

Western Dreams and Western Landscapes:

Western American Fiction

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The American West is a landscape of desire. Loggers, miners, cowboys, traders, trappers, Mormons, Jesuits, farmers, merchants all moved West to pursue wealth, freedom, salvation, Zion, fresh beginnings. Despite the presence of Native Americans and their millenniums-old cultures, these migrants often saw the land as empty and free for the taking, a place to make literal the various dreams they brought with them. Some came to extract the natural resources hoping to then return to the civilized East, or to Europe with the wealth of the place in their pockets. Others came to homestead, farm, ranch, or build religious communities with utopian visions. At the same time, native cultures were struggling with the new migrants and with the violence and disease they brought. The diverse migrants carried in common the ability to imagine the landscape in a way that met their desire. They would then impose that vision on the native peoples and the deserts, canyons, mountains and valleys of the West. This course will take a critical look at the experience of the American West through literature. How does the literature of this place reflect its cultural and natural history? How do the desires brought by the migrants play themselves out in the landscape, with the native peoples? How is the literature of the West both a promoter and critic of the Western story?

Required Texts

Alexie, *Reservation Blues*

Cather, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*

H.L. Davis, *Honey in the Horn*

Kingsolver, *The Bean Trees*

Maclean, *A River Runs Through It*

Stegner, *Angle of Repose*

Course Requirements and Policies

Completing of Assignments: Each week's assignments are due by Friday at midnight. Late work will not be accepted.

Scholastic Integrity: I assume all students are honest and ethical in the way they conduct their personal and scholastic lives. However, so there is no question, if you plagiarize or cheat in any way, you will fail this class. **All work submitted in this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly documented. Please see me if you have any questions about your use of sources. Ignorance is no excuse.**

Bulletin Board

Much of the learning in a literature course comes from discussion. In an online course, this is a bit more difficult. In an attempt to simulate face-to-face discussion, we will have an online bulletin board. Each Monday by midnight, I will post a series of discussion questions for the

weeks reading. By Friday at midnight, you will need to have responded to the bulletin board 3 times. The first response should be to one of my posted questions, or a question posted by that weeks critic the remaining two responses should be to classmate posts. Good responses will be a paragraph or two long, and make an evaluative claim about the reading using evidence from the text to support your claim. All weekly responses must be completed by Friday at midnight. Your weekly responses will be graded.

Essay

You will be required to write one criticism review and one 4-6 page critical essays during the term. Due dates are on the schedule. Both assignments should be Word documents, double-spaced with one-inch margins in MLA format. I will post directions for the criticism review. A good literature essay answers an interpretive question and uses the text as evidence. As you participate in the bulletin-board discussion, be thinking about what issues arise that might be expanded into an essay. All essays must be submitted to www.turnitin.com by 11:59 pm on the due date to be on time. I have set this up so you can see the originality report at the same time I can. For an accurate report please be sure to click the "exclude bibliography" and "exclude quotations" buttons. The course number is 2173668 and the password is Sumner. Just follow the instructions on the web site and if you have any trouble, make sure you work it out before the due date.

Final Exam

There will be a comprehensive final exam from 5-7 PM on May 29. To pass this course, you must take this exam at this time. This exam will be open book, but if you have not read carefully, your book won't help. It is crucial that you stay current on your reading if you plan on passing this exam.

Office Hours

With an online class, there are no regular office hours. However, in order to manage my own time—and to not let this course completely consume all of my time—I will be holding email office hours. In other words, I will check my email Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays and address your concerns and questions then. So if you don't hear from me for a couple of days, hang tough; I will get to it.

Grading Breakdown

Threaded Discussions	20%
Criticism Review	25%
Critical Essay	25%
Final Exam	30%

Western Literature Schedule

Week	Reading	Assignment Due
Feb 17	<i>Death Comes for the Archbishop:</i> "Prologue" through "Snake Root"	Introduction, three responses and Plagiarism Assignment due by Friday at midnight.
Feb. 24	<i>Death Comes for the Archbishop:</i> Finish	Three responses due by Friday at midnight.
Mar. 2	<i>Honey in the Horn</i>	Three responses due by Friday at midnight.
Mar. 9	<i>Honey in the Horn</i>	Three responses due by Friday at midnight.
Mar. 16	<i>Honey in the Horn</i>	Three responses due by Friday at midnight.
Mar. 23	<i>Angle of Repose</i>	Three responses due by Friday at midnight. Criticism Review due by Friday at midnight.
Mar. 30	<i>Angle of Repose</i>	Three responses due by Friday at midnight.
Apr. 6	<i>Angle of Repose</i>	Three responses due by Friday at midnight.
Apr. 13	<i>A River Runs Through It</i>	Three responses due by Friday at midnight.
Apr. 20	<i>A River Runs Through It</i>	Three responses due by Friday at midnight.
Apr. 27	<i>The Bean Trees</i>	Three responses due by Friday at midnight. Critical Essay due by Friday at midnight.
May 4	<i>The Bean Trees</i>	Three responses due by Friday at midnight.
May 11	<i>Reservation Blues</i>	Three responses due by Friday at midnight.
May 18	<i>Reservation Blues</i>	Three responses due by Friday at midnight.
May 25	Final Exam	Final Exam, Thurs. May 29, 5-7 pm