

SYLLABUS

Chadron State College – North Platte Campus
History 441/541: Topics in History – The American West
Dr. Wolar
Fall, 2004
Saturday – 9:30 a.m.
Room 134

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Robert V. Hine and John Mack Faragher, The American West: A New Interpretive History (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).
Clyde A. Milner, Anne M. Butler, and David Rich Lewis, Major Problems in the History of the American West. Second Edition. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997).

ON RESERVE:

Nebraska History, Spring 1999, Vol. 80, No. 1.
Jay Parini, “A Sense of Place Grounds History in Personal Discovery,”
The Chronicle of Higher Education, December 8, 2000.
“Change of Heartland”, National Geographic, May, 2004.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

Bernard DeVoto (ed.), The Journals of Lewis and Clark (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).
Francis Parkman, Jr., The Oregon Trail (New York: Penguin, 1982).
Wallace Stegner, Beyond the Hundredth Meridian (New York: Penguin, 1992).
Howard R. Lamar (ed.), The New Encyclopedia of the American West (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).
William E. Riebsame (ed.), Atlas of the New West: Portrait of a Changing Region (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997).
“Western Historical Quarterly” (Western History Association – <http://www.unm.edu/~wha/>)
“Montana – The Magazine of Western History” (Montana Historical Society – <http://www.montanahistoricalsociety.org>)
WestWeb: <http://www.library.csi.cuny.edu/westweb/>
Repositories of Primary Sources on the American West:
<http://www.uidaho.edu/special-collections/west.html>
The American West: <http://www.americanwest.com/>
American History and the American West: <http://www.ukans.edu/history/VL/USA/>,
which leads to: <http://raven.cc.ukans.edu/~kansite/WEST/>
Headwaters News: <http://www.headwatersnews.org/>

FILM OF THE SEMESTER: "Lonely Are the Brave" (1962)

OBJECTIVE: To critically survey the historical context of the American West, often termed the trans-Mississippi West, taking into account the political, social, economic, religious, and cultural themes and issues of import from predominantly the nineteenth century to the present.

SCHEDULE OF READING:

August 28: Jay Parini, "A Sense of Place Grounds History in Personal Discovery," The Chronicle of Higher Education, December 8, 2000, pp. B11-B12; Nebraska History, "Where is Nebraska, Anyway?" Spring 1999, Vol. 80, No. 1, pp. 3-14; American West, pp. 1-38; and, Major Problems, pp. 1-33.

September 4: American West, pp. 39-69; and, Major Problems, pp. 57-80.

September 11: American West, pp. 71-99; and, Major Problems, pp. 103-113.

September 18: American West, pp. 100-131; and, Major Problems, pp. 130-154.

September 25: American West, pp. 133-158; and, Major Problems, pp. 169-181.

October 2: American West, pp. 159-197.

October 9: American West, pp. 199-232; and, Major Problems, pp. 206-221.

October 16: American West, pp. 234-273; and, Major Problems, pp. 247-266.

October 23: American West, pp. 274-300; and, Major Problems, pp. 359-377.

October 30: American West, pp. 301-361.

November 6: American West, pp. 362-400; and, Major Problems, pp. 318-339.

November 13: American West, pp. 401-432; and, Major Problems, pp. 285-301.

November 20: American West, pp. 434-470; and, Major Problems, pp. 431-452.

November 27: THANKSGIVING BREAK.

December 4: American West, pp. 472-510; and, Major Problems, pp. 463-483, 500-524.

December 11: American West, pp. 512-560; and, Major Problems, pp. 398-413, 536-555.

December 18: Final Examination.

EXAMINATION/CRITICAL BOOK SUMMARY SCHEDULE:

First Critical Book Summary – October 2
Midterm Examination – October 16
Second Critical Book Summary – October 30
Third Critical Book Summary – December 4
Final Examination – December 18

EVALUATION:

The midterm examination is worth 15% of the course grade. Discussion participation is worth 25% of the course grade. The critical book summaries are worth 30% of the course grade. The final examination is worth 30% of the course grade.

The midterm examination, written in examination blue books, will consist of identification of names/terms/interpretive perspectives in the form of short paragraphs that detail the historical significance of the identified items and/or a critical thinking exercise. The final essay examination will be comprehensive in nature and will also be written on examination blue books. Blue books are on sale at the NPCC bookstore on the South Campus.

The critical book summaries will consist of focused critical summaries of three scholarly monographs pertinent to the subject matter and chronology of this course. Appropriate books may be chosen from either the bibliography attached to this syllabus or from the bibliographies attached to the end of each chapter of your textbooks. Prior approval of your book choice must be obtained from the instructor. If you cannot find a suitable book from the bibliography, see the instructor for further advice.

At least one of the three critical book summaries must be on either: Bernard DeVoto's The Journals of Lewis and Clark; Francis Parkman's The Oregon Trail; or, Wallace Stegner's Beyond the Hundredth Meridian. These titles are asterisked on your attached bibliography for your convenience and each has been ordered by the NPCC bookstore.

Students will receive an appropriate form to effectuate the critical book summaries. The forms will serve to focus the student's attention on pertinent critical issues germane to each book reviewed. Students should confine their summary reviews to the parameters of the model summary form, and the summary reviews should not be more than two single-spaced pages in length.

The discussion participation evaluation will focus upon the ability of the student to take responsibility for leading the class discussion during particular class sessions. The instructor will assign a scheduled class session to a student, who will be expected to carefully outline the salient issues/themes within the scheduled reading and generate class discussion accordingly. The instructor will share responsibility with the student by posing questions and raising issues for further discussion during each class session. It is assumed that all students will have completed the reading for each class session and be prepared to discuss the pertinent issues raised by such reading.

It is expected that the instructor will engage in limited lecturing and predominantly serve as a discussion facilitator. It is generally assumed that the student has earned at least three (3) college credits in American History prior to enrolling in this course.

All critical book summaries are to be turned in during the class session on the appropriate deadline date, unless alternatively advised by the instructor.

Make-up examinations are NOT granted, unless under extraordinary circumstances and with the prior approval of the instructor. Late critical book summaries are NOT accepted unless the above-mentioned criteria are met.

For evaluative purposes, the student is accountable for ALL assigned reading and ALL class presentations. Therefore, to maximize your potential in the course, you are strongly advised to regularly attend class.

All electronic recording devices are prohibited in class unless the instructor grants, upon good cause, prior consent for such use.

For evaluative purposes, the following grade scale is applicable:

A = 90-100
B = 80-89
C = 70-79
D = 60-69
F = 50-59

The instructor views the above grades as indicative of the following academic standard of achievement:

An "A" grade is an honor grade indicating excellence, and is equivalent to a consistently superior performance in the course. The issuance of an "A" grade reflects the instructor's professional judgment that the student has mastered the essential facts, issues, and themes of the college-level history course and the interconnections between such facts, issues, and themes in proper chronological sequence.

A “B” grade is an honor grade equivalent to a competent performance that is less than the substantive mastery expected for an “A” grade, yet clearly above the average performance expected within the confines of a “C” grade. The issuance of a “B” grade reflects the instructor’s professional judgment that the student has a good, but not superior, grasp of the relevant facts, issues, and themes, as well as the interconnections between such facts, issues, and themes in proper chronological sequence.

A “C” grade is equivalent to an average or satisfactory performance in the course and professionally reflects an adequate comprehension of the essential facts, issues, and themes, as well as the interconnections between such facts, issues, and themes. The issuance of a “C” grade indicates that the student has exhibited sufficient ability to warrant entering sequential courses in the discipline of history.

A “D” grade is equivalent to a passing, but less than satisfactory, performance in the course and reflects no more than a minimal comprehension of the essential facts, issues, and themes, and no more than a minimal comprehension of the interconnections between such facts, issues, and themes. The issuance of a “D” grade indicates that the student is not likely to be successful in a higher level history course and would not meet prerequisite requirements.

An “F” grade is a failed performance that reflects neither a minimal comprehension of the essential facts, issues, and themes of the course, nor any viable comprehension of the interconnections between such facts, issues, and themes of a college-level history course.

GRADUATE STUDENTS: If you are taking this course for graduate credit, please meet with the instructor immediately subsequent to the first class session to discuss additional course responsibilities generally consistent with professional expectations of a graduate student in the discipline of history.

OFFICE HOURS:

MWF - 10 a.m.

T/Th - 11:00 a.m.

Room 145A

308-535-3763

wolarg@mpcc.edu

<http://www.geocities.com/gwolar/>

If the above office hour is unsatisfactory, please arrange to meet me at another time. Leave a phone number or email address by which you can be reached. Alternatively, arrange to meet with me immediately prior to, or immediately subsequent to, a class session. Do not hesitate to contact me as soon as it becomes apparent that you are experiencing academic difficulty.

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