



### **The Course:**

This course examines the history of the imagined American West, how Americans have shaped and have been shaped by the mythologies and expressions of the imagined West, and how the imagined West has served as a means of expressing identities, ideologies, and values. We will study how collective memories and cultural representations of the frontier and the region we call "the West" have influenced our histories and informed our sense of national identity. The course will pay special attention to how frontier myths have misrepresented Native Americans or erased them from the narrative entirely. Issues of race and gender, false nostalgia in historical memory, and the meanings of "frontier" will also be topics of focus. The course relies on interdisciplinary cultural history, exploring images of the American West through film, literature, art, photography, music, and other cultural productions to understand how these images reflected and shaped American notions of the West.

### **Aims of the Course:**

- To develop in-depth historical thinking, an increased ability to analyze and interpret the world historically. To better recognize change and contingency.
- To develop skills of critical thought about primary and secondary sources. To learn to weigh and interpret conflicting evidence.
- To improve reading and writing skills in the effort to build one's own informed and evidence-based arguments.
- To better process information and opinions from a spoken source, whether from peers in classroom discussions or lectures. To better express one's own thoughts in a discussion.
- To cultivate one's aptitude for empathy. To contemplate the life experiences of unfamiliar peoples. To put that understanding in context and apply it to the present.
- Recognize the inaccurate Euro-American representations of Native Americans driven by settler-colonialism and racism.

---

## COVID Accommodations and Strategies:

- **Please visit <https://coronavirus.ufl.edu/> for valuable information.**
- The University recommends wearing a mask in the classroom. UF also recommends vaccination: "in alignment with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as well as UF Health, we continue to encourage everyone to get vaccinated to minimize their risk of contracting COVID-19."
- Please make every effort, if possible, to keep distance between you and your classmates.
- **Even if you believe that getting COVID is harmless to you, it can be very harmful to others around you.**
- **Please do not attend class in-person if you feel under the weather, even if you are certain that you do not have COVID!** You will not be penalized in this course because of poor health. Test and retest if you feel sick. Testing is readily available using at-home test kits, local pharmacies or through your primary care physician. If you test positive for COVID, please reach out to those you have recently been in close contact with to inform them of your status.
- All of our class meetings will be recorded. You can only gain access to the recording(s) of the class meeting(s) you miss because of extraordinary circumstances, including quarantine or illness. You can also attend a class meeting virtually via Zoom if you must miss the meeting because of extraordinary circumstances. Be aware that these accommodations are temporary, determined by the instructor, and only available for an extended period of time (not permanent) on a case-by-case basis. Examples of extraordinary circumstances include illness, disability, serious family emergencies, special curricular requirements, military obligation, severe weather conditions, religious holidays, participation in official university activities, and court-imposed legal obligations.
- If the university shifts to remote delivery, our course will shift without interruption.
- **Eating is not permitted during class.** Individuals should leave the classroom to eat, if necessary. If you require accommodations due to a disability, please contact the Disability Resource Center.

## Support, Health, & Wellness:

- Students that experience a family or personal emergency (death in the family, unplanned hospitalization, etc.) may contact the [Dean of Students Office Care Team](#) for help dealing with extended absences (like contacting instructors on your behalf).
- As a student, you may experience a range of challenges that can interfere with learning. Mental health concerns or stressful events may diminish your academic performance and/or reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. The UF Counseling & Wellness Center (CWC) is available to provide support, and participation in services does work. You can learn more about confidential mental health services available on campus at: [counseling.ufl.edu](https://counseling.ufl.edu) Support is available (24/7) from the CWC who can be reached at: 352-392-1575 for brief consultation or support for urgent/emergent concerns.

- The U Matter, We Care Initiative aims to assist the UF community with: care related resources and programs focused on health, safety, and holistic well-being, finding an appropriate network of support, and education and training. : If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu), 352-392-1575, or visit U Matter, We Care website to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
- 

### Course Expectations:

- **Engagement:** Your attendance, your contribution to our discussions, and your work outside of class are all essential to your success.
  - **Attend:** I strongly discourage absences, but I do not “take attendance.” If absences are excessive, the instructor will give student a warning, and instructor reserves the right to fail a student because of lack of attendance. **Please do not attend class if you are feeling sick.** If an extraordinary circumstance occurs in your personal life that causes you to miss assignments or substantial portions of class, please let me know. You don't have to explain your circumstances to me if you need assistance in this course. I'm here to help. See info above regarding class recordings.
  - **Participate:** You are a part of this course: ask questions, express your thoughts. Our in-class discussions are not graded, but two online discussion board assignments will be. We'll also have eight in-class exercises that are graded.
  - **Read:** You should do all the required reading, including weblinks. Repeated absences and/or failing to stay caught up on the assigned readings will strongly hamper your ability to excel in this course.
  - **Watch:** Yes, you get to watch stuff for this course.
  - **Monitor Canvas:** Course announcements, information, assignments, and supplemental readings and links will be posted on the course's Canvas website.
- **Originality:** The work you do here is your own. You will present your own thoughts about what you read, watch, and research. You should not present anyone else's work as your own, so you must cite your sources. Collaboration with fellow students is allowed only with instructor's permission.
  - Each University of Florida student is required to be familiar with and abide by the University's Student Conduct Code. Click [here to read the Code](#). Students with questions about how these policies apply to a particular course or assignment should immediately contact their instructor.
  - Cheating on exams, quizzes, or any assignment will result in failure.
  - The University has access to sophisticated methods for detecting plagiarism. This instructor will know if you use someone else's work as your own.
  - I consider selling notes or PowerPoints to any commercial service a violation of my intellectual property rights and/or copyright law as well as a violation of the Student Conduct Code.
  - Continued enrollment in this class signifies intent to abide by these policies.

---

**Course Assignments (Details on Canvas):**

- **In-class Exercises** - There will be 10 or 11 in-class exercises that will be graded – if you miss class, you miss the grade, no make-ups. But this should not affect your grade unless you miss an inordinate number of classes because **only your 7 best in-class exercises will count toward your final grade. Your worst exercise scores will be dropped. Please understand this!**
- **Canvas Discussions** – There will be 2 discussions that will take advantage of Canvas’s discussion board feature. Each will ask you to make two posts about a shared topic. Your first post must be submitted by Monday 11:59 PM of the week that the discussion takes place. Your second, follow-up response must be posted by class time Thursday.
- **Film or Literature Essay** – Students will complete an essay that analyzes a “western” film or book, your choice. Suggestions for this assignment are at the end of this document. Different due dates depending on your choice of Film or Literature.
- **Music or Gaming Essay** – Students will complete an essay that presents the narrative and themes of a song (or piece of music) or a video game, your choice. “Digital” projects are welcome. Different due dates depending on your choice of Music or Gaming.
- **Primary Source Project** – Students will think critically and write about a primary source that fits within the themes of our course. Many more details are on Canvas. Students also have the option to present the project in a digital format, using a platform like StoryMaps.
- **Exams** – There will be two exams, a midterm and final, that students will complete at our scheduled class time, but on Canvas. In each exam you will choose two of three essay questions given to you at the start of the exam.
- **Grading** – You do not have to email me to ask about your grade. All grades will be posted on Canvas throughout the semester. Your final grade only appears on One.UF. Click [here for UF Grading Policies](#).  
Primary Source Project ----- 50 Points  
Primary Source Project Proposal --- 10 Points  
Film or Literature Essay ----- 35 Points  
Music or Gaming Essay ----- 35 Points  
Seven Best In-class Exercises ----- 70 Points  
Two Canvas Discussions ----- 20 Points  
Exam #1 ----- 70 Points  
Exam #2 ----- 75 Points  
**TOTAL ----- 375 Points**
- **Academic Resources & Support** - <https://academicresources.clas.ufl.edu/>
  - **The Writing Studio** - <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>
  - **Using the Libraries** - <https://uflib.ufl.edu/using-the-libraries/>

## Course Policies:

- **Tardiness** – Please come to class on time. If you are more than 10 minutes late, do not walk into class. Habitual tardiness will not be accepted.
  - **While in Class** – Respect the learning experience of your classmates.
    - You may not record or photograph the instructor or lecture slides without explicit, written permission by the instructor. Lectures are protected by copyright.
  - **Email** – I will be happy to respond to most any question or concern you might have through email, but I cannot treat your email as a text message. It might take some time for me to respond. There is also no guarantee that I will respond on the weekends. **Before emailing me, check the syllabus for any solution to your question.** When emailing, be sure to use the subject line to identify yourself by first & last name and course number. Thanks!
  - **Students requiring accommodations:** connect with the disability Resource Center. Click [here to get started with the Disability Resource Center](#). It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.
  - **Make-up Exams** – A make-up exam can be given for those missing the midterm because of EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES and at the sole discretion of the instructor. Only the midterm exam can be made up. That exam will be administered on one day only.
  - **Inclement Weather** – If the University of Florida is closed because of bad weather, class will be canceled.
  - **Emergency Procedures** – Many types of emergencies can occur on campus; instructions for specific emergencies such as severe weather, active assailant, or fire can be found at <https://emergency.ufl.edu/>.
  - **Office Hours** – I'd be happy to meet with you throughout the semester, via Zoom is also fine. My hours are on Wednesday, 10:00-12:00. You can email me at [jgage1@ufl.edu](mailto:jgage1@ufl.edu) to let me know you're coming (or would like to Zoom), or you can just drop in. Alternative times can also be scheduled.
  - **GatorEvals** – Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals or in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals.
- 

## Required Readings:

**All of our required readings are available electronically through Canvas.**

### **Complete Monographs:**

- Phillip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998) – Free online via UF Libraries.

### **Fiction:**

- James Fenimore Cooper, *The Pioneers* (1824).

### **Articles and Chapters** (available on Canvas):

- Richard Aquila, "Introduction" and "A Blaze of Glory: The Mythic West in Pop and Rock Music," in *Wanted Dead or Alive* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1996), pp. 1-19, 191-215.
- Jeff Berglund's review of *Pocahontas* in *Seeing Red: Hollywood's Pixeled Skins: American Indians and Film* (Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2013).
- Rachel Buff, "Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa: Myth, Historiography and Popular Memory," *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historique*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Spring 1995), pp. 277-299.
- Tom Colonese, "Native American Reaction to The Searchers" in *The Searchers: Essays and Reflections on John Ford's Classic Western* (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 2004).
- Phillip Deloria's review of *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992) in *Seeing Red*.
- Vine Deloria, Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*, Ch. 2.
- Patricia Limerick, "Introduction" in *Something in the Soil: Legacies and Reckonings in the New West* (New York: W.W. Norton Co., 2000).
- Ken Nolley, "The Representation of Conquest: John Ford and the Hollywood Indian, 1939-1964," in *Hollywood's Indian* (Lexington: Univ. of Kentucky Press, 1998).
- Jean M. O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2010). – Introduction & Chapter 2.
- Paul Chaat Smith, "The Big Movie," in *Everything You Know About Indians is Wrong* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), pp. 43-52.
- Susan Stebbins' review of *The Searchers* in *Seeing Red*.
- Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (1893)
- Elliott West, "Selling the Myth: Western Images in Advertising," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (Summer, 1996).
- Esther Wright, "Rockstar Games, *Red Dead Redemption*, and Narratives of 'Progress,'" *European Journal of American Studies* 16, 3 (2021): 1-19.

➤ **Additional readings are linked in the schedule below.**

### **Required Films:**

- *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992) – In-class
- [The Great Train Robbery](#) (1903) – In-class
- [High Noon](#) (1952) – Free on Pluto TV
- *The Searchers* (1956) – In-class
- *Unforgiven* (1992) – HBO Max or \$3.99 on various services
- *Reel Injun* (2009) – In-class

### **Warning of Graphic Materials:**

- Some assigned or recommended course materials contains subject matter and imagery that may be upsetting or traumatic, including violence. If you are concerned about such materials, please do not hesitate to let me know.
- 

## Class Schedule:

### Week 1 –

- **Aug. 25:** Welcome
  - **Read:** Begin James Fenimore Cooper, *The Pioneers*; Paul Chaat Smith, "The Big Movie"
  - **Explore:** [Native Lands](#)

### Week 2 –

- **Aug. 30:** Myths, the "Frontier," and "The West"
  - **Read:** Patricia Limerick, "Introduction," in *Something in the Soil*; "[Decolonizing Idaho's Road Signs](#)"
- **Sept. 1:** Pre-Columbian Images and A New World
  - **Read:** Vine Deloria, Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins* (Ch. 2)

### Week 3 –

- **Sept. 6:** America East to West: Christianity, the Enlightenment, & Romanticism
  - **Read:** "[Thomas Jefferson Built This Country on Mastodons](#)"; Continue *The Pioneers*
- **Sept. 8:** America West to East: Indigenous Americans and European "Indian Hating"
  - **Read:** Jean M. O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*, Introduction, Chapter 2

### Week 4 –

- **Sept. 13:** American Revolution and Early Republic
  - **Read:** Richard Aquila, "Introduction," in *Wanted Dead or Alive*, pp. 1-19.
- **Sept. 15:** Early Literature

### Week 5 –

- **Sept. 20:** Louisiana and Lewis & Clark
  - **Read:** Finish *The Pioneers*
- **Sept. 22:** In-class **DISCUSSION:** *The Pioneers*  
**SCREENING:** *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992)
  - **Read:** Phillip Deloria's review of *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992) in *Seeing Red*; Jeff Berglund's review of *Pocahontas* in *Seeing Red*
  - **DUE:** Canvas Discussion #1

### Week 6 –

- **Sept. 27:** Political Imagery
  - **Explore:** [Pioneer Monuments in the American](#)

- **Sept. 29:** Manifest Destiny and Indigenous Erasure
  - **DUE:** Primary Document Project Proposal

#### Week 7 –

- **Oct. 4:** The West in Art
  - **Explore:** Art Exhibit Links on Canvas
- **Oct. 6:** Expansion, Gold, and Slavery
  - **Listen:** Podcast - "[Little War on the Prairie](#)"

#### Week 8 –

- **Oct. 11: EXAM #1**
- **Oct. 13: NO CLASS!**
  - **Read:** Esther Wright, "Rockstar Games, *Red Dead Redemption*, and Narratives of 'Progress'"; "[You Died of Dysentery: 50 Years of Traveling the Oregon Trail](#)"; "[A New Spin on A Classic Video Game Gives Native Americans Better Representation](#)"
  - **Play:** [The Oregon Trail \(1990\)](#)

#### Week 9 –

- **Oct. 18:** Custer and the Epic of Defeat
  - **Read:** Begin Phillip Deloria, *Playing Indian*
  - **DUE:** Canvas Discussion #2
- **Oct. 20:** Cowboys and Dime Novels
  - **Explore:** [Frontier Fantasies: Imagining the American West in the Dime Novel](#)
  - **DUE:** Gaming Essay (if you've chosen to do a Gaming Essay instead of a Music Essay)

#### Week 10 –

- **Oct. 25:** Music I
  - **Read:** Richard Aquila, "A Blaze of Glory: The Mythic West in Pop and Rock Music"
- **Oct. 27:** Music II
  - **DUE:** Literature Essay (if you've chosen to do a Literature Essay instead of Film Essay)

#### Week 11 –

- **Nov. 1:** The West Performed: Buffalo Bill Cody
  - **Read:** [Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History"](#)
- **Nov. 3:** Art Part II / The Myth Goes to College: Frederick Jackson Turner
  - **DUE:** Music Essay (if you've chosen to do a Music Essay instead of a Gaming Essay)

#### Week 12 –

- **Nov. 8:** John Muir and National Parks
  - **Explore:** [The John Muir Exhibit](#)
  - **Read:** "[Sierra Club Grapples with Founder John Muir's Racism](#)"
- **Nov. 10:** Masculinity & the West: Roosevelt, Remington, & Wister; **SCREENING:** *Reel Injun*



### Week 13 –

- **Nov. 15:** The West in Early Film
  - **Read:** Ken Nolley, “The Representation of Conquest: John Ford and the Hollywood Indian”; [“Iconic Clint Eastwood Western dubbed in Navajo”](#)
- **Nov. 17:** Film of the 1920-1950s; **SCREENING:** *The Searchers* (1956)
  - **Read:** Tom Colonese, “Native American Reaction to *The Searchers*”; Susan Stebbins’ review of *The Searchers* in *Seeing Red*

### Week 14 –

- **Nov. 22: NO CLASS!**
  - **DUE Tuesday Nov. 22:** Film Essay (if you’ve chosen to do a Film Essay instead of a Literature Essay)

### Week 15 –

- Nov. 29: Television in the Golden Age
  - **Read:** [Liza Black, “Native TV in 2021”](#)
- Dec. 1: Television and Film 1960s-1990s
  - **Watch:** *Unforgiven* (1992)

### Week 16 –

- Dec. 6: Advertising & Tourism
  - **Read:** Elliott West, “Selling the Myth: Western Images in Advertising”
  - **Explore:** [Early Advertising of the West, 1867-1918](#)
  - **Watch:** Lindsay Stallones Marshall, [“Saving History from the Cowboys”](#)
- **DUE Dec. 6:** Primary Document Project

### FINAL EXAM: TBD

---

#### Film Essay Suggestions (Rental prices and service availability can change):

- *Cimarron* (1931) - \$1.99 on various services
- *Stagecoach* (1939) – Free on various services
- *The Ox-Bow Incident* (1942) – Hulu or \$3.99 on various services
- *Fort Apache* (1948) - \$1.99 on various services
- *Red River* (1948) – Hulu or \$3.99 on various services
- *Shane* (1953) – Hulu or \$2.99 on various services
- *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962) - \$2.99 on various services
- *Cat Ballou* (1965) – Free on Roku Channel
- *Hang 'Em High* (1968) – Free on various services
- *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968) – Hulu or \$2.99 on various services
- *The Wild Bunch* (1969) - \$1.99 on various services
- *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969) - \$3.99 on various services
- *Little Big Man* (1970) – Prime Video or \$2.99 on Vudu
- *The Last Picture Show* (1971) – Hulu or \$2.99 on various services

- *Blazing Saddles* (1974) – HBO Max or \$3.99 on various services
- *Young Guns* (1988) – Prime Video
- *Dances with Wolves* (1990) – Netflix or \$3.99 on various services
- *Smoke Signals* (1998) – Hulu or \$2.99 on various services
- *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford* (2007) - \$2.99 on various
- *True Grit* (2010) – Free on Pluto.tv, also on Netflix
- *Hell or High Water* (2016) – Netflix or \$3.99 on various services

### **Literature Essay Suggestions:**

- James Fenimore Cooper, *The Deerslayer* (1841) or *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826) or *The Pathfinder* (1840), or *The Prairie* (1827)
- Mark Twain, *Roughing It* (1872)
- Ned Buntline, *Buffalo Bill and His Adventures in the West* (1886)
- Owen Wister, *The Virginian* (1902)
- Mary Hunter Austin, *The Land of Little Rain* (1903)
- Zane Grey, *Riders of the Purple Sage* (1912)
- Willa Cather, *O Pioneers!* (1913)
- D'Arcy McNickle, *The Surrounded* (1936)
- Wallace Stegner, *The Big Rock Candy Mountain* (1943)
- A. B. Guthrie, *The Way West* (1949)
- Charles Portis, *True Grit* (1968)
- Cormac McCarthy, *Blood Meridian* (1985)
- Larry McMurtry, *Lonesome Dove* (1985)

### **Suggested Readings:**

- Liza Black, *Picturing Indians: Native Americans in Film, 1941–1960*
- Jules David Brown, et al, *Discovered Lands, Invented Pasts: Transforming Visions of the American West*
- Lawrence Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure*
- William Goetzmann, *The West of the Imagination*
- Thomas Hallock, *From the Fallen Tree: Frontier Narratives, Environmental Politics, and the Roots of a National Pastoral, 1749-1826*
- Lee Mitchell, *Westerns: Making the Man in Fiction and Film*
- L.G. Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians, 1883-1933*
- Katrina Phillips, *Staging Indigeneity: Salvage Tourism and the Performance of Native American History*
- Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America*
- Jane Tompkins, *West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns*
- Alan Trachtenberg, *Shades of Hiawatha: Staging Indians, Making Americans, 1880-1930*

**THE INSTRUCTOR RESERVES THE RIGHT TO MAKE ANY NECESSARY CHANGES TO THE SYLLABUS AND COURSE POLICY DURING THE SEMESTER.**

**CHANGES WILL BE ANNOUNCED IN CLASS.**