

# HIST 5397.001: Nineteenth Century American West

Tuesday, 6:00-8:45pm, CAS 257  
University of Texas at Tyler  
Fall 2025

**Instructor:** Prof. [Matt Stith](#)  
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**Office:** CAS 127  
**Office Hours:** Tuesday, 3:30-5:30; Thursday, 12:30-1:30; Or by appointment.

## Course Description:

We will explore—through intensive readings, discussion, and research—the American West during the long nineteenth century. In so doing, we will use social, cultural, political, military, and environmental history to both understand and interpret the place and its people.

## Content Objectives:

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate a strong understanding of the major interpretive currents and debates that underscore the nineteenth-century American West.
2. Think critically and objectively about the nineteenth-century American West and its place in the course of American history.
3. Develop analytical skills through thinking, speaking, researching, and writing about the nineteenth-century American West.
4. Exhibit an advanced appreciation for and mastery of the historian's craft.

## Important Note:

I encourage you to meet with me regularly to discuss or clarify discussion and readings—or to talk about history in general. My job (and satisfaction) is as much to work with students on an individual basis as it is to lecture and facilitate discussion. Please keep this in mind throughout the semester.

## Required Reading (in order):

- Introduction
  - o Anne F. Hyde, "The Disadvantages of Hindsight: A Re-Reading of the Early American West," *OAH Magazine of History* 19 (November 2005): 7-11. [On Canvas]
- Context (1800-1860)
  - o Ann F. Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families: A New History of the North American West, 1800-1860* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011) ISBN: 978-0062225153
- Native
  - o Brian Delay, *War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the U.S.-Mexican War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008) ISBN: 978-0300158373;
    - <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uttyler/detail.action?docID=3420505>
- Slavery and Society
  - o Alice Baumgartner, *South to Freedom: Runaway Slaves to Mexico and the Road to the Civil War* (New York: Basic Books, 2020) ISBN: 978-1541617766
    - <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uttyler/detail.action?docID=6904743> [Links to an external site.](#)
- Context (1840s-1900)
  - o Elliott West, *Continental Reckoning: The American West in the Age of Expansion* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2023) ISBN: 978-1496243010
    - <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uttyler/detail.action?docID=30294135> [Links to an external site.](#)

- Nature
  - o Dan Flores, *American Serengeti: The Last Big Animals of the Great Plains* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2016) ISBN: 978-0700624669
    - <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uttyler/detail.action?docID=5244782> [Links to an external site.](#)
- Research
  - o Zachary M. Schrag, *The Princeton Guide to Historical Research* (Princeton University Press, 2021) ISBN-13: 978-0691198224
    - <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uttyler/detail.action?docID=6478446> [Links to an external site.](#)

### Recommended Reading:

- Robert V. Hine, et al., *The American West: A New Interpretive History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017)
- Elliot West, *The Essential West: Collected Essays* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014)

### Book Reviews:

Please write a single-spaced, analytical review of the following: Hyde (1,000-words); West (1,000 words); Flores (600 words); Baumgartner (600 words); DeLay (600 words). The reviews are due on Canvas at **5:00pm** on Tuesdays.

**Research Paper & Presentation:** Please prepare a 3,500-4,500-word (exclusive of footnotes) research paper based on primary sources and contextualized by relevant secondary sources. It is worth 100 points and due on the evening of your presentation. You will present your work to the class in a conference-style format at the end of the semester.

### Attendance and Participation:

Active and informed participation in addition to assigned presentations is mandatory. Poor, hostile, or no discussion will result in the loss of all participation points. More than two unexcused absences will also result in the loss of a letter grade.

### Make-up Policy:

I will work with you on an individual basis regarding any missed exams or deadlines.

### Academic Honesty **\*\*\*IMPORTANT\*\*\***

Cheating of any kind, including plagiarism or the use of AI, will result in immediate failure of the class and possibly further disciplinary measures from the University of Texas at Tyler. Plagiarism, put simply, is using another's work as your own without proper citation or usage. This includes everything from copying and pasting from the Internet to failing to cite an idea from another source that you put in your own words. I strongly recommend reviewing the university policy for cheating and academic dishonesty at the following website: <http://www.uttyler.edu/judicialaffairs/scholasticdishonesty.php>. AI is not permitted in this course. All work students submit for this course should be their own. Using ChatGPT or any other artificial intelligence (AI) tools for any stages of the work process is expressly forbidden. Deviations from these guidelines will be considered a violation of UT Tyler's Honor Code and academic honesty values.

### Point Breakdown:

Book Reviews:	5 x 20 = 100
Participation:	50
Research Paper:	100
Presentation:	50
Total:	300

### Grade Scale:

A = 300-270
B = 269-240
C = 239-210
D = 209-180
F = 179-000

### Reading List and Schedule:

- **Week 1 (8/27)**
  - o Introduction to the Field of History and the American West
  - o Start Reading Hyde
- **Week 2 (9/3)**
  - o Discuss Hyde, intro., chaps. 1-4

- **Week 3 (9/10)**
  - Discuss Hyde, chaps. 5-8, conclusion
  - **Hyde review due at 5pm**
  - Start reading DeLay
- **Week 4 (9/17)**
  - Discuss DeLay (all)
  - **DeLay review due at 5pm**
  - Start reading Baumgartner
- **Week 5: (9/24)**
  - Discuss Baumgartner (all)
  - **Baumgartner review due at 5pm**
  - Start reading West
- **Week 6: (10/1)**
  - Discuss West, intro., chaps. 1-12
  - Continue reading West
- **Week 7 (10/8)**
  - Discuss West, chaps. 13-conclusion
  - **West review due at 5pm**
  - Start reading Flores
- **Week 8 (10/15)**
  - Discuss Flores
  - **Flores review due at 5pm**
  - Start reading Schrag
- **Week 9 (10/22)**
  - Discuss Schrag + research + writing
- **Week 10 (10/29):**
  - Research/Writing Workshop; Individual Meetings
- **Week 11 (11/5)**
  - Research/Write
- **Week 12 (11/12)**
  - Research/Writing Workshop; Individual Meetings
- **Week 13 (11/19)**
  - Presentations
- **Week 14 (11/23): Thanksgiving**
- **Week 15 (11/30)**
  - Presentations