The American West
AmStud 124A, ArtHist 152, English 124, History 151, PoliSci 124A

T/Th, 10:30-11:50 a.m. Room: 200-002

GERs: DB-Hum; EC-AmerCul

WAYS: WAY-A-II; WAY-SI

(last updated: March 14, 2018)

Professors:

Bruce Cain (Political Science) bcain@stanford.edu
Shelley Fisher Fishkin (English) sfishkin@stanford.edu
David Freyberg (Civil and Environmental Engineering) freyberg@stanford.edu
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Alexander Nemerov (Art & Art History) anemerov@stanford.edu

Teaching Assistants and Section Times:

Megan Strackbein (English) mstrackb@stanford.edu
Thursday 4:30-5:20; Friday 10:30-11:20

Cynthia Garcia (Modern Thought & Literature) cjgarcia@stanford.edu
Friday 9:30-10:20; 11:30-12:20

Lance Sorenson (Law School) lfsorens@stanford.edu
Wed 2:30-3:20; 3:30-4:20

Office Hours:

Bruce Cain: By appointment, Y2E2 Room 173. (Email Surabhi at surabhi2@stanford.edu to schedule)

Shelley Fisher Fishkin: By appointment, 460-420.

David Freyberg: TBD

David Kennedy: By appointment, 200-234.

Alexander Nemerov: TBD
Course Objectives:

This course integrates several disciplinary perspectives into a comprehensive examination of western North America—its history, physical geography, climate, institutions, politics, demography, economy, and continuing policy challenges, as well as its artistic and cultural expression.

The course will examine how the West came to be settled, defined, and ultimately viewed as distinctive. Students will understand how geology, topography, and climate—aridity in particular—have shaped the region’s history, development and public policies. Aridity accounts in part for the fact that the federal government is the region’s largest landlord, controlling more than 50 percent of the West’s surface area. In addition, Western governance is complicated and distinctively shaped by its populist culture, direct democracy options, and highly fractured system of local jurisdictions. Direct democracy, for instance, enables more innovative programs to manage climate change and the environment, but the dispersion of jurisdictional responsibilities makes it harder to implement them.

Students will also examine transformations in the West’s demography and its economy. The West has been the nation’s most demographically dynamic region since World War II. Massive wartime and postwar internal migration has given way to transnational migration, notably from Mexico and Asia. And the West is home to a majority of the nation’s Native Americans. Migration, of course, closely tracks economic patterns. The transformation of the West from a natural resource extraction economy to a high-tech economy—with Silicon Valley its exemplar and locomotive—will be another course theme, as will the policy issues attending the prospects for the West’s environmental, demographic, and economic future. Participating in vigorous analytical discussions and writing papers on western trends, students will be able to analyze westerners’ behavior and western social organizations using data or primary source material.

The course will also examine the long tradition of rendering and expressing the West in art, film, and literature. In addition to analyzing poems, essays, short stories, and excerpts from longer works, the course will focus on paintings, photography, sculpture, and prints of the American West. The goal is for students to understand that these various accounts are not illustrations of the West but rather inventions that suited the ideological needs of particular moments. The portrayal of western peoples differed from one period to the next, and the same is true for borders, water, and the landscape itself. At the same time, the goal is to note how the works we study can—sometimes—introduce us to states of feeling not easily categorizable by recourse to social or ideological explanations.
Course requirements:

Students who come to class, attend discussion sections and complete the course readings will do well in the course.

Readings

All readings are posted on Canvas as assigned.

Many of our readings are made available through Stanford Libraries’ restricted databases, electronic journals, or e-books. In order to access these readings, you must be connected to the Stanford network. If you are having trouble accessing these readings, visit http://library.stanford.edu/using/connect-campus to test your connection.

Lectures and Discussion Sections

Class lectures will include 2 or 3 back-to-back lectures (25 or 40 min). Attendance will be taken at each lecture and section, starting the second week of the quarter. Students are fully responsible for checking in at the student ID scanner placed by the door of the lecture hall. Attendance at and participation in lectures and discussion sections constitute 20% of your final grade.

Related Course Events

Several events related to the American West Course are scheduled during Spring Quarter. Attendance at these events is highly encouraged by the faculty team. Details can be found on the Bill Lane Center’s website: west.stanford.edu/events. Please note the following dates on your calendar:

- **May 2: Clay Jenkinson Visit**
  - Clay Jenkinson as John Wesley Powell
  - Location TBD
- **May 15, 12:15pm: Ana Minian Book Talk**
  - Professor Ana Minian (History) will discuss her new book, *Undocumented Lives: Mexican Migration to the United States 1965-1986*
  - Terrace Room, Margaret Jacks Hall
- **May 18, 2-5pm: ArtsWest Borderlands Symposium**
  - Panel discussion between five scholars of arts in the U.S.-Mexico border region.
  - Stanford Humanities Center
- **REQUIRED: June 5, 4:30-6pm: Mary Dailey Desmarais**
  - Curator at Montreal Museum of Fine Arts
  - McMurtry Building

Other talks organized for the class will be announced during the quarter. **Students are expected to attend at least two outside events and write one reflection paragraph about each.**
Written Assignments

Students are expected to write two five-page papers throughout the quarter, each constituting 20% of the final grade. These will be due on April 29th and May 20th. Further details on the expectations and topics for written assignments will be discussed early in the quarter.

Exam

Students will complete a take-home final at the end of the quarter. The exam will take the form of one or more essays that test your ability to synthesize the diverse interdisciplinary perspectives offered in the class into an understanding of the American West as a distinct region. It will be due by 5pm on Monday, June 11th and it will constitute 40% of the final grade.

DCI Students

We are glad to have DCI students in the American West Course. Please note that DCI students should not attend weekly sections with the TAs, and instead will have the opportunity to attend an optional one-time, two-hour section led by the faculty.

Electronics Policy

Electronics, including but not limited to laptops and mobile phones, are not permitted during lectures for this course.
Course Outline

THEME 1: SPACE

Tuesday, April 3

1. **Introduction: Themes of the West** *Professor Cain*

2. **Western Spaces** *Professor Freyberg*

3. **Writing the West** *Professor Fishkin*

   - Twain, Mark. “Jim Smiley and His Jumping Frog.” 1865.
   - Twain, Mark. “Fenimore Cooper’s Literary Offenses.” 1895.
   - Dunbar, Paul Laurence. “Welcome Address, to the Western Association of Writers.” *Oak and Ivy.* Dayton: Press of United Brethren, 1892.
   - OPTIONAL: Katharine Lee Bates, “Pike’s Peak” (1904).

Thursday, April 5

1. **Policy Spillover and Domestic Borders** *Professor Cain*


2. **Open Space vs. Bordered Space in the West** *Professor Fishkin*


3. **International Borders** *Professor Cain*

Tuesday, April 10

1. **At the El Paso Holiday Inn: A Reading of Marisela Norte’s “Act of the Faithless”**  
   *Professor Nemerov*
   

2. **Drowning on the Mountain: Anne Brigman in the High Sierras**  
   *Professor Nemerov*

3. **From Stanford to Tule Lake: The Internment of Professor Yamato Ishihashi**  
   *Professor Nemerov*

Thursday, April 12

1. **Water and Borders**  
   *Professor Freyberg*

2. **Controlling Space: Federal Lands and Local Control**  
   *Professor Cain*
   
   - “The Oregon Occupiers’ Land Dispute, explained in nine maps”
   - “Beyond the Coal Boom: Powder River Basin Residents Look to a Diversified Future.”

3. **Mobility vs. Confinement in the West**  
   *Professor Fishkin*
   
THEME 2: TIME

Tuesday, April 17

1. The Evolution of the Western Landscape Professor Freyberg

2. The Shrinking Iconic West – Demography and Politics Professor Cain

3. Discussion

Thursday, April 19

1. Historical Time, Mythical Time Professor Kennedy

2. The Evolution of the Western Landscape Professor Freyberg

Tuesday, April 24

1. The End of Time: The Art of James Castle Professor Nemerov

2. Pearl Harbor: or, Where Do We Go When We Die? Professor Nemerov

3. Take from the Rich and Give to the Poor: Sherwood Forest in Chico, California Professor Nemerov
THEME 3: FIRE AND WATER

Thursday, April 26

1. Coming into the Country Professor Kennedy
2. Sharing Resources: Water Rights and Water Law Professor Freyberg
3. Writing Aridity in the West Professor Fishkin


Tuesday, May 1

1. How the West Was Won and What it Has to Lose Professor Kennedy
2. Water in the West: Too Little? Professor Freyberg

Thursday, May 3

1. Water in the West: Too Much? Professor Freyberg
2. 36 Views of Lake Tahoe Professor Fishkin
3. Climate Change Adaptation to Fire and Water Professor Cain

Tuesday, May 8

1. Water Politics Professor Cain

2. Water and Power in the West Professor Freyberg
3. What Is A Work of Art?: A Meditation on Sergio Leone’s Exploding Bridge in The Good, The Bad and the Ugly Professor Nemerov
THEME 4: PEOPLES

Thursday, May 10

1. Native Americans Professor Kennedy

2. Western Multiculturalism Professor Cain

Tuesday, May 15

1. Native American Voices Remember Wounded Knee Professor Fishkin

2. Water, Sanitation, and Salmon on the Reservation Professor Freyberg

3. Tribal Governance Professor Cain

Thursday, May 17

1. The Chinese in the West: The Challenge of Reconstructing Chinese Railroad Workers' Lives Professor Fishkin
   - Browse the website of Chinese Railroad Workers in North America Project at Stanford University: http://chineserailroadworkers.stanford.edu

2. Immigration and “Reconquista” Professor Kennedy

3. The Chinese in the West: Discrimination and Exclusion Professor Fishkin
   - Twain, Mark. “Goldsmith’s Friend Abroad Again.” [1870, 1871] , Letters 1-4, 7
Tuesday, May 22

1. Emory Douglas and the Art of the Black Panthers, Oakland Professor Nemerov

2. Black California Writers Professor Fishkin


3. The Killing of Matthew Shepard, Laramie, Wyoming, October 6, 1998 Professor Nemerov
THEME 5: BOOM AND BUST

Thursday, May 24

1. Gold and Other Rushes *Professor Kennedy*

2. Writing the Gold Rush and the Silver Boom *Professor Fishkin*
   - Dame Shirley. *The Shirley Letters from California Mines in 1851-52*. San Francisco: Thomas C. Russell, 2007. Letter the sixth (pp. 77-86), twelfth (pp. 163-176), fourteenth (pp. 191-204), fifteenth (pp. 205-222), and twenty-second (pp. 317-334).

3. “The Observatory Scene in Rebel Without a Cause” (1954) *Professor Nemerov*

Tuesday, May 29

1. Boom: The Rise of Irrigated Agriculture in the West *Professor Freyberg*

2. Europe Discovers the West *Professor Fishkin*

3. The Modern Western Economy *Professor Kennedy*

Thursday, May 31

1. The Political Implications of Modern Boom and Bust: California and Wyoming Compared *Professor Cain*

2. Bust: Sustaining Irrigated Agriculture in the West (or Not) *Professor Freyberg*

3. The Port Chicago Disaster: Racial Injustice during World War II *Professor Nemerov*

Tuesday, June 5

1. Dams: Boom, Bust, or Both? *Professor Freyberg*

2. Bigfoot: The Rise and Fall of a Legend *Professor Nemerov*

3. Discussion