

Cultures in Contact: The American Frontier

Laura Leibman, Dept. of English
LBST 524 Summer 2006 (1 Unit)
Liberal Studies Core Course



Updated Course Description:

In 1893, historian Frederick Jackson Turner declared that "The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward explain American development." He also declared that the frontier was closed. In this course we will investigate the ways nineteenth-century American writers used the frontier to formulate notions of America, Americans, and American manhood. How did the myth of the frontier evolve as it traced the movements of explorers, sailors, gold miners, and cowboys? What role did women and the dispossessed play in this romance? We will cover both classical representations of the frontier, as well as views from the dispossessed. We will address the frontier's legacy in American popular and literary culture in the 20th century. The course will take a cultural studies approach: that is, we will read the literature in the context of the art, history, politics, ritual objects, newspapers, architecture, and artifacts that surrounded these writers and inhabit their works. The course is writing intensive.

Class Meets: Mondays through Thursdays from 4:00-6:00 p.m., Monday, June 5 -Thursday, July 13. (No class Monday July 3rd or Tuesday, July 4th. Possible make-up class the evening of Thursday July 6th)

Schedule of Readings

Week 1	Krakauer, <i>Into the Wild</i>
Week 2	Thoreau, <i>Walden</i>
Week 3	Ridge, <i>The Adventures of Joaquin Murieta</i> (Selections from <i>Shirley Letters</i>)
Week 4	Wister, <i>The Virginian</i> (Selections from <i>Nat Love</i>)
Week 5	Ford, <i>Searchers</i>
Week 6	Berry, <i>Trask</i>

Weekly Activities (the class will meet Mondays-Thursdays, two hours/day, starting in June):

Mondays:	Primary Text (see above). [Revision of Previous Week's Paper Due.]
Tuesdays:	Critical Approaches/Narrative Strategies
Wednesdays:	Cultural Artifacts. Short Paper Due
Thursdays:	Workshop Papers. Readings on Approaches to Writing

Assignments:

Each week a short paper (1-3 pages) will be due. This paper will be workshopped by the class. The following week a revision of the paper will be due. Each paper will focus on a different writing strategy.