

The Frontier in American Culture

COURSE GUIDE

History 324w

Spring 2002

Prof. Tolbert
Office: McIver 210

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Office Phone: 334-4646
Hours: Tues. & Thurs.
11:00-12:00; and by appt.

Course Objectives

By the end of the semester you should be able to:

- ?? Evaluate historical debates over the role and significance of the frontier in the development of American culture.
- ?? Identify and evaluate key events in the geographic expansion of the American frontier and assess the consequences of expansion in American history.
- ?? Assess the meanings of the frontier as a symbol in the development of a distinctive American culture.
- ?? Evaluate the interactions of diverse groups of people in the American frontier, paying particular attention to the factors of gender, race, ethnicity and cultural diversity.
- ?? Evaluate different types of historical evidence documenting the American frontier including maps, paintings, films, documents, and such popular cultural inventions as the wild west show.
- ?? Practice a variety of writing styles and formats.
- ?? Improve your writing skills by learning to assess the strengths and weaknesses of your own writing through peer evaluation.

Required Readings

Books: (available at UNCG Bookstore)

Etulain, Richard W., ed. *Does the Frontier Experience Make America Exceptional?* Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1999.

Fischer, David Hackett and James C. Kelly. *Bound Away: Virginia and the Westward Movement*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000.

Kasson, Joy. *Buffalo Bill's Wild West: Celebrity, Memory, and Popular History*. New York: Hill & Wang, 2000.

Reserve Readings (Reserve Room in Jackson Library and on the web)

Cronon, William. "Telling Tales on Canvas: Landscapes of Frontier Change" In *Discovered Lands, Invented Pasts: Transforming Visions of the American West*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.

Gulliford, Andrew. "The West As America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier, 1820-1920." *The Journal of American History* Vol. 79, No. 1 (Jun. 1992): 199-208. [JSTOR]

Hight, K. S., "'Doomed to Perish': George Catlin's Depictions of the Mandan." *Art Journal*. Vol. 49, No. 2 (Summer 1990): 119-124. [EBSCOhost]

Johns, Elizabeth. In *American Genre Painting: The Politics of Everyday Life*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991.

Schimmel, Julie. "Inventing 'the Indian.'" In *The West As America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier, 1820-1920.*" Edited by William H. Truettner. Washington: Published for the National Museum of American Art by the Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991.

Evaluation

Participation	10%
Unit 1 Test	20%
Unit 2 Test	20%
Unit 3 Portfolio	20%
Unit 4 Essay	30%

Attendance Policy

Faithful attendance is essential for your learning in this course. Therefore, beyond the part attendance plays in the overall participation grade, **there will be a 3% reduction of the student's final grade for each absence after the first 3.** Beyond even this penalty, a student who seriously neglects attendance and preparation risks failing the course. You are responsible for all materials and information discussed in classes you miss.

Participation (10%)

This assessment will be based on three criteria:

1. Consistent **attendance**--This is not a traditional lecture course. We will be critically evaluating the content of the readings and practicing the application of analytical skills during each class period. You will not be able to make up for your absences by copying someone else's notes. For this reason, consistent attendance is essential to your learning in this course. See above for an explanation of the course attendance policy which has an impact on your overall grade in the course beyond its importance for evaluating your participation.
2. Thorough **preparation** for class--readings must be completed before class and assignments must be turned in on time. There will be a penalty for late assignments and no assignments that are more than one week late will be accepted for credit.
3. Regular **contributions to class discussions**--the success of this course for your learning depends on active intellectual engagement with your peers. Discussions will take place during every class meeting in both small group exercises and as a whole class.

Tests

There will be two open-book, take-home essay tests at the end of Units 1 and 2. Responses must be typed. Questions will focus on key terms, issues, events, and ideas explored in each unit. Tests will be due at the beginning of the next class period scheduled after you receive the test.

Unit 3 Portfolio

Unit 3 focuses on the ways that the frontier has been constructed or interpreted by a wide range of American artists. You will produce a portfolio that evaluates the meaning and significance of selected paintings for understanding the history of the frontier in the United States. Specific instructions will be provided well in advance of the due date. You will produce drafts of your work and there will be at least one writing workshop focusing on successful completion of this assignment.

Unit 4 Essay

You will produce an essay (about 5-7 pages) that evaluates key themes or issues raised in Joy Kasson's book, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West*. We will evaluate drafts in writing workshops that will train you to identify strengths and weaknesses in your essays and improve your skills as a writer. Detailed instructions will be provided well in advance of the due date. You will complete a full draft of this essay for revision and we will conduct peer review in a writing workshop as part of the revision process.

Course Schedule

Unit 1. The Frontier as Myth, Symbol, and Experience

17 January Frederick Jackson Turner and the Significance of the Frontier in American History

Read: Etulain, *Does the Frontier Experience Make America Exceptional?* pp. 1-43.

22 January Frederick Jackson Turner and the Significance of the Frontier in American History

Read: Etulain, *Does the Frontier Experience Make America Exceptional?* pp. 1-43.

24 January Turner's Critics: New Questions about the Frontier

Read: Etulain, *Does the Frontier Experience Make America Exceptional?* pp. 45-85.

29 January Frontier/West

Read: Etulain, *Does the Frontier Experience Make America Exceptional?* pp. 87-128.

31 January Unit 1 Test

Unit 2. Moving West: The Frontier as Experience, 1600-1860

5 February Migration to Virginia

Read: Fischer and Kelly, *Bound Away*, pp. 1-73

7 February Migration in Virginia

Read: Fischer and Kelly, *Bound Away*, pp. 74-134

12 February Migration Beyond Virginia

Read: Fischer and Kelly, *Bound Away*, pp. 135-201

14 February Problems of Cause and Consequence

Read: Fischer and Kelly, *Bound Away*, pp. 202-228

19 February African American Migration
Read: Fischer and Kelly, *Bound Away*, pp. 229-252

21 February The Cultural Legacy
Read: Fischer and Kelly, *Bound Away*, pp. 253-304

26 February Unit 2 Test

Unit 3. Art and the West: Frontier as Myth and Symbol, 1830-1990

28 February Landscapes: Wilderness and the West
Read: Cronon, "Telling Tales on Canvas: Landscapes of Frontier Change"

5 March- Telling Tales on Canvas: Landscapes of Frontier Change
Read: Cronon, "Telling Tales on Canvas: Landscapes of Frontier Change"

7 March Genre Paintings: Competing Visions of the Western Hero
Read: Johns, "From the Outer Verge of Our Civilization."

12/14 March !!!!!!!!! SPRING BREAK !!!!!!!!!

19 March West as America: Politics of Exhibiting Western Art
Portfolio workshop. Two caption drafts due
Read: Gulliford, "The West As America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier, 1820-1920."

21 March Indian Portraits: Views of a Vanishing Frontier
Read: Hight, K. S. "Doomed to Perish."

26 March Inventing the Indian
Read: Schimmel, Julie, "Inventing the Indian."

28 March Unit 3 Portfolios due--presentations

Unit 4. The Wild West Show: Frontier as History and Memory, 1870-1920

2 April Inventing the Wild West, 1868-1886
Read: Kasson, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West*, pp. 3-63

4 April The Wild West Abroad, 1887-1892
Read: Kasson, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West*, pp. 65-91

9 April At the Columbian Exposition, 1893
Read: Kasson, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West*, pp. 93-121

11 April Buffalo Bill and Modern Celebrity
Read: Kasson. pp. 123-158

16 April American Indian Performers in the Wild West
Read: Kasson, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West*, pp. 161-219

18 April Memory, Modernity, and National Identity
Read: Kasson, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West*, pp. 221-273

23 April Unit 4 Essay pre-writing workshop

25 April Unit 4 Essay drafts due

30 April Unit 4 Essay peer review

2 May Unit 4 Essay due

Course Syllabus

COURSE NUMBER: HIS 324

COURSE TITLE: The Frontier in American Culture

CREDITS: (3:3)

PREREQUISITES/COREQUISITES: None

FOR WHOM PLANNED:

Undergraduate history majors.

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION: Office numbers, office hours, phone numbers, and email addresses should be listed.

Dr. L. Tolbert, 210 McIver, 334-4646, lctolber@uncg.edu

hours depend on teaching schedule—generally Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:00-1:00.

CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

Role of the frontier as symbol and region in the development of American culture from early settlement to the twentieth century. Topics include race, gender, ethnicity, and popular culture.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Students will be able to

- ?? evaluate historical debates over the role and significance of the frontier in the development of American culture.
- ?? identify and evaluate key events in the geographic expansion of the American frontier and assess the consequences of expansion in American history
- ?? assess the meanings of the frontier as a symbol in the development of a distinctive American culture
- ?? evaluate the interactions of diverse groups of people in the American frontier, paying particular attention to the factors of gender, race, ethnicity and cultural diversity
- ?? evaluate different types of historical evidence documenting the American frontier including maps, paintings, films, documents, and such popular cultural inventions as the wild west show.

TEACHING STRATEGIES:

Teaching strategies will be varied and will emphasize active learning. I will employ lecturing, slide presentations, directed small group activities, writing workshops, and student presentations.

EVALUATION METHODS AND GUIDELINES FOR ASSIGNMENTS:

Students will be evaluated based on their class participation (10%), two essay tests (20% each), frequent informal writing assignments (10%), and a final research project (40%, essay with footnotes and bibliography).

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Etulain, Richard W., ed. Does the Frontier Experience Make America Exceptional? Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1999.
- Fischer, David Hackett and James C. Kelly. Bound Away: Virginia and the Westward Movement. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000.
- White, Richard. "It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own": A New History of the American West. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991.
- Kasson, Joy. Buffalo Bill's Wild West. Hill & Wang, 2000.

REQUIRED READINGS [Electronic Reserves]

- Cronon, William. "Telling Tales on Canvas: *Landscapes of Frontier Change*" In Discovered Lands, Invented Pasts: Transforming Visions of the American West. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.
- Demos, John. The Unredeemed Captive. New York: Random, 1994. [selections]
- Perkins, Elizabeth A. "The Consumer Frontier: Household Consumption in Early Kentucky," Journal of American History 78 (September 1991): 486-510.
- Slotkin, Richard. Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America. New York: Atheneum, 1992. [selections]

REFERENCES:

- Aron, Stephen. How the West was Lost: The Transformation of Kentucky from Daniel Boone to Henry Clay, 1996.
- Calloway, Colin G., ed. Our Hearts Fell to the Ground: Plains Indian Views of How the West Was Lost. Bedford/St. Martin's Press.
- *Etulain, Richard W. Re-imagining the Modern American West: A Century of Fiction, History, and Art. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996.
- *Etulain, Richard W. Telling Western Stories: From Buffalo Bill to Larry McMurtry. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999.
- Faragher, John Mack, ed., Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1994.
- Hutsler, Donald A. The Architecture of Migration: Log Construction in the Ohio Country, 1750-1850. Athens, Ohio, 1986.
- Kolodny, Annette. The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers, 1630-1860. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984.
- Limerick, Patricia Nelson. Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.
- *Nash, Gerald D. Creating the West: Historical Interpretations 1890-1990. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991.
- Russell, Don. The Wild West or, A History of the Wild West Shows. Fort Worth, Tex.: Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, 1970.
- Smith, Henry Nash. Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth. 1950. Reprint. New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1961.

TOPICAL OUTLINE:

- Unit 1: Defining the Frontier: Place, Process, or Symbol?
?? Frederick Jackson Turner and the frontier as a process

- ?? Donald Worster and the geographic frontier
- ?? Henry Nash Smith, Richard White, and the symbolic frontier
- ?? Patricia Nelson Limerick and the New Western history

Unit 2: Colonial America: Frontier and American Identity

- ?? Atlantic World frontier: Red, White and Black in America
- ?? Unredeemed Captives: Puritans and Indians
- ?? Hector St. John Crèvecoeur: Inventing America

Unit 3: Nineteenth-Century America: Frontier and American Nationalism

- ?? Moving West: the Migrants' Point of View
- ?? Race and Conquest: Expanding the White Republic
- ?? Log Cabins and Pioneers: Myth and Symbol on the American Frontier
- ?? Wild West Shows and Dime Novel Heroes

Unit 4: Twentieth Century American: Frontier and American Memory

- ?? Hollywood frontiers
- ?? Space: the final frontier

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

This is the attendance policy I use in my lower level courses:

Faithful attendance is essential for your learning in this course. Therefore, beyond the part attendance plays in the overall participation grade, **one point will be subtracted from the student's final grade for each absence after the first 3.** Beyond even this penalty, a student who seriously neglects attendance and preparation risks failing the course.

WESTERN (VH8069)

Part of the series AMERICAN CINEMA.

This item is in VHS format is 60 minutes long.

Collection: Instructional

Associated subjects: FILM-WESTERN

Description: New York Center for Visual History, color and b/w. 1995. Travels through the early days of shoot-em ups, through John Ford's Stagecoach to Dances with wolves. Features an interview with Clint Eastwood.

VIEWS OF A VANISHING FRONTIER (VH9303)

This item is in VHS format is 56 minutes long.

Collection: Instructional

Associated subjects: INDIANS OF NORTH AMERICA;BODMER, KARL

Description: Metropolitan Museum of Art, color. 1988. Chronicles the trip taken by scientist Prince Maximilian and painter Karl Bodmer in 1832-1833 along the Missouri River where they recorded both visually and in writing the Indian cultures they encountered. Stresses the importance of these records today to contemporary Indians as they attempt to document their history and culture.

GREAT ENCOUNTER PART 1 (VH2422)

Part of the series LAND OF THE EAGLE.

This item is in VHS format is 60 minutes long.

Collection: Instructional

Associated subjects: U.S. HISTORY-COLONIAL;ROANOKE ISLAND;INDIANS OF NORTH AMERICA

Description: PBS, Color, 1991. Portrays the struggles of the early English colonists of Roanoke Island, the Chesapeake Bay area, and the Pilgrim settlements of Massachusetts as they fought to establish dominion over the land. Contrasts the European wilderness encounters with the Cherokee.

WILDERNESS AND THE WEST (VH5690)

Part of the series AMERICAN VISIONS: PT. 3.

This item is in VHS format is 60 minutes long.

Collection: Instructional

Associated subjects: ART;ARCHITECTURE;U.S. HISTORY

Description: BBC, color. 1996. Looks at landscape painting with both its religious and patriotic connotations. Examines the work of Bierstadt, Audubon, Church, Remington

and Cole.