

The American West

AmStud 124A, ArtHist 152, English 124, History 151, PoliSci 124A

Lectures uploaded to Canvas every Friday

WAYS: WAY-AII; WAY-SI

(last updated: April 2, 2020)

Professors:

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Office Hours:

Bruce Cain: By appointment, to schedule email Marco: marcomtz@stanford.edu

Shelley Fisher Fishkin: By appointment.

David Freyberg: Announced on Canvas after the first week

David Kennedy: By appointment

Alexander Nemerov: 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 by European and Asian immigrants, 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 in recent decades 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 are responsible for watching all of the lectures, participating in section discussions, and completing the course readings in order to receive credit for this class.

Readings

Required Book: *Tracks*, Louise Edrich

Available through [Amazon](#) or work with Stanford Bookstore

Other 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

Lectures will be pre-recorded on Zoom and placed on Canvas for viewing by the end of the day on every Friday and TA led discussion sections will be held on Thursdays. Students will be expected to have listened to the lectures and done the reading for that week by the time their discussion section meets on Thursday. The first set of lectures will be posted on April 3 in preparation for the April 9 discussion sections. All material (lectures videos, slides, readings, and assignments) due that upcoming week will be grouped in a module on Canvas that will become visible to students on Friday. PLEASE NOTE: Discussion sections are only for students in the course. DCI and auditors will not be enrolled in discussion sections and we will try to organize a separate one time section for you.

Optional synchronous discussions with professors

The professors will allow for several optional synchronous meetings where undergraduate students can engage directly with all five professors, perhaps with questions submitted ahead of time. Details about dates and times will be posted to the Canvas page.

Weekly assignments: 3&1 responses

Students will submit 3 bulleted observations (a couple of sentences each) about what you found insightful, interesting or disagreed with in the lectures and reading PLUS 1 question you would like answered or discussed in the section. This 3 & 1 assignment should be posted on Canvas for your TA's to collect by 5pm (Pacific time) Wednesday for that week's Thursday discussion section. This material will serve as the basis for class discussion so it is imperative that these

questions be submitted on time. Completion of the 3&1 assignments and full participation in the weekly discussion sections are 30% of the determination of whether you receive credit for the Course.

Movie Screening

As part of the course, students will be asked to watch “The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance.” Viewing this film is mandatory and will fit into a larger course discussion. The film is available for streaming on [Swank](#). Everyone with an SUNet ID has access to the service. Chrome and Firefox work well with the platform but Safari has some compatibility problems, see this [guide for Safari troubleshooting tips](#).

Two Essay Assignments

Students will complete two 10-15 page essay assignments due May 5th and June 11th with more information to come. These essays will test your ability to synthesize the diverse interdisciplinary perspectives offered in the class into an understanding of the American West as a distinct region. More information about these assignments will be forthcoming.

Students with Documented Disabilities

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the OAE as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 723-1066, URL: <http://oae.stanford.edu>).

Distinguished Career Institute (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 over Zoom. DCI students who enroll in the course are also welcome to contact the Instructors by email.

Electronics Policy

Due to this unprecedented moment, this course has to be offered online. Course materials and other information about the course including section meetings can be found on Canvas. Please read the announcements we send out to you diligently since we may have to make adjustments

throughout the term as the instruction team grapples with converting this course to an online format. By enrolling in this course and joining the Zoom meeting, you are consenting to having your image or name recorded as being part of this course.

Course Outline

Week 1: April 7 and April 9: Intro and Space and Time

INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

1. **Introduction: Themes to the West (30 min)** *Professor Cain*
2. **Themes of the Course in Literature and Art (20 min)** *Professor Fishkin*
3. **The Geography of the West (20 min)** *Professor Freyberg*
4. **Cody, Turner, and Mt. Rushmore (20 min)** *Professor Kennedy*

Readings:

- Frederick Jackson Turner, “*The Significance of the Frontier in American History*” (1893)
5. **“The West as America” exhibition at the Smithsonian, 1991 (20 min)** *Professor Nemerov*

Readings:

- Stein, *Visualizing Conflict*

THEME 1: SPACE AND TIME

6. **The West Enters American History (50 min)** *Professor Kennedy*
7. **Deep Time and the Creation of the American West (50 min)** *Professor Freyberg*

Week 2: April 14 and April 16: Space and Time

1. **Writing the West (35 min)** *Professor Fishkin*

Readings:

- Twain, Mark. “Jim Smiley and His Jumping Frog.” 1865.
- Twain, Mark. “Buck Fanshaw's Funeral.” *Roughing It*. American Publishing Company, 1872.
- 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.
- Wister, Owen. Chapters 1 and 2. *The Virginian: A Horseman of the Plains*. New York: The Macmillan company, 1904.

- OPTIONAL: Katharine Lee Bates, “Pike’s Peak” (1904).
 - OPTIONAL: <https://campusnames.stanford.edu/pdf/Serra-Report.pdf>
 - OPTIONAL: Lynch Mobs Killed Latinos Across the West. The Fight to Remember These Atrocities is Just Starting.” New York Times 3/2/19 <https://nyti.ms/2VxZwLJ>
2. **The Portrayal of the American West, 1830-1860 (45 min)** *Professor Nemerov*
 3. **Eadweard Muybridge and the Invention of Time at Stanford, 1872 (30 min)**
Professor Nemerov
Readings:
 - Mitchell, *George Catlin’s Mission*
 - Ott, *Iron Horse*
 4. **A Tale of Two Outlaws: Oscar Wilde and Jesse James at a Moment in Time (30 min)** *Professor Nemerov*
Readings:
 - Sullivan, *Jesse James, American Outlaw*
 5. **The Spatial Consequences of Time: Western Natural Resources (50 min)** *Professor Freyberg*
 6. **Politics Over Time (30 min)** *Professor Cain*

Week 3: April 21 and April 23: Space and Time and Peoples

1. **Wall, Borders and Neighboring States (30 min)** *Professor Cain*
2. **Western Regional Interests and Bordered Space (30 min)** *Professor Cain*
3. **Open Space vs. Bordered Space in the West (40 min)** *Professor Fishkin*
Readings:
 - Anzaldúa, Gloria E. *Borderlands/La Frontera*. 4th ed. [1987]. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2012. Excerpts from preface to the first edition; excerpts from chapters 1, 2, and 7: pp. 19-20, 23-35, 41-45, 99-102, 112-113.

THEME 2: PEOPLES THEN AND NOW

4. **Mobility vs. Confinement in the West (30 min)** *Professor Fishkin*
Readings:
 - Inada, Lawson Fusao. “Prologue.” *Legends from Camp: Poems*. Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 1992. 1-2.
 - Inada, Lawson Fusao. “Concentration Constellation.” *Legends from Camp: Poems*. Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 1992. 1-2.
 - OPTIONAL: Tully, Jim. “A California Holiday.” *The American Mercury*. January 1928. 22-29.

- OPTIONAL: Lai, Him Mark, Genny Lim, and Judy Yung. “The Detainment, Poems 12-33.” *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910 to 1940*. 1981. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991. Poems #12, 17, 21, 22, 31.
5. **Native American Voices Remember Wounded Knee (30 min)** *Professor Fishkin*
- Readings:
- Black Elk, Nicholas. *Black Elk Speaks, Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux As told through John G. Neihardt (Flaming Rainbow)*. [1921]. University of Nebraska Press, 1979, Chapters 21-25.
 - Momaday, N. Scott. “December 29, 1890.” *In The Presence of the Sun: Stories and Poems, 1961-1991*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992. 139.
 - Welch, James. “The Man from Washington.” 1971. *The Seattle Times* 20 October 2004.
 - Rose, Wendy. “I Expected My Skin and My Blood to Ripen.” *Bone Dance: New and Selected Poems 1965-1993*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1994. 18-19.
6. **Sam Durant’s Scaffold (2017) and the Execution of 38 Dakota Men in 1862 (50 min)** *Professor Nemerov*
- Readings:
- Bessler, *On Lincoln’s Orders, Mankato’s Mass Hanging*

Week 4: April 28 and April 30: Peoples Then and Now

1. **Native Americans (50 min)** *Professor Kennedy*
- Reading:
- Walker, Francis A. “The Indian Question.” *J.R. Osgood and company* Boston (1874)
2. **Black California Writers (30 min)** *Professor Fishkin*
- Readings:
- Himes, Chester. “Zoot Riots are Race Riots.” [1943]. *Black California*. Ed. Aparajita Nanda. Berkeley: Heyday, 2011. 70-73.
 - Copeland, Brian. “In the Beginning.” *Not a Genuine Black Man, Or, How I Claimed My Piece Ground in the Lily-White Suburbs*. New York: Hyperion, 2006. 19-26.
 - Bradley, David. “Eulogy for Nigger.” *Tri Quarterly*. Northwestern University, 15 July 2014.
 - OPTIONAL: Carter, Jennie. Letter to the Editor of the San Francisco Elevator, 13 June 1869 and 4 July 1869. *Jennie Carter: A Black Journalist in the Early West*. Ed. Eric Gardner. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010. 73-76.

- OPTIONAL: Coleman, Wanda. "L.A. Love City." [1996]. *Black California*. Ed. Aparajita Nanda. Berkeley: Heyday, 2011. 230-234.
 - OPTIONAL: Williams, Shirley Anne. "North Country: The Dream Realized." *The Peacock Poems*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1975. 74-75.
3. **Louise Erdrich's *Tracks* (50 min)** *Professor Nemerov* (Potential live course discussion)
- Reading:
- *Tracks*, Louise Erdrich
4. **Immigration (30 min)** *Professor Kennedy*
5. **The Chinese in the West (50 min)** *Professor Fishkin*
- Part I: The Challenge of Reconstructing Chinese Railroad Workers' Lives**
- Part II: The Chinese in the West: Discrimination and Exclusion**
- Readings:
- Kingston, Maxine Hong. "The Grandfather of the Sierra Nevada Mountains." *China Men*. [1980]. New York: Vintage Books and Random House Inc, 1989. pp. 128-130, 135-146.
 - Chang, Gordon and Fishkin, Shelley Fisher. "The Chinese Helped Build America." *ForbesAsia* 12 May 2014.
 - Browse the website of Chinese Railroad Workers in North America Project at Stanford University: <http://chineserailroadworkers.stanford.edu>
 - Twain, Mark. "Disgraceful Persecution of a Boy." *The Writings of Mark Twain, Volume XXIII*. [1870]. New York: P. F. Collier & Son Company, 1917.
 - Twain, Mark. "Goldsmith's Friend Abroad Again." [1870, 1871], Letters 1-4, 7,
 - Stegner, Wallace. "The Chink." *Collected Stories of Wallace Stegner*. [1940]. New York: Random House/Penguin Books, 1990. 191-203.
6. **Native Americans, Reservations, and Water (30 min)** *Professor Freyberg*

Week 5: May 5 and May 7: Water, Energy, and Fire

1. **First essay deadline, May 5th**

THEME 3: WATER, ENERGY, AND FIRE

2. **Water: Too Little (Aridity and Drought)? (50 min)** *Professor Freyberg*
3. **Writing Aridity in the West (30 min)** *Professor Fishkin*

Readings:

- Stegner, Wallace. "Thoughts in a Dry Land." *Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs: Living and Writing in the West*. New York: Random House, 1992. Pgs 45-56.

- Stegner, Wallace. “Living Dry.” *Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs: Living and Writing in the West*. New York: Random House, 1992. Pgs 60-64, 68-75.
 - Austin, Mary. “The Land of Little Rain” and “Water Trails of the Ceriso.” *The Land of Little Rain*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1903.
 - Abbey, Edward. “Water.” *Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness*. 1968. New York: Simon & Schuster/Touchstone Books, 1998. 112-127.
 - OPTIONAL: Rivera, Tomás. “Los niños no se aguantaron / The Children Couldn’t Wait.” ... *Y No Se Lo Tragó La Tierra...And the Earth Did Not Swallow Him*. Houston: Arte Público Press, 1987. 7-9, 87-89.
4. **Alvan Fisher’s *Prairie Fire* (1827): A Tale of Artist and Community (30 min)** *Professor Nemerov*
- Fisher, *Prairie on Fire*

Week 6: May 12 and May 14: Water, Energy, and Fire

1. **John Wesley Powell and the Tyranny of Climate (50 min)** *Professor Kennedy*
Readings:
 - John Wesley Powell, *Report on the Lands of the Arid Region of the United States* (U.S. Geological Survey, 1879)
2. **36 Views of Lake Tahoe (30 min)** *Professor Fishkin*
3. **David Hanson’s Photographs of Colstrip, Montana (30 min)** *Professor Nemerov*
Readings:
 - Bass, Rick. “Colstrip, Montana, David T. Hanson.” *Taverner Press*
 - Oates, *Hanson’s Colstrip, Montana series*
4. **Water Politics (30 min)** *Professor Cain*
5. **Water: Too Much (Floods)? (40 min)** *Professor Freyberg*
6. **Risky Business: Aridity, Wildfires and the West (30 min)** *Professor Cain*
Readings:
 - “Wildfire Trends in the US,” <https://www.sciline.org/evidence-blog/wildfires>
 - John T. Abatzoglou and A. Park Williams, “Impact of anthropogenic climate change on wildfire across western US forests” PNAS October 18, 2016 113 (42) 11770-11775; published ahead of print October 10, 2016
<https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1607171113>

Week 7: May 19 and May 21: Politics and Policy

THEME 4: POLITICS AND POLICY

1. **How the West was Won and What It Has to Lose (50 min)** *Professor Kennedy*
2. **Managing Public Lands in the West/Tribal Governance and Federalism in the West (50 min)** *Professor Cain*

Reading:

- Mary Ann King, Co-Management or Contracting -Agreements between Native American Tribes and the U.S. National Park Service Pursuant to the 1994 Tribal Self-Governance Act, 31 Harv. Envtl. L. Rev. pp 475-493 only

3. **Texas v. California (80 min)** *Professor Kennedy and Professor Cain*

Readings:

- Schrag, Peter, *California: America's High Stakes Experiment* (UC Press, 2008), Intro and Chapter 1

4. **Dams and Fish: Politics and Policy in Western Rivers (30 min)** *Professor Freyberg*

Week 8: May 26 and May 28: Politics and Policy and Boom and Bust

1. **Populism and Democracy in the West (30 min)** *Professor Cain*
2. **The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance (discussion-based class session after watching film) (80 min)** *Professor Nemerov*

THEME 5: BOOM AND BUST

A Western Culture of Risk and Adventure

3. **Gold and Other Rushes (50 min)** *Professor Kennedy*
4. **Irrigation: Boom or Bust? (50 min)** *Professor Freyberg*

Week 9: June 2 and June 4: Boom and Bust

1. **Writing the Gold Rush and the Silver Boom (30 min)** *Professor Fishkin*

Readings:

- 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).
- Twain, Mark. *Roughing It*. American Publishing Company, 1872. Chapters 26-30, 40-41.

2. **The Modern Western Economy (50 min)** *Professor Kennedy*
Reading:
 - Berlin, Leslie. "The History of Silicon Valley." Manuscript.
3. **The End of an Era: Ralph Waldo Emerson's Trip to Salt Lake City, San Francisco, and Yosemite, 1871 (30 min)** *Professor Nemerov*
Readings:
 - Davis, *Emerson the Lecturer in California*
4. **The Port Chicago Disaster: Racial Injustice During War II (30 min)** *Professor Nemerov*
Reading:
 - Allen, Robert L. "The Port Chicago Disaster and Its Aftermath." *The Black Scholar*. 13.2-3 (Spring 1982) 2-29.
 - *Presidential Pardon Sought in Port Chicago Case*
5. **Road Kill: Tales from the Side of the Road (30 min)** *Professor Nemerov*
6. **The West's Changing Climate (50 min)** *Professor Freyberg*

Week 10: June 9 and June 11: Boom and Bust

1. **Europe Discovers the West (50 min)** *Professor Fishkin*
Reading
 - May, Karl. Chapters I and II. *Winnetou*. New York, Cincinnati, and Chicago: Benziger Brothers, 1878. 7-26.
2. **Modern Boom and Bust in Western States (60 min)** *Professor Cain*
Reading:
 - Cain, Bruce E., and Roger Noll. "Institutional Causes of California's Budget Problem." *California Journal of Politics and Policy* 2.3 (2010).
<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6xc7316c>.
3. **Second Essay deadline, June 11th**