

# HIST 4321

# THE AMERICAN

# WEST

UT-TYLER, T/R 2:00-3:20; HPR 262

Prof. Matt Stith; [mstith@uttyler.edu](mailto:mstith@uttyler.edu)

**Office:** CAS 127; **Office Hours:** T/R, 11:00-12:30, or by appointment

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## **Course Objectives:**

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

1. Demonstrate a strong understanding of the major currents that underscore the history of the American West.
2. Think critically and objectively about the American West and its place in the course of American history.
3. Develop analytical skills through thinking, speaking, and writing about American history generally and the American West specifically.

## **Important Note:**

I encourage you to meet with me regularly to discuss or clarify lecture, discussion, or reading—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. Please keep this in mind throughout the semester.

**Required Reading:** All available on Canvas or Online

## **Secondary Sources:**

### First Exam:

- Anne F. Hyde, “The Disadvantages of Hindsight: A Re-Reading of the Early American West,” *OAH Magazine of History* 19 (November 2005): 7-11.
- Tim Seiter, “The Karankawa-Spanish War from 1778-1789: Attempted Genocide and Karankawa Power,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 124 (April 2021): 375-412.
- Dan Flores, “Jefferson’s Grand Expedition and the Mystery of the Red River,” in Patrick G. Williams, et al, eds., *A Whole Country in Commotion: The Louisiana Purchase and the American Southwest* (University of Arkansas Press, 2005), 21-40.
- Lauren Brand, “‘Great Conceptions of Their Own Power’: Native and U.S. Diplomacy in the Old Southwest,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 47 (Autumn 2016): 261-281.

### Second Exam:

- Catharine R. Franklin, “Black Hills and Bloodshed: The U.S. Army and the Invasion of Lakota Land, 1868-1876,” *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 63 (Summer 2013): 26-41; 90-93.
- Richard W. Etulain, “Calamity Jane: A Life and Legends,” *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 64 (Summer 2014): 21-45; 92-94.
- Elliott West, “The Nez Perce and Their Trials: Rethinking America’s Indian Wars,” *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 60 (Autumn 2010): 3-18; 92-93.

## **Primary Source (For L&C Essay):**

- *Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition*, Center for Digital Research in the Humanities and the University of Nebraska Press, [lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu/journals](http://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu/journals)

## **Recommended Reading:**

- Robert V. Hine, et al., *The American West: A New Interpretive History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Yale University Press, 2017)
- H.W. Brands, *Dreams of El Dorado: A History of the American West* (Basic Books, 2019)

**Book Essay:**

Please write a 800-1,000-word analytical essay in which you analyze the major arguments and conclusions in your book choice from the list below.

**Exams:**

There will be two exams worth 100 points each. I will distribute a study guide a week before each exam. The final is not comprehensive. The exams will consist of two essay questions worth equal amounts. Typically, one essay will cover class lecture and discussion and the other will focus entirely on assigned reading.

**Lewis and Clark Essay:**

Using the Lewis & Clark journals (see above and on Canvas), craft a 3,000+ word essay based on a topic or multiple related topics that you find to be most interesting. This could range from grizzly bears, the Mandan people, Fort Clatsop, hunting, Native American relations, etc. The choice is yours.

**Attendance and Participation**

This is an upper-level university course. Attendance and participation are mandatory. The fourth unexcused absence will result in loss of all attendance points (50pts). **Note:** unless an approved emergency, leaving *during* class will count as an absence.

**Point Breakdown**

Exam I: 100 pts  
Exam II: 100 pts  
Book Essay: 50 pts  
L&C Essay: 100 pts  
Attendance: 50 pts  
Total: 400 pts

**Grading Scale**

A: 400-360  
B: 359-320  
C: 319-280  
D: 279-240  
F: 239-000

**Classroom Conduct:**

Be kind. The classroom environment will remain a non-confrontational space for lecture and discussion. Should you wish to challenge or argue with another student: don't. Should you wish to challenge the professor, it must be done *after* class or during office hours.

**Make-up Policy:**

I'll work with you on anything missed.

**Grade Grubbing:**

Except for legal university accommodations, there will be no special circumstances offered to any individual student with respect to increasing their grade (such as extra work, bonus opportunities, or similar requests) beyond what is offered to the entire class. This is especially important to remember at the end of the semester. The best way to make the grade you want to make is to do your very best on the work required throughout the semester and to ask for honest help on assignments—not bonus points or favors after all assignments are finished. It is bad practice and unethical to request that professors offer you something that isn't offered to the entire class.

**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>.

## UT Tyler Statement on AI

UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools' ethical, societal, philosophical, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged as this aligns with our commitment to honor and integrity, as noted in UT Tyler's Honor Code. Faculty and students must not use protected information, data, or copyrighted materials when using any AI tool. Additionally, users should be aware that AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content that may appear correct but is sometimes shown to be incomplete, inaccurate, taken without attribution from other sources, and/or biased. Consequently, an AI tool should not be considered a substitute for traditional approaches to research. You are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the information you submit. Misusing AI tools that violate the guidelines specified for this course is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler's Academic Integrity Policy.

## My Statement on AI

**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 and **will result in a failure of the assignment or the course at the professor's discretion.**

## **Schedule/Topic Outline:**

### Part 1: From the Pre-Columbian West to the Oregon Trail (14,000 BCE – 1840s CE)

- Weeks 1-2: (Jan. 11-15; Jan. 18-22):
  - Unit 1: Defining the West; Assigned Reading (See Outline)
- Week 3: (Jan. 25-Jan. 29)
  - Unit 2: Contest of Cultures; Assigned Reading (See Outline)
- Week 4: (Feb. 1-5)
  - Unit 3: The Struggle for Empires; Assigned Reading (See Outline)
- Week 5: (Feb. 8-12)
  - Unit 4: The Land and Its Markers; Assigned Reading (See Outline)
- Week 6: (Feb. 15-19)
  - Unit 5: Finding Purchase; Assigned Reading (See Outline)
- Week 7: (Feb. 22-Feb. 26)
  - Unit 6: War and Destiny; Assigned Reading (See Outline)
- Week 8: (March 1-5)
  - Unit 7: Machine; Assigned Reading (See Outline)
  - **Exam I (March 4)**
  - **L&C Paper Due (11:59pm, Sunday, March 7)**
- Week 9: Spring Break! (March 8-12)

### Part 2: From the Gold Rush to Silicon Valley, 1840s-2000s

- Week 10: (March 15-19)
  - Unit 8: A Search for Community; Assigned Reading (See Outline)
- Week 11: (March 22-26)
  - Unit 9: The Urban Frontier; Assigned Reading (See Outline)
- Week 12: (March 29-April 2)
  - Unit 10: New Frontiers; Assigned Reading (See Outline)
- Week 13: (April 5-9)
  - Unit 11: As the West Goes . . . ; Assigned Reading (See Outline)
- Week 14: (April 12-16)
  - Unit 12: The Modern West; Assigned Reading (See Outline)
- Week 15: (April 19-23)
  - Unit 13: Course Wrap-Up; Video Lecture(s); Assigned Reading (See Outline);
  - **Exam II (April 22)**
- Week 16: **Book Review Essay Due 11:59pm, Thursday, April 30, on Canvas**

Please choose ONE book from the below list and write an 800-1,000-word review essay in which you consider the following: 1) What is the author's purpose in writing the book?; 2) Based on your scholarly perspective, in which ways did they succeed?; 3) Identify and explain three ideas from the book that you found to be particularly compelling; 4) How did this book shape or re-shape your understanding of the American West? <https://ill.uttyler.edu>

- Karl Jacoby, *Shadows at Dawn: An Apache Massacre and the Violence of History* (Penguin, 2008)
- Megan Kate Nelson, *The Union, the Confederacy, and Native Peoples in the Fight for the West* (Scribner, 2020)
- Richard Edwards and Jacob K. Friefeld, *First Migrants: How Black Homesteaders' Quest for Land and Freedom Heralded America's Great Migration* (University of Nebraska Press, 2023)
- Elliott West, *The Last Indian War: The Nez Perce Story* (Oxford University Press, 2009)
- Alaina E. Roberts, *I've Been Here All the While: Black Freedom on Native Land* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021)
- Peter Stark, *Astoria: Astor and Jefferson's Lost Pacific Empire* (Ecco, 2014)
- H.W. Brands, *The Age of Gold: The California Gold Rush and the New American Dream* (Anchor, 2003)
- Sue Fawn Chung, *In Pursuit of Gold: Chinese American Miners and Merchants in the American West* (University of Illinois Press, 2011)
- Michael Wallis, *The Best Land Under Heaven: The Donner Party in the Age of Manifest Destiny* (Liveright, 2017)
- Winifred Gallagher, *New Women in the Old West: From Settlers to Suffragists, An Untold American Story* (Penguin, 2021)
- Samuel Truett, *Fugitive Landscapes: The Forgotten History of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (Yale University Press, 2006)
- Patricia Nelson Limerick, *Legacies of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (W.W. Norton, 1987)
- Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* (W.W. Norton, 2011)
- Dan Flores, *American Serengeti: The Last Big Animals of the Great Plains* (University Press of Kansas, 2016)
- Robert M. Utley, *Geronimo* (Yale University Press, 2012)
- Robert M. Utley, *Sitting Bull: The Life and Times of an American Patriot* (Holt, 1993)
- Monica Rico, *Nature's Noblemen: Transatlantic Masculinities and the Nineteenth-Century American West* (Yale University Press, 2013)
- Ari Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre: Struggling Over the Memory of Sand Creek* (Harvard University Press, 2013)
- Tim Seiter, *Wrangling Pelicans: Military Life in Texas Presidios* (University of Texas Press, 2025)
- Jane Botkin, *The Girl Who Dared to Defy: Jane Street and the Rebel Maids of Denver* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2021)
- Louis S. Warren, *Buffalo Bill's America: William Cody and the Wild West Show* (Vintage, 2005)
- Elizabeth A. Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World: A History of the Mandan People* (Straus and Giroux, 2015)
- Thomas Andrews, *Killing for Coal: America's Deadliest Labor War* (Harvard University Press, 2008)
- Brian DeLay, *War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the U.S.-Mexican Borderlands* (Yale University Press, 2008)
- Timothy Egan, *The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl* (Houghton Mifflin, 2005)
- Colin G. Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count: The Native American West before Lewis and Clark* (University of Nebraska Press, 2003)
- Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Gold Seekers and the Rush to Colorado* (University Press of Kansas, 1998)
- Robert M. Utley, *A Life Wild and Perilous: Mountain Men and the Paths to the Pacific* (Henry Holt, 1997)
- Anne F. Hyde, *Born of Lakes and Fire: Mixed-Descent Peoples and the Making of the American West* (W.W. Norton, 2022)
- Ned Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Harvard University Press, 2006)
- Tore C. Olsson, *Red Dead's History: A Video Game, an Obsession and America's Violent Past* (St. Martin's Press, 2024)
- Kelly Lytle Hernández, *Bad Mexicans: Race, Empire, and Revolution in the Borderlands* (W.W. Norton, 2022)