

Spring 2008

**AMST 449. THE AMERICAN WEST IN SYMBOL AND MYTH**

Instructor: Allan Axelrad  
UH 409 (278-3625)  
Office Hours: MW 4:00-5:00, Tu 1:30-3:30.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

James Fenimore Cooper, *The Deerslayer* (Penguin Classics).  
Francis Parkman, *The Oregon Trail* (Penguin Classics).  
Clarence King, *Mountaineering in the Sierra Nevada* (Nebraska, Bison Books, 1997).  
Owen Wister, *The Virginian* (Signet Classics — Afterword Max Evans).  
Packet of Readings (purchase at CopyCo – 2438 E. Chapman Ave., Fullerton)  
Louis L'Amour novel (consult list).

(Texts may be purchased at Little Professor Text Books – *Make sure* you use that edition of each text)

**DETERMINATION OF GRADES:**

The course divides into three units, with a response paper assigned for each unit. The first and second response papers each count 30% and the third 40% of the final grade. Class participation will influence borderline grades. This class will not use plus/minus grading.

Graduate students will write an additional five-page critical analysis of the use of western mythology in Susan Faludi's *The Terror Dream: Fear and Fantasy in Post-9/11 America* (Metropolitan Books, 2007).

**Course Chronology**

**UNIT ONE: THE NEW WORLD AS THE WEST**

Jan. 22 – Introduction.

Jan. 29 – The New World of Columbus and Jacque Le Moyne.  
“The Captivity of Mary Rowlandson” (packet).  
Traditional and Romantic Perceptions of Wilderness.  
“The adventures of Col. Daniel Boon” (packet).

Feb. 5 – 19<sup>th</sup> Century perception of Indians: the Savagist Paradigm.  
Thomas Cole, *The Last of the Mohicans*, and the Hudson River School (slides).  
*The Last of the Mohicans*: an American enigma.  
Overview of the Leatherstocking Tales (slides).

Feb. 12 – *The Deerslayer*.

Assignment of first response paper.

## UNIT TWO: THE TRANS-MISSISSIPPI WEST

Feb. 19 – Lewis and Clark and the search for the River of the West.  
The Great American Desert.  
Mountain Men.  
Mississippi/Missouri School of Art (slides).

Feb. 26 – *The Oregon Trail*.

Mar. 4 – Rocky Mountain School of Art (slides).  
The stereograph and the winning of the West.

Due date for response paper.

Mar. 11 – *Mountaineering in the Sierra Nevada*.

Assignment of second response paper.

## UNIT THREE: THE CLOSED FRONTIER

Mar. 18 – Buffalo Bill's Wild West.  
Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (packet).  
The West of Remington, Russell (slides), Roosevelt, and Wister.

Mar. 25 – *The Virginian*.

April 8 – *Shane* (film).

Due date for response paper.

April 15 – Jane Tompkins on "Death" and "Women and the language of Men" (packet).  
Louis L'Amour's West – Discussion of novel you selected from list:

<i>Brionne</i>	<i>Kilkenny</i>
<i>The Empty Land</i>	<i>Killoe</i>
<i>Guns of the Timberlands</i>	<i>Kilrone</i>
<i>The High Graders</i>	<i>The Man Called Noon</i>
<i>The Key-Lock Man</i>	<i>Son of a Wanted man</i>

April 22 – *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* (film).

Assignment of third response paper.

April 29 – *Unforgiven* (film).

May 6 – Return of the Vanishing American.  
"The West As America."  
The New Western Historiography.

May 16 – Due date for response paper (by 5:00 p.m.).