The American West

Am Stud 124A, ArtHist 152, English 124, History 151, PoliSci 124A

T/Th, 9:30 a.m.-11:20 a.m. Room: History 200-002

GERs: DB  Hum; EC  AmerCul

WAYS: WAY A II; WAY SI

Professors:

Bruce Cain (Political Science)  bcain@stanford.edu
David Freyberg (Civil and Environmental Engineering)  freyberg@stanford.edu
Shelley Fisher Fishkin (English)  sfishkin@stanford.edu
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Connie Wolf (Cantor Arts)  cwolf5@stanford.edu

Teaching Assistants:

Emily Zhang (Head TA) (Political Science)  erzhang@stanford.edu
Henry Rownd (Art History)  hrownd@stanford.edu
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Office Hours:

Bruce Cain: By appointment. Y2E2 Room 173.
Shelley Fisher Fishkin: Wednesdays, 1:00-2:30 p.m. in Bldg. 460, Room 420, or by appt.
David Freyberg: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:30 a.m. -1:20 p.m. in Y2E2 257, or by appt.
David Kennedy: By appointment.
Connie Wolf: By appointment.

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

The Course Reader will be available at the Stanford Bookstore (~$70) and on reserve at Green Library.

Online resources are posted on Coursework as assigned.

Many of our readings are made available through Stanford Libraries’ restricted databases, electronic journals, or ebooks. 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

Students are encouraged to respond to lectures with questions of their own. Attendance at and participation in lectures and discussion sections constitute 20% of your final grade.

Students are also expected to attend a talk by Carrie Kemper (Stanford ‘06), writer and producer for the Emmy-nominated television series "Silicon Valley" on HBO. The show is set in the the high-tech gold rush of modern Silicon Valley, in which the people most qualified to succeed are the least capable of handling success. The comedy is partially inspired by Mike Judge's own experiences as a Silicon Valley engineer in the late 1980s. The talk will be on May 12th, in the Tressider Oak Room East at 12:00pm. Pizza will be served.

Other talks organized for the class will be announced during the quarter.

Written Assignments

Students are expected to write two five-page papers throughout the quarter, each constituting 20% of the final grade. 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 be in the form of an essay. It will be due on June 8 and it will constitute 40% of the final grade.
Course Outline

THEME 1: TIME

March 29

1. What Is the West? Professor Kennedy

2. West in Historical Context Professor Kennedy

3. Deep Time: The West Under Foot Professor Freyberg

March 31

1. Writing the West Professor Fishkin

Readings/Lecture materials:


2. The Western Physical Landscape: Time Made Space Professor Freyberg
3. The Shrinking Iconic West-Demography Professor Cain

  
  http://xroads.virginia.edu/~Hyper/TURNER/. (click on table on contents for chapter 1)

April 5

(**Location: Cantor Arts Museum Auditorium**)

1. Western Politics Over Time Professor Cain


2. Red Horse: Drawings of the Battle of the Little Bighorn Professor Scott Sagan (Political Science)

THEME 2: SPACE

April 7

1. Open Space vs. Bordered Space in the West Professor Fishkin


2. Policy Spillover: Western Regional Problems and State Borders Professor Cain

  

3. Controlling Space: Federal Lands and Local control Professor Cain

April 12

1. **Big Sky Country** *Professor Kennedy*

2. **Western Natural Resources** *Professor Freyberg*

April 14

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

2. **Mobility vs. Confinement in the West** *Professor Fishkin*

3. **International Borders and the West** *Professor Cain*

April 19

(**Location: Cantor Arts Museum Auditorium**) 

1. **Manifest Destiny: Capturing the West through Painting**, *Professor Wolf*

2. **Best General View: The First Photographs of the American West**, *Professor Wolf*

3. **Discussion**

THEME 3: PEOPLES

April 21

1. **Legacies of Conquest** *Professor Kennedy*


2. **Sovereignty, Gaming and Tribal Identity** *Professor Cain*


3. **Sharing Water: Water Rights** *Professor Freyberg*

April 26

1. **Native American Voices Remember Wounded Knee** *Professor Fishkin*


2. **Water and Sanitation on the Reservation**  *Professor Freyberg*

3. **Black California Writers**  *Professor Fishkin*


April 28

1. **The Second Westward Movement and the “Reconquista”**  
   *Professor Kennedy*


2. **Western Multiculturalism**  
   *Professor Cain*

   - “A Racial/Ethnic Diversity Interpretation of Politics and Policy in the States of the U.S.”  
     Authors(s): Rodney E. Hero and Caroline J. Tolbert  

   *Professor Fishkin*

     12 May 2014. Coursework.  
   - Browse the website of Chinese Railroad Workers in North America Project at Stanford University: http://chineserailroadworkers.stanford.edu

May 3

1. **The Chinese in the West: Discrimination and Exclusion**  
   *Professor Fishkin*

     http://www.twainquotes.com/Galaxy/187005e.html
   - Twain, Mark. “Goldsmith’s Friend Abroad Again.” [1870, 1871], Letters 1-4, 7,  
     http://www.gutenberg.org/files/3191/3191-h/3191-h.htm
2. Who Owns History: The *America as West* Exhibition Professor Wolf

3. Discussion

THEME 4: WATER

May 5

1. Water in the West: Too Little? Professor Freyberg

2. Writing Aridity in the West Professor Fishkin


3. Federalism and Western Water Governance Professor Cain

  
http://mitpress.mit.edu/sites/default/files/titles/content/9780262512978_sch_0001.pdf

May 10

1. 36 Views of Lake Tahoe Professor Fishkin

2. Coming Into the Country Professor Kennedy

3. Water in the West: Too Much? Professor Freyberg

May 12

1. Watering the West Professor Kennedy

  
http://www.sciencemag.org/content/303/5661/1124.full

2. Water Politics Professor Cain

  
http://escholarship.org/uc/item/0685t8n2

3. Water and Power in the West Professor Freyberg

May 17

(**Location: Cantor Arts Museum Auditorium**) 

1. Artists’ Views on Water: Abundance/Alteration/Decimation Professor Wolf

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3. Discussion
THEME 5: BOOM AND BUST

May 19

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

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

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


May 24

1. **The 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. [http://www.gutenberg.org/files/23280/23280-h/23280-h.htm](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/23280/23280-h/23280-h.htm) Letter the sixth (pp. 77 - 86), twelfth (pp. 163 - 176), fourteenth (pp. 191 - 204), fifteenth (pp. 205 - 222), and twenty - second (pp. 317 - 334). Be sure to read the full text beneath each synopsis.


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

May 26

1. **Feast or Famine: Budget Cycles and Western State Governments** *Professor Cain*


2. **The Modern Western Economy** *Professor Kennedy*

May 31

1. The Homes We Build: What makes the West distinctive *Professor Wolf*

2. Europe Discovers the West *Professor Fishkin*


3. Discussion