

**The American West (HIST 4347)
Fall Semester 2024
Tuesday / Thursday 11:00 – 12:15
Classroom: HALL 221**

**Instructor: Dr. William Kiser
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**OFFICE HOURS:
Tuesday & Thursday 8:30AM-10:30AM or by Appointment**

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course will examine the history of American frontiers from the colonial era through the twentieth century. Important themes include: colonialism and imperialism, Manifest Destiny, military conflict, Indian Wars, capitalism and economics, the environment, trade and commerce, federal policy, urbanization, and social/cultural trends. We will focus on historical interpretation and critical thinking, rather than merely memorizing names and dates, as so many history classes require you to do.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To develop critical thinking skills through classroom discussion, extended-length reading and writing assignments, and essay exams.
2. To practice and improve analytical writing skills.
3. To understand the history of The Cold War within the context of political, social, and cultural change over time.

REQUIRED COURSE READINGS:

Robert Wooster, *The American Military Frontiers: The United States Army in the West, 1783-1900* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009).

Robert M. Utley, *High Noon in Lincoln: Violence on the Western Frontier* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987). ANY EDITION

Additional article-length readings will be posted on Blackboard

COURSE TEXTBOOK:

Robert V. Hine & John Mack Faragher, *The American West: A New Interpretive History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000).

EXAMS

There will be two tests: one midterm exam and one final exam. The exams are given in essay format to allow you to demonstrate your understanding of historical topics and to provide your own interpretations of events and themes. It is more important that you be able to demonstrate critical thinking skills by positing and defending an historical argument, rather than simply regurgitate a laundry list of names and dates. Prior to the exams, you will be provided with a list of five possible essay questions to study. Of those five, two will be on the exam, and you will select one question to write your essay on. You must bring a blank blue book to each exam. The questions will be based on lecture, class discussions, and supplementary readings.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

You will be required to write two analytical essays over the readings. Each of these essays will be written during class time and you will be permitted to use the book while writing the essay. I will provide a prompt for each of the essays, so you will be using the supplementary readings to respond to a specific historical question. More instructions will be provided during class.

ARTICLE QUIZZES

In the weekly schedule below, there are several journal articles assigned (these are posted on Blackboard). There will be a short in-class quiz over each of these articles. Students must be present to take each quiz; no make-ups will be allowed.

CLASSROOM PARTICIPATION

Students must participate and engage in classroom discussion over the readings, as well as the lectures. As this is an upper-division course, both attendance AND participation are expected.

GRADING SCALE

Midterm Exam: 150 points

Final Exam: 150 points

Supplemental Reading Essays: 400 points (2 essays worth 200 points each)

Quizzes: 200 points (4 quizzes worth 50 points each)

Classroom Participation & Attendance: 100 points

TOTAL POINTS: 1000

A= 1000-900; B = 899-800; C =799-700; D = 699-600; F = 599 and below.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Attendance: Class attendance is mandatory and is part of your final grade. You will not be able to succeed in this course if you habitually miss class. Please be punctual – do not arrive late, and do not leave early. If you know that you will be late or must leave early, please inform me ahead

of time. **If you arrive more than 10 minutes late to class, you will be marked absent for that entire period.**

Extra Credit: I do not offer extra credit.

Blackboard: This course has a Blackboard site, which is where your grades will be posted. Powerpoint slides for class lectures, course announcements, and supplementary readings will be posted to Blackboard as well.

Make-Up Exams: Make-up exams are only allowed for emergencies such as debilitating illness, a death in the immediate family, and religious or school functions. In any case, you must provide documentation of your absence in order to be allowed a make-up exam.

Late Paper Policy: I do not accept late papers.

Classroom Etiquette: Please be respectful in the classroom. Do not get up and leave early, turn your cell phone to silent mode, and do not hold personal conversations during lecture or discussion. Laptops may only be used to take notes.

Communication: E-mail me at any time regarding questions or concerns that you might have. I do my best to respond to email within one day. You may also schedule an appointment to speak with me in my office outside of regular office hours. All correspondence between professors and students must occur via university email accounts. You must have a Jaguar email account ready and working. If it is not working, contact the help desk at sahelp@tamusa.edu or 210-784-4357.

Statement on Artificial Intelligence: All student work must be generated by the students themselves. Students should not have another person/entity do the writing or any other portion of an assignment for them. This includes hiring a person or a company to write assignments, as well as using artificial intelligence tools including but not limited to ChatGPT.

Support Services & Disclosures

Academic Accommodations for Persons with Disabilities: The Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008 and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 are federal anti-discrimination statutes that provide comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Title II of the ADAAA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act require that students with disabilities be guaranteed equal access to the learning environment through the provision of reasonable and appropriate accommodation of their disability. If you have a diagnosed disability that may require an accommodation, please contact Disability Support Services (DSS) for the coordination of services. The phone number for DSS is (210) 784-1335 and email is dssupport@tamusa.edu.

Academic Learning Center: The Academic Learning Center provides free course-based tutoring to all currently enrolled students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. Students wishing to work with a tutor can make appointments through the Brainfuse online tutoring platform. Brainfuse can be accessed in the *Tools* section of Blackboard. You can contact the Academic

Learning Center by emailing tutoring@tamusa.edu, calling (210) 784-1307, or visiting the Central Academic Building, room 202.

Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center: The Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center supports graduate and undergraduate students in all three colleges as well as faculty and staff. Tutors work with students to develop reading skills, prepare oral presentations, and plan, draft, and revise their written assignments. Our language tutors support students enrolled in Spanish courses and students composing in Spanish for any assignment. Our digital studio tutors support students working on digital projects such as eportfolios, class presentations, or other digital multimedia projects. Students can schedule appointments through JagWire under the Student Services tab. Click on “Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center” to make your appointment. The Center offers face-to-face, synchronous online, and asynchronous digital appointments. More information about what services we offer, how to make an appointment, and how to access your appointment can be found on our website at <https://bit.ly/WLDCCenter>.

Counseling/Mental Health Resources: As a college student, there may be times when personal stressors interfere with your academic performance and/or negatively impact your daily functioning. If you are experiencing emotional difficulties or mental health concerns, support is available to you through the Student Counseling Center (SCC). To schedule an appointment call 210-784-1331 or visit Modular C, Room 166 (Rear entrance). **Crisis support is available 24/7 by calling the SCC at 210-784-1331 (after-hours select option ‘2’).** For more information and self-help resources, please visit www.tamusa.edu/studentcounseling

Financial Aid and Verification of Attendance: According to the following federal regulation, 34 CFR 668.21: U.S. Department of Education (DoE) Title IV regulation, a student can only receive Title IV funds based on Title IV eligibility criteria which include class attendance. If Title IV funds are disbursed to ineligible students (including students who fail to begin attendance), the institution must return these funds to the U.S. DoE within 30 days of becoming aware that the student will not or has not begun attendance. Faculty will provide the Office of Financial Aid with an electronic notification if a student has not attended the first week of class. Any student receiving federal financial aid who does not attend the first week of class will have their aid terminated and returned to the DoE. Please note that any student who stops attending at any time during the semester may also need to return a portion of their federal aid.

The Six-Drop Rule: Students are subject to the requirements of Senate Bill (SB) 1231 passed by the Texas Legislature in 2007. SB 1231 limits students to a maximum of six (6) non-punitive course drops (i.e., courses a student chooses to drop) during their undergraduate careers. A non-punitive drop does not affect the student’s GPA. However, course drops that exceed the maximum allowed by SB 1231 will be treated as “F” grades and will impact the student’s GPA.

Academic Misconduct: Students are expected to exhibit a high level of honesty and integrity in their pursuit of higher education. Students engaging in an act that violates the standards of academic integrity will find themselves facing academic and/or disciplinary sanctions. Academic misconduct is any act, or attempt, which gives an unfair advantage to the student. Additionally, any behavior specifically prohibited by a faculty member in the course syllabus or class

discussion may be considered as academic misconduct. For more information on academic misconduct policies and procedures please review the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

University policy prescribes serious consequences for acts of academic misconduct including, but not limited to, a grade of 'F' on the particular paper or assignment or a failing grade in the course. Also, a referral may be issued to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities where the sanctions can vary up to possible expulsion from the University. Considering the potential consequences of academic misconduct, it is obviously in students' best interests to avoid even the appearance of such behavior. If you are ever unclear whether a specific act might constitute academic misconduct, please contact your instructor for an assessment of the situation. All student term papers and other written assignments are subject to analysis by anti-plagiarism software.

The complete academic calendar is available online:

<https://www.tamusa.edu/academics/documents/ay-2025-calendar-09-19-2023.pdf>

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

IMPORTANT DATES:

August 29: Quiz 1

September 26: Quiz 2

October 10: First Book Essay Due (Wooster)

October 17: Quiz 3

October 24: Midterm Exam

November 7: Quiz 4

December 3: Second Book Essay Due (Utley)

December 7-13: Final Exam Week

Week 1: August 27, August 29

Tuesday: Course Introduction & Syllabus

Thursday: Discussion on the "Western Frontier" (**Quiz: Turner, Cronon, Worster**)

READINGS: Turner Thesis; Cronon, "Vanishing Frontier"; Worster "New West, True West" (Blackboard)

Week 2: September 3, September 5

Tuesday: Discussion on Manifest Destiny and Westward Expansion

Thursday: Prehistoric Cultures

Week 3: September 10, September 12

Tuesday: Imperialism & Colonialism

Thursday: The Spanish Colonial Frontier

READINGS: Textbook Chapter 1 "A New World Begins"

Week 4: September 17, September 19

Tuesday: The Western Frontier in the Early American Republic

Thursday: Indians & The Fur Trade

READINGS: Textbook Chapter 4 “The Land and its Markers”; Chapter 5 “The Fur Trade”

Week 5: September 24, September 26

Tuesday: The Debate on Native American Genocide

Thursday: Scalp Warfare (**Quiz: Kiser & Westermann**)

READINGS: Westermann, “Words and Ward of Conquest,” and Kiser, “The Business of Killing Indians” articles (Blackboard)

Week 6: October 1, October 3

Tuesday: Manifest Destiny, Slavery, & Sectional Politics

Thursday: Manifest Destiny, Slavery, & Sectional Politics

READINGS: Textbook Chapter 6 “From Texas to Oregon”

Week 7: October 8, October 10

Tuesday: The Mexican-American War

Thursday: Discuss Wooster Book; **Wooster Book Essay Due**

READINGS: Textbook Chapter 7 “War and Destiny”; Wooster “American Military Frontiers”

Week 8: October 15, October 17

Tuesday: Civil War in Texas

Thursday: Civil War in the Southwest Borderlands (**Quiz: Hamalainen**)

READINGS: Hamalainen, “Reconstructing the Great Plains” (Blackboard)

Week 9: October 22, October 24

Tuesday: Exam Review

Thursday: Midterm Exam

Week 10: October 29, October 31

Tuesday: Frontier Indian Wars

Thursday: Frontier Indian Wars

Week 11: November 5, November 7

Tuesday: *Tombstone* Movie

Thursday: *Tombstone* Movie (**Movie Quiz**)

Week 12: November 12, November 14

Tuesday: Range Wars & Vigilante Justice

Thursday: Lincoln County War; Discuss Utley Book

READINGS: Utley, *High Noon in Lincoln*

Week 13: November 19, November 21

Tuesday: Cowboys and Cattle Industry

Thursday: Mining & Natural Resources

READINGS: Textbook Chapter 8 “Mining Frontiers”; Chapter 10 “Open Range”

Week 14: November 26

Tuesday: Railroads and Frontier Capitalism

Thursday: No Class (Thanksgiving)

READINGS: Textbook Chapter 9 “The Power of the Road”

Week 15: December 3, December 5

Tuesday: Myths of the West; **Utley Book Essay Due**

Thursday: Review for Final Exam

READINGS: Textbook Chapter 15 “Myth of the West”; Chapter 16, “The Frontier and West in our Time”

Week 16: Week of December 7-13

Final Exam: TBA