

HIST 2450

MANY WESTS: HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN WEST

FALL 2025 SEMESTER

AUGUSTANA UNIVERSITY

Dr. Will Wright, Instructor

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Office Location: Madsen Center, Room 236

Course Location: Madsen Center, Room 102

Office Hours: MWF, 8-9 a.m., 3-4:40 p.m., or by appt.

Course Day/Time: MWF, 9-9:50 a.m.



Lewis and Clark Meeting Indians at Ross' Hole, a 1912 painting by Charles M. Russell that hangs at the Montana State Capitol, depicts a fortuitous encounter between Thomas Jefferson's Corps of Discovery and the Salish Indians in the Sula Basin in the southwestern corner of Montana. The meeting, which occurred in September 1805, was one of enormous strategic importance as it enabled the expedition to secure the horses and directions needed to traverse the Bitterroot Mountains before winter snow would make travel impossible.

Course Description

This course traces the rise of the "American West" in American consciousness from the early 19th century until today. Understanding that U.S. expansion looks different for the indigenous cultures of the trans-Mississippi West, the course asks students to re-think the "myth of the West" with the reality of western development. To do so, this course introduces four ways to think about the American West: as lines of frontier settlement, as borderlands zones of intercultural mixing and policing, as a distinct region with shared characteristics, and as romanticized imaginaries that become powerful myths.

Learning Outcomes

Students who diligently complete this course in good faith will be able to:

1. examine continuity and change in human society.¹
2. Connect relevant knowledge (facts, theories, etc.) to civic engagement and to one's own participation in civic life, politics, and government.¹
3. Identifies key aspects of a text (e.g., content, structure, literary features), relates them to the author's argument or purpose and also demonstrates an awareness of the historical / social context that produced the text.¹
4. Articulate an understanding of the impact of U.S. history and cultures on self and others.²
5. Interpret key ideas that have defined American life.²
6. Assess how people interact within U.S. social, economic and/or political systems.²
7. Depict societies through multiple perspectives and historical consciousness.³
8. Organize historical information into categories of analysis, including politics, economics, social organization (race, gender, class, ethnicity), culture, religion, and environments, to characterize distinct influences in society.³
9. Analyze primary and secondary sources to assess their strengths and limitations.³

¹ Via Viking core curriculum outcome for "Reading the Human Record" knowledge area with "civic knowledge and engagement" and "critical reading" competencies

² SOPHIA core curriculum outcome for "U.S. Experience."

³ History Department student learning outcome

Required Reading

Book (Available online through Mikkelsen Library)

- Richard Edwards, Jacob K. Friefeld, and Rebecca S. Wingo, *Homesteading the Plains: Toward a New History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017).
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/augie-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4921962> .

Articles (Available for download on Canvas)

In addition to the text above that will support the NPS Homesteading Project, there will be articles, book excerpts, and web pages assigned on Canvas according to the week in which they are due. See the class schedule below for specific details (I have put M, W, or F by the readings to signal the Monday, Wednesday, or Friday when you should have the material read).

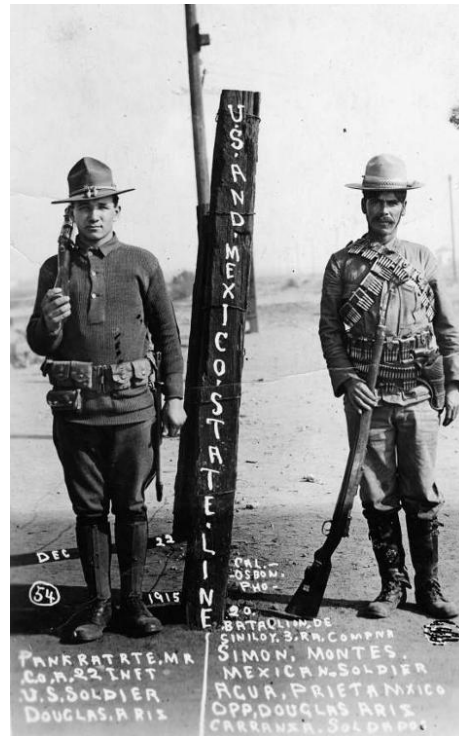
It is imperative that you come to each class session having read the assigned materials beforehand as they will introduce approaches and issues in western history. I strongly recommend printing hard copies off to take notes on or bringing your laptop/tablet with comments in the .pdf file.

Grading Components (Weighted by Category)

Essay Exams- 2 total @ 15% each	30%
Reading Quizzes- 14 total @ 2% each	28%
NPS Homesteading Project	32%
Attendance	10%
Total	100%

Grading Scale

A	93-100	C	73-76
A-	90-92	C-	70-72
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	83-86	D	60-66
B-	80-82	F	0-59
C+	77-79		



U.S. soldier and Mexican revolutionary, battle of Agua Prieta, 1915. The image in this picture postcard highlighted the distinction between U.S. and Mexican space and how soldiers maintained that division along the border during the war years. Note that all the writing, including that on the post that identifies the boundary line, was added to the negative after the photograph was taken.

Grades will be maintained and updated on Canvas. If you have questions or concerns about grades, please contact me via email or talk to me in-person during office hours, before or after class.

Assignments

Essay Exams (October 10, December 5)

At the middle and end of the semester, you will write an analytical essay during class time. The first exam will ask you to compare two approaches—frontier and borderlands—to understanding western history. The second exam will assess the myth of the American West and how it lives up to the reality of western regional identity. You must use evidence from lectures, readings, and discussions to support your argument. A study guide with key terms will be given out a week in advance to prepare for the test. Unless for an emergency, approved activity, or special circumstances, the exam will not be given other than the scheduled time. Satisfies student learning outcomes 1, 3-7.

Readings Quizzes (Weekly)

You will be reading several book chapters or articles that will give you content depth on themes related to the lectures. To hold you accountable for completing the readings, you should expect a short quiz at the beginning of every class in which we will have a discussion. All quizzes will be open to using hand-written or typed notes, so you should write down the historian's arguments and evidence, as well as key figures, events, or stories, to assist you. Satisfies student learning outcomes 4-8.

NPS Homesteading Project (Semester Long)

In partnership with Homestead National Historic Park in Beatrice, Nebraska, you will be writing short vignettes (approximately 1,000 words) for the National Park Service website about homesteaders in South Dakota. We have numerous collections at the Center for Western Studies on the homesteading experience that you can draw on, or I have some additional people to propose. You will rely on newspapers, government records, and secondary sources to construct your narratives. With a partner, you will follow the writing process to produce a finished product: building a bibliography, creating an outline, drafting a text, editing peers' work, and revising based on feedback. More information will come from our project collaborators. Satisfies student learning outcomes 1, 2, and 9.

Attendance

The late UCLA men's basketball coach John Wooden, who won 10 NCAA titles, once said that "ninety percent of success is just showing up." I will be taking attendance for every class and it will be worth an entire letter grade for the course. If you will be gone for extenuating circumstances (extracurricular activities, religious observation, family emergency, illness, etc.), please contact me in advance so that we make alternative arrangements for staying up with the instruction. Satisfies student learning outcomes 1 and 4.

Course Policies

Cell Phones, Laptops, and Other Portable Technology

Please ensure that your cell phone is silent or turned off during class. Texting during class is not acceptable. If you need to take an important phone call, please step out of the classroom. You may use a laptop or tablet to take notes, but please avoid using the devices for other activities (checking email, online shopping, etc.). Your compliance will help to maintain a positive environment for teaching and learning in our class period.

Late Work

All late assignments are still eligible for partial credit (95% after 1 day late, 90% after 2 days late, etc.); please turn them in. In many cases, I am happy to give deadline extensions if you communicate with me about how much more time you need and why.

Recording Disclaimer

Please be advised that class sessions may be recorded via Zoom for sharing with your classmates. This is the sole intention of this recording, and not intended for use in any broader sense. Should you have any questions or concerns about this, please discuss it with the instructor directly.

Attendance and Participation

Attendance and class participation are expected at every class. Your input to class discussions is valued and needed. If you are not able to attend class, you should contact me prior to your absence. You are allowed two absences without prior contact; these absences are known as unexcused absences. After two unexcused absences, a half letter grade will be deducted from your overall grade for each subsequent unexcused absence. If you need to miss class for an excused reason (e.g., illness, athletic event), you need to let Dr. Wright know beforehand so as not be penalized for any missed in-class work. An email such as the one below may be a helpful template to utilize if a circumstance arises in which you cannot attend class:

Hi Dr. Wright,

I will be missing class today because [I'm not feeling well, my car isn't starting, I need to help with a family emergency, I'm out of town, I have a soccer game etc.]. I will be back in class [on Friday, next week, etc.]. In the meantime, I will keep up with the assignments on the syllabus schedule, check Canvas for anything that I might miss and talk with a classmate to get their notes. If there is any in-class work not posted on Canvas, can you send it to me via email so that I can still complete it for credit?

Thanks,

Student Name

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

Writing is an important form of learning and thinking: it is an extension of one's identity, a way to remember important information, and a way to develop analytical skills applicable to all academic areas. Therefore, it is essential that students' written work represents their own independent thinking. At the same time, there are ethical ways of using AI technology to aid in the composition process, and students may use AI technology at their instructor's discretion.

If students use AI (including but not limited to ChatGPT, Bard, Quillbot, or translators) at any point in the writing process for a W-Component class or FYS, they must include a reflection at the beginning or end of the paper describing in detail how they used AI. Writing done for credit in a W-component or FYS course may not include any verbatim language from any source, including AI or a translator, without proper attribution via quotation marks and an in-text citation.

University Policies and Resources

Accessibility and Accommodations

Augustana welcomes students with disabilities to participate in all of its courses, programs, services, and activities. If you have a documented disability and are requesting accommodations, please contact Jeff Merkle, Director of Accessibility. His office is located in room 223 of the Madsen Center, and he may be reached at 605-274-4631 or jmerkle@augie.edu.

Canvas

Augustana uses the learning management system, Canvas. This guide, <https://tinyurl.com/AugieCanvasStudentGuide>, will help you get started in Canvas. Our Canvas course can be accessed at augie.instructure.com. Once you log in (using your regular Augie username and password) you will see all your courses using Canvas. If you have questions about our course, please contact me. But, if you have questions about Canvas, please contact the Help Desk: helpdesk@augie.edu or 605.274.5331.

Commitment to Preventing Discrimination and Sexual Harassment

Augustana University is committed to creating and fostering a learning and working environment based on open communication and mutual respect. This is an integral part of the academic mission to enrich our students' educational experiences and prepare them to live in and contribute to a global society. If you encounter sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, sexual assault, or discrimination please contact the Title IX Coordinator at 605-274-4044 or belam@augie.edu. If you make a report of this nature to a faculty member, they must notify the Title IX Coordinator about the basic facts of the incident (you may choose whether you or anyone involved is identified by name). For more information about options at Augustana, please visit www.augie.edu/titleix.

Illness Prevention and Protection

Guided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Augustana's own monitoring of the situation in our region, the university has established the following health protocols:

- First and foremost, if you are ill, do not come to class. Contact your instructor regarding options for making up missed work, following policies specified on the syllabus.
- If you test positive for COVID-19, RSV, or another contagious respiratory illness, stay home and away from others until your symptoms are improving AND you have been fever-free without the use of medication for 24 hours. COVID-19 at-home test kits are available (while supplies last) at the Campus Safety desk in the Morrison Commons and at the Campus Clinic. For more information visit Augustana COVID protocols.
- Handwashing remains one of the best ways to protect yourself and the campus community from getting sick. To prevent the spread of germs you should wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer to clean your hands.
- Mask wearing has become a normal occurrence among those who feel they need to protect themselves and others from potential infection. Please be considerate of people who choose to wear a mask and social distance.

As members of Augustana's caring community of students, faculty, and staff, we each have a role to play in keeping one another healthy and safe.

Honor Code

As a community of scholars, the students and faculty at Augustana University commit to the highest standards of excellence by mutually embracing an Honor Code. The Honor Code requires that examinations and selected assignments contain the following pledge statement which students are expected to sign:

“On my honor, I pledge that I have upheld the Honor Code, and that the work I have done on this assignment has been honest, and that the work of others in this class has, to the best of my knowledge, been honest as well.”

Faculty members are responsible for investigating all instances involving any student who does not sign the Honor Pledge or who brings forward an academic integrity concern. The complete Honor Code can be found at www.augie.edu/honor.

Student Wellbeing/Mental Health

Augustana promotes student well-being and healthy self-care by offering a number of services on campus in the areas of counseling services, health services, and other wellness-related resources.

The Campus Clinic is located in the lower level of Solberg Hall and is staffed by a Sanford Health Registered Nurse and Certified Nurse Practitioner. The clinic is available for all medical needs and can be reached at 605-274-5552. Services provided by the RN are covered under the student activity fee and Certified Nurse Practitioner visits will be billed toward insurance.

Students may contact the Dean of Students Office for assistance with mental health and other health-related concerns or help setting up counseling appointments by calling 605-274-4124 or emailing Beth Elam at belam@augie.edu.

The Campus Pastors are available to meet with students around topics of grief, anxiety, vocational discernment, or spiritual care. Contact Pastor Ann Rosendale or Pastor Jen Dreiske in the Chapel (605-274-5403) to schedule an appointment.

Concerns related to academics, career, and vocation may be directed to the Student Success Center (605-274-4127). Career and academic specialists are ready and eager to meet with students.

The International Programs Office (605-274-5050) assists international and third culture students when issues of culture shock and adjustment arise, as well as with other cultural elements such as adjusting to U.S. academic and classroom expectations.

All Augustana students have access to confidential counseling services through our campus partners at Sioux Falls Psychological Services. Counseling services are located in the lower level of the Welcome Center, across the street from the Mikkelsen Library—located on Summit Avenue. The door to the counseling services will be on the east side of the building (facing Norton Avenue). Our counselors are licensed professional counselors and specialize in a number of mental health areas including anxiety, depression, transition to college, grief & loss, and many more. Students can call 605-334-2696 to set up a time that works best. All counseling sessions are covered under the student activity with no billing towards insurance or copays.

Registrar

For information on the academic calendar, add/drop/withdraw dates, midterm, and graduation, visit <https://www.augie.edu/academics/registrar>

Writing Center

The tutors at the Augustana Writing Center can help students with any stage of the writing process: planning, brainstorming, outlining, drafting, revising, and editing. The Writing Center is located in the Fryxell Humanities Building (HUM 220). To learn more or make an appointment, visit www.augie.edu/writing or email writing@augie.edu. While the university, future graduate programs, and prospective employers expect students to be fluent in Standard Written Academic English, Augustana also deeply appreciates students' own unique voices drawing from their individual backgrounds; the Writing Center will respect and affirm the voice the students choose to write in.

Help Desk

Please contact helpdesk@augie.edu or 605.274.5331 for assistance with technology issues.

Remote assistance to your computer for software related issues is available from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday-Thursday and until 5 p.m. on Friday. Staff members will also be checking email and voicemail regularly outside of those hours.

Course Modification Policy (inclement weather, illness, etc.)

If significant inclement weather, professor illness, or any special circumstance arises that may require an adjustment to the course schedule (i.e. an alternative assignment, switching to synchronous Zoom, canceling the class, etc.), every attempt will be made to communicate such changes to students by the night before the scheduled class. Communication to students will come via an email to your AU email address. If you have reason to believe the class may not be able to be offered as scheduled, please keep an eye on these inboxes.

Student Learning Experience Questionnaires (LEQs)

To help provide the instructor feedback on the course's environment and performance, both in terms of instructor and student, two anonymous surveys will be employed to gather information regarding the student experience. Both surveys will be accessible through the course's Canvas page, the first occurring around midterm and the second at the end of the semester (results of the final survey will be released after final grades are submitted by the faculty member).

Minnesota-born sharpshooter Annie Oakley performed shooting tricks in Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show. After her husband and partner Frank Butler had thrown glass balls in the air, Annie would jump a hurdle, pick up her gun and smash the balls before they hit the ground. The Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, which toured the United States and Europe from 1883 to 1906, helped to promote a romanticized version of the American West.



TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE

Please note that the topics, readings, and deadlines below are subject to revision.

Week One

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 27

Introduction: What and where is the West? Explorations in Regional History (read Nugent, "Where is the West?")

FRIDAY, AUGUST 29

Discussion: Turner Thesis and the American West as "Process" or "Place"

Readings

- F: Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," "The Problem of the West," and Patricia Nelson Limerick, "The Legacy of Conquest" "What on Earth Is the New Western History?" in *Major Problems in the History of the American West*, ed. Clyde A. Milner II, Anne M. Butler, and David Rich Lewis (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997), 1-11

UNIT 1- THE WEST AS FRONTIER

Week Two

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 1

NO CLASS (Labor Day)

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3

Lecture: Fur Trading Frontier and the Mixed Worlds of the West

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 5

Discussion: Frontier as Middle Ground? Negotiating Power among Natives and Newcomers

Readings

- F: Tiya Miles, "Seeing Sacagawea: A personal and historical trek on the Lewis and Clark Trail," *Places Journal* (April 2025), <https://doi.org/10.22269/250410>
- F: Michael Lansing, "Plains Indian Women and Interracial Marriage in the Upper Missouri Trade, 1804-1868," *Western Historical Quarterly* 31 (Winter 2000): 413-433.

Week Three

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 8

Lecture: Wars of Incorporation

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10

Discussion: Bent's Fort and the Unraveling of Mixed Worlds

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 12

NPS Homesteading Project: Introduction to Project

Readings

- W: Anne Hyde, "Forging Peace on the Southern Plains, 1821-1840," and "'Marked for Slaughter': Borderland Violence in the 1840s," in *Born of Lakes and Plains: Mixed-Descent Peoples and the Making of the American West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2022), 146-169, 197-222.

Week Four

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 15

Lecture: Mining and Transportation Frontiers

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17

Discussion: Chinese Miners during the Pacific West

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 19

NPS Homesteading Project: Research at Center for Western Studies

Readings

- W: Mae M. Ngai, "Chinese Gold Miners and the 'Chinese Question' in Nineteenth-Century California and Victoria," *Journal of American History* 101 (March 2015): 1082-1108

Week Five

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 22

Lecture: Ranching and Farming Frontiers

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24

Discussion: Female Homesteaders as Exception or Rule?

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 26

NPS Homesteading Project: Research on Ancestry.com, General Land Office Records, and Online Databases

Readings

- W: Richard Edwards, Jacob K. Friefeld, and Rebecca S. Wingo, "Competing Visions of Our Homesteading Past," and "Women Proving Up Their Claims," in *Homesteading the Plains: Toward a New History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 1-23, 107-131.

UNIT 2- THE WEST AS BORDERLANDS

Week Six

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 29

Lecture: Indigenous Nations and Marking the Border

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 1

Discussion: Texas Rangers, Canadian Mounties, and Policing the Plains

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 3

NPS Homesteading Project; **Bibliography Due**

Readings

- W: Andrew R. Graybill, "Instruments of Incorporation" and "Subjugating Indigenous Groups," in *Policing the Great Plains: Rangers, Mounties, and the North American Frontier, 1875-1910* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 1-63.

Week Seven

MONDAY, OCTOBER 6

Lecture: Migra! Enforcing the Border

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 8

Discussion: Origins of the U.S. Border Patrol

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 10

Essay Exam #1

Readings

- W: Patrick Ettinger, "'We sometimes wonder what they will spring on us next': Immigrants and Border Enforcement in the American West, 1882–1930," *Western Historical Quarterly* 37 (Summer 2006): 159-181.

Week Eight

MONDAY, OCTOBER 13

NO CLASS (Native American Day)

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 15

NO CLASS (FALL BREAK)

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 17

NPS Homesteading Project: Writing in Accessible Language workshop

Readings

- None

Week Nine

MONDAY, OCTOBER 20

Lecture: Capitalism and Contesting the Border

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 22

Discussion: Braceros, "Factories in the Fields," and Deportation

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 24

NPS Homesteading Project; **Outline Due**

Readings

- W: Kelly Lytle Hernandez, "The Crimes and Consequences of Illegal Immigration: A Cross-border Examination of Operation Wetback, 1943-1954," *Western Historical Quarterly* 37 (Winter 2006): 421-444.

UNIT 3- THE WEST AS REGION

Week Ten

MONDAY, OCTOBER 27

Lecture: The Arid West, Irrigation, and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 29

Discussion: Dams and their Discontents

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 31

NPS Homesteading Project

Readings

- W: Katherine Helsop, "Making the Desert Blossom: Spreading the Gospel of Irrigation," *Journal of the Southwest* 56 (Spring 2014): 29-51
- W: Erika Bsumek, "Imagining Indians and Revisiting Reclamation Debates," *RCC Perspectives* 1 (Spring 2013): 27-42.

Week Eleven

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 3

Lecture: The Federal West: Conserving the Public Domain

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 5

Discussion: National Parks, National Forests

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 7

NPS Homesteading Project

Readings

- W: Adam M. Sowards, "Forming," in *Making America's Public Lands: The Contested History of Conservation on Federal Lands* (Lanham, MD: Roman & Littlefield, 2022), 41-76

Week Twelve

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 10

Lecture: Militarizing the West

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 12*

Discussion: Hanford, Plutonium, and the Nuclear West

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 14

NPS Homesteading Project

Readings

- W: Kate Brown, "Part I: Incarcerated Space on the Western Nuclear Frontier," in *Plutopia: Nuclear Families, Atomic Cities, and the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disasters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1-60.

UNIT 4- THE WEST AS MYTH

Week Thirteen

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 17

Lecture: Dime Novels and the Creation of the Mythic West from Daniel Boone to Zane Grey

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19

Discussion: Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 21

NPS Homesteading Project

Readings

- W: Louis S. Warren, "Cody's Last Stand: Masculine Anxiety, the Custer Myth, and the Frontier of Domesticity in Buffalo Bill's Wild West," *Western Historical Quarterly* (Spring 2003)

Week Fourteen

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 24

Lecture: Hollywood and Western Film: From Gary Cooper to Clint Eastwood; **DRAFT DUE**

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 26

NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Break)

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 28

NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Break)

Readings

- None

Week Fifteen

MONDAY, DECEMBER 1

Discussion: *Yellowstone* TV Series and Gentrification in the New West

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 3

NPS Homesteading Project

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5

Essay Exam #2

Readings

- M: Robert M. Wilson, "Yellowstone and the Making of a New West Western," *Montana the Magazine of Western History* 74 (Spring 2024): 61-76.

Week Sixteen: Final Exam

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11

Final Examination 9:00-11:00 a.m., NPS Homesteading Vignette Due