need to read all 67 pages, but please at least read an overview.)

Image: "Column of cavalry, artillery, and wagons, commanded by Gen. George A. Custer, crossing the plains of Dakota Territory." (1874) catalog.archives.gov/id/519427.

Secondary sources:

Paul A. Hutton, "From Little Bighorn to Little Big Man: The Changing Image of a Western Hero in Popular Culture," *Western Historical Quarterly* 7, no. 1 (1976): 19-45. (36 pg.)

Olivia Waxman, "Why We've Gotten 'Custer's Last Stand' Wrong for Nearly 150 Years," *Times*, June 25, 2023, time.com/6288437/custer-last-stand-history-education/. (~ 7 pg.)

James Welch and Paul Stekler, *Killing Custer: The Battle of Little Bighorn and the Fate of the Plains Indians* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1994), 25-47. (22 pg.)

Further reading:

Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1998).

Philip Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2004).

Michael Elliott, *Custerology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

September 17, 2025 (Class 4 - Week of September 15, 2025)

18 Unratified Treaties of California

Required Reading Materials:

Primary documents:

Treaty K (or, Treaty of Peace and Friendship Between the U.S. Government and the Kahwea, San Luis Rey, and Cocomcahra Indians Signed at the Village of Temecula, California). catalog.archives.gov/id/55030733?objectPanel=transcription. (~ 5 pg.)

Secondary sources:

Benjamin Madley, "Understanding Genocide in California under United States Rule, 1846–1873," *Western Historical Quarterly* 47, no. 4 (2016): 449-461. (13 pg.)

Robert F Heizer, *The Eighteen Unratified Treaties of 1851-1852 between the California Indians and the United States Government* (Berkeley: University of California, Berkeley Archaeological Research Facility), 1-26. (26 pg.)

Damon B. Akins and William J. Bauer, Jr., *We Are the Land: A History of Native California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2021), 239-269. (30 pg, preferably reading at least p. 239-246.).

Further reading:

Robert Lee et al., *Land-Grab Universities* landgrabu.org/ (digital research project).

Vine Deloria Jr., *Behind the Trail of Broken Treaties: An Indian Declaration of Independence* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1974).

September 24, 2025 (Class 5 - Week of September 22, 2025)

Death of Meriwether Lewis

Required Reading Materials:

Primary documents: /

Secondary sources:

Jamie M. Bolker, "America Still Isn't Ready to Acknowledge That a Hero of National Myth Could Have Died by Suicide," *Time*, December 1, 2023, time.com/6340942/meriwether-lewis-suicide-history/ (~ 5 pg.)

Howard I. Kushner, "The Suicide of Meriwether Lewis: A Psychoanalytic Inquiry," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (1981): 464-481. (18 pg.).

John D. W. Guice, ed., *By His Own Hand?: The Mysterious Death of Meriwether Lewis* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011), ix-16 (30 pg.)

Paul R. Cutright, "Rest, Rest, Perturbed Spirit," *We Proceed On* 12, no. 1 (1986): 7-16. (9 pg.)

Further reading:

University of Nebraska, Lincoln Center for Digital Research in the Humanities, *Journals of Lewis & Clark Expedition*. Digital project, lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu/.

John D. W. Guice, ed., *By His Own Hand?: The Mysterious Death of Meriwether Lewis* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011). (The whole book).

October 1, 2025 (Class 6 - Week of September 29, 2025)

Angel Island

Homework Assignment #2 (for discussion in Class 8):

Research the Carson City Mint and the Morgan Silver Dollar for Class 8. During class, we will compare the different stories we've gathered.

Required Reading Materials:

Primary documents:

Page Act of 1875 (~ 3 pg.)

Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, [daily.jstor.org/the-chinese-exclusion-act-annotated/](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1-1qjwv). (~ 3 pg.)

Immigration Act of 1917 (~ 3 pg.)

Immigration Act of 1924 (~ 3 pg.)

Tydings–McDuffie Act of 1934 (~3 pg.)

Choose two of the oral histories to read from the Angel Island Oral History project: escholarship.org/search/?q=author%3AOral%20History%20Project%2C%20Angel%20Island. (~ 20 pg.)

Secondary sources:

Erika Lee, *Angel Island: Immigrant Gateway to America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1-26. (26 pg.)

Roger Daniels, “No Lamps Were Lit for Them: Angel Island and the Historiography of Asian American Immigration,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 17, no. 1 (1997): 3-18 (16 pages).

Further reading:

Erika Lee, *Angel Island: Immigrant Gateway to America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). (The whole book).

Charles Egan, *Voices of Angel Island: Inscriptions and Immigrant Poetry, 1910–1945* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2021).

Tim Cresswell and Gareth Hoskins, “Place, Persistence, and Practice: Evaluating Historical Significance at Angel Island, San Francisco, and Maxwell Street, Chicago,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 98, no. 2 (2008): 392-413.

Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation’s Virtual Galleries: <https://www.aiisf.org/virtualgallery>.

October 8, 2025 (Class 7 - Week of October 6, 2025)

Chinese Community in Montana amid the Geary Act.

Required Reading Materials:

Primary documents:

Geary Act of 1892 (~ 3 pg.)

Secondary sources:

Mark T. Johnson, *The Middle Kingdom under the Big Sky : A History of the Chinese Experience in Montana* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2022), 1-20, 45-66, 93-122. (70 pg.)

Stacy A. Flaherty, "Boycott in Butte: Organized Labor and the Chinese Community, 1896-1897," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 37, no. 1 (1987): 34-47 (14 pg.)

Further reading:

Kathryn Tolbert, "A Japanese Picture Bride in Montana: The Story of Aya Hori Masuoka (1882–1972)," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 70, no. 1 (2020): 27-43. (17 pg.)

Laurie K. Mercier, "We Are Women Irish": Gender, Class, Religious, and Ethnic Identity in Anaconda, Montana," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 44, no. 1 (1994): 28-41. (14 pg.)

Sara Allison Robinson, "Beyond Coolie; socioeconomic and class in Butte Montana's Chinatown" (MA thesis, University of Wyoming, 2006).

October 15, 2025 (Class 8 - Week of October 13, 2025)

US Mint in Carson City

Short Writing Assignment due

Required Reading Materials:

Primary documents:

Newspaper clips (~5 pg.).

Secondary sources:

Wanda L. Eaton, "The Effect of the Gilded Age on Carson City Mint" (MA thesis, Sam Houston State University, 1970). (70 pg.)

R. S. Yeoman, *A Guidebook of United States Coins* (Atlanta: Whitman, 2010), 15-28. (13 pg.), https://archive.org/details/isbn_9780794831486/page/n5/mode/2up?q=carson+city.

Popular culture readings (required):

Robert Van Ryzin, "The Great Theft at Carson City," *Numismatic News*, April 14, 2022, numismaticnews.net/us-coins/the-great-theft-at-carson-city.

Douglas Winter, "So... You've Decided to Collect Carson City Gold," Douglas Winter, December 13, 2016, raregoldcoins.com/blog/2016/12/13/soyouve-decided-to-collect-carson-city-gold.

"Carson City Silver Dollars purchased for \$1.2 million," Northern Nevada Business Weekly, August 6, 2018, nnbw.com/news/2018/aug/06/carson-city-silver-dollars-purchased-for-12-millio/.

Youtube: "The King of Carson City Silver: 1889-CC Morgan Dollar MS64," [youtube.com/watch?v=1uDQEe3Q2Cc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1uDQEe3Q2Cc)

Further reading: /

October 22, 2025 (Class 9 - Week of October 20, 2025)

Wind River Reservation in Wyoming and the Death of Sacagawea

Planned Faculty Advisor visit.

Homework Assignment #3 (for discussion during Class 10):

Find an oil well from California Department of Conservation, “Well Finder,” *California Department of Conservation, conservation.ca.gov/calgem/Pages/Wellfinder.aspx* and be ready to explain why you found this specific oil well interesting.

- It could be due to its location, ownership, year, or anything about it.

Required Reading Materials:

Primary documents: /

Secondary sources:

Documentary: “Wind River” by Drury Gunn Carr (2000), find.library.duke.edu/catalog/DUKE007515345 (30 min).

Helen Addison Howard, “The Mystery of Sacagawea’s Death,” *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (1967): 1-6 (6 pg.).

Boonie “Spirit Wind-Walker” Butterfield, “Sacagawea’s Death,” *Native Americans*, February 16, 2012, web.archive.org/web/20120227060638/http://www.bonniebutterfield.com/sacagawea-death.html. (~ 5 pg.).

Virginia Scharff, *Twenty Thousand Roads: Women, Movement, and the West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 12-33. (21 pg.)

Further reading:

Sally McBeth, “Memory, History, and Contested Pasts: Re-imagining Sacagawea/Sacajawea,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 27, no. 1 (2003): 1-32.

Harold P. Howard, *Sacajawea* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979).

October 29, 2025 (Class 10 - Week of October 27, 2025)

California’s Oil Industry

Required Reading Materials:

Primary documents:

“Waste of Oil Stirs up Row,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 10, 1926. (2 pg.)

“Cities Use camouflage to Conceal Ugly Utilities,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 24, 1960 (2 pg.)

“Venice Oil Wells Have to Modernize or Be Removed,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 15, 1966. (2 pg.)

California Department of Conservation, “Well Finder,” *California Department of Conservation, conservation.ca.gov/calgem/Pages/Wellfinder.aspx*. (Website, ~ 5 pg.)

Secondary sources:

Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (London: Verso, 2018), 17-40. (23 pg.)

Nancy Quam-Wickham, “‘Cities Sacrificed on the Altar of Oil’: Popular Opposition to Oil Development in 1920s Los Angeles,” *Environmental History* 3, no. 2 (1998): 189-209. (20 pg.).

Sarah S. Elkind, “Oil in the City: The Fall and Rise of Oil Drilling in Los Angeles,” *Journal of American History* 99, no. 1 (2012): 82-90. (8 pg.)

Emily Witt, "The End of Oil Drilling in LA," *The New Yorker*, March 3, 2022. (10 pg.)

Further reading:

Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (London: Verso, 2018). (Full book).

Paul Sabin, *Crude Politics: The California Oil Market, 1900-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

Kevin Starr, *Material Dreams: Southern California Through the 1920s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

November 5, 2025 (Class 11 - Week of November 3, 2025)

Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the U.S.-Nation American community relations in the Southwest

Required Reading Materials:

Primary documents:

Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848 (23 pg.)

Secondary sources:

Jean O'Brien, "Indians and the California Gold Rush," in *Why You Can't Teach United States History Without American Indians*, eds. Susan Sleeper-Smith, Juliana Barr, Jean M. O'Brien, Nancy Shoemaker, Scott Manning Stevens (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 101-117. (16 pg.)

Brian Delay, "Independent Indians and the U.S.-Mexican War," *The American Historical Review* 112, no. 1 (2007): 35-68. (33 pg.)

Further reading:

Brian Delay, *War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the U. S.-Mexican War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

Richard Griswold del Castillo, *The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo: A Legacy of Conflict* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990).

Rachel St. John, *Line in the Sand: A History of the Western U.S.-Mexico Border* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011)

November 10, 2025 (Class 12 - Week of November 8, 2025)

USPS in the West

Required Reading Materials:

Primary documents: /

Secondary sources:

Cameron Blevins, *Paper Trails: the U.S. Post and the Making of the American West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 1-35, 75-93. (58 pg.)

Cameron Blevins, *Gossamer Network* (digital project), gossamernetwork.com/ (~10 pg.)

Wayne E. Fuller, "The Populists and the Post Office," *Agricultural History* 65, no. 1 (1991): 1-16 (16 pg.)

Further reading:

Cameron Blevins, *Paper Trails: the U.S. Post and the Making of the American West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021). (Full book).

Richard R. John, *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

Richard R. John, *Network Nation: Inventing American Telecommunications* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015).

November 19, 2025 (Class 13 - Week of November 17, 2025)

Global West - Vietnam and the Philippines

Required Reading Materials:

Primary documents: /

Secondary sources:

Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 441-487, 578-623. (96 pg.)

Further reading:

David Wrobel, *Global West, American Frontier: Travel, Empire, and Exceptionalism from Manifest Destiny to the Great Depression* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2013).

November 26, 2025 (Week of November 24, 2025)

Thanksgiving Break

December 3, 2025 (Class 14 - Week of December 1, 2025)

The Atomic West and Conclusion

Final Assignment due 11:59pm.

Required Reading Materials:

Primary documents: /

Secondary sources:

Michael A. Amundson, "Constructing and consuming atomic culture in the American West," *Buffalo Bill Center of the West*, August 24, 2018, centerofthewest.org/2018/08/24/points-west-online-atomic-culture-american-west/. (~10 pg.)

Maria Elena Salinas et al., "New Mexico 'downwinders' fight for aid after Manhattan Project amid community's cancer concerns," *ABC News*, November 2, 2023, abcnews.go.com/US/new-mexico-downwinders-fight-aid-after-manhattan-project/story?id=104538100. (~7 pg.)

Buu Nygren, "The Navajo Suffered From Nuclear Testing. Oppenheimer Doesn't Tell Our Story," Time, July 21, 2023, time.com/6296470/oppenheimer-navajo-uranium-mining-essay/. (~10 pg.)

William Deverell, "Searching for a Redemptive West," *Western Historical Quarterly* 55, no. 1 (2024): 1-20. (20 pg.)

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