

History 254 Dee Garceau
Office: Clough 301
MWF, 9:10-10:10am

Theater 229.1 Cookie Ewing
Office: Kennedy 105
Class: Kennedy 101

INTERPRETING THE AMERICAN WEST

Course Description

In this course students will explore the potential for collaboration between History and the Theater Arts. Students will engage in primary historical research, using archival materials from the history of the American West. From these sources, students will develop a performance piece. Professor Garceau will guide students through the processes of historical interpretation; Professor Ewing will guide students through the processes of dramatic interpretation.

The history of the American West offers a compelling blend of myth, scholarly debate, and evidence that invite further study. “For more than a century,” wrote Richard White, “the American West has been the most strongly imagined section of the United States.” Through oral and written history, songs, fiction, art, and film, the West has been identified with mythic themes of adventure and transformation. Once thought a simple tale of white migration westward, historians now recognize the West as a meeting ground of cultures, a crucible of intertribal diplomacy as well as encounters between Indian nations and EuroAmerican colonizers.

By studying in depth three of the most mythologized forms of migration --the fur trade, the Overland Trail, and the cattle drives-- students can appreciate the complexity of western history and search for its dramatic core. We hope that students will come away with new insight into the processes of storytelling through History and Theater.

Course Structure

Class time will be spent in discussion of the assigned articles, journals, and narratives, as well as in scripting, staging, and acting workshops. Assignments will include written analysis of archival materials, in-class exams, production of scripts, and exploration of acting and directing; all of which will culminate in a dramatic performance.

Course Requirements

1) Consistent attendance and participation. Over two absences will lower your average by a full letter grade.

2) Journal of historical interpretation: Keep a journal of insights drawn from readings and discussion. Identify key issues and larger themes; how does this material change your understanding of the American West?

3) Scripting Folder: Keep a folder of excerpts from the narratives that you have identified as good dramatic material. You may draw from this when scripting your performance piece.

4) Exams: There will be two written exams and two performance exams. The first written exam

will be an in-class essay on the fur trade. The second written exam will be an in-class essay on the Overland Trail. The first performance exam will be a practice piece. The final performance exam will be the dramatic production which develops out of the whole semester's work.

Required Texts:

Richard White, *Its Your Misfortune and None of My Own: A New History of the American West* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

Coursepack: This collection of xeroxed articles and documents will be handed out in class. Students pay a lab fee for this packet.

COURSE OUTLINE

W Jan 10 Introduction to the Course

F Jan 12 What's Theater Got To Do With It?

M Jan 15 NO CLASS. Martin Luther King Day Celebration

W Jan 17 History, Memory, and Myth

Reading: Richard White, "The Imagined West," *Its Your Misfortune and None of My Own; A New History of the American West*, pp.613-32.

Donald Worster, "New West, True West," pp.21-33.

James Axtell, "The Ethnohistory of Native America," pp.11-27.

Susan Arinitage, "Through Women's Eyes: A New View of the West," pp.9-18.

Katherine Morrissey, "Engendering the West," pp.132-44.

F Jan 19 Oral History Workshop

M Jan 22 Lecture
Introduction to the Fur Trade

- W Jan 24 "Many Tender Ties": The Economics and Politics of Kinship
- Reading: Sylvia Van Kirk, "The Role of Native Women in Fur Trade Society," pp.53-62.
- George Ruxton, "On Life Among the Trappers," (1847), pp.165-69.
- Frederick Choteau, "Indian Marriage," p.130.
- F Jan 26 Rivalry and Alliance: Doing Business Across Cultures
- Reading: Arthur Ray, "The Fur Trade as an Aspect of American History," pp.147-56.
- Edmond Atkin, "Reasons for French Success in the Indian Trade" (1751), pp. 142-44.
- LeBorgne, A Crow Chief, "Tell the Hidatsas to Protect and Trade With the Whites" (1805), p.1.
- Peter Skene Ogden, "Journal" (1822), pp.386-89.
- Thomas Forsyth, "Observations Respecting Our Relations With the Indian Nations" (1831), pp.936-38.
- J. Thomas Famham, "An Indian Trapper," p.175.
- M Jan 29 Theater Process
- W Jan 31 Theater Process
- F Feb 2 Theater Process
- M Feb 5 Individualism and Community: Revisiting the Mountain Man
- Reading: Richard White, "Trade With the United States," *Its Your Misfortune*, pp.44-52.
- Charles Larpenteur, "Narrative" (1835), pp.70-75.
- N.J. Wyeth's Instructions for the Fort Hall Trading Post (1834). pp.177-80.
- American Fur Company Papers (1836), pp.943-47

James Clyman, "Journal of a Mountain Man," pp.11-iS, 26-33.

Jedidiah Smith, "Diary," pp.19-22, 69-73.

W Feb 7

Unforeseen Legacies: Game Depletion and Epidemic Disease

Reading: Cohn Calloway, "Horses, Guns, and Smallpox," pp.37-42.

Lone Dog's Winter Count (1800-1871), pp.31-36.

Saukamaptee, "Memories of War and Smallpox," (1788), pp.43-7

"I Bring Death: The Kiowas Meet Smallpox" (1839-40), pp.50-3.

Thomas Famham, "Smallpox Among the Blackfeet" (1828), pp.265-66.

Chief Sharitarish (Pawnee), "The End of the Pawnee Way of Life" (1822), p.238.

Osburne Russell, "The Final Rendezvous" (1843), pp.396-98.

* GROUP PRESENTATIONS ASSIGNED *

F Feb 9

Group Presentations

Written Assignment Handed Out

M Feb 12

Theater Process

W Feb 14

Theater Process

Written Assignment Due

F Feb 16

Theater Process

M Feb 19

Introduction to the Overland Trail

Reading: Richard White, "The Oregon and California Migrations," *Its Your Misfortune*, pp.189-94.

Glenda Riley, "The Specter of a Savage: Rumors and Alarmism on the Overland Trail," pp.427-44.

Documents, "Oregon Fever" (1843, 1845), p.1.

Peter Burnett, "Propaganda for Oregon," pp.453-54.

- W Feb 21 Women's Experience on the Overland Trail
- Reading: John Faragher, "Women and Their Families on the Overland Trail to California and Oregon," pp.246-67.
- Keturah Belknap's "Running Commentary," (1841-43), p.194-200, 206-09.
- Lydia Allen Rudd, "Notes By the Wayside En Route to Oregon" (1852), pp.187-98.
- Sallie Hester, "Journal" (1850), pp.238-45.
- Rebecca Hildreth Nutting Woodson, "A Sketch of Her Life" (1850-71), pp.234-39.
- F Feb 23 Men's Experience on the Overland Trail
- Reading: Henry Bigler, "Journal" (1849), pp.172-80.
- George Cannon, "Narrative" (1849), pp.218-20, 232-40, 253-54.
- Jacob Stover, "The Pinney-Savage Story" (1849), p.291.
- Vincent Geiger & Wakeman Bryerly, "Impressions of the Overland Trail" (1849), pp.126-27.
- M Feb 26 Theater Process
- W Feb 28 Theater Process
- F March 2 Rehearsal Time
- March 3-11 **Spring Break**
- M March 12 Conflict and Morality on the Trail
- Reading: John Reid, "Punishment of Expulsion," pp.171-79.
- John Reid, "Imperative of Harmony," pp.209-28.
- Gilbert Cole, "Journal" (1849), p.96.
- Elizabeth Dixon Geer, "Diary," p.153.

Russell Bidlap, "Letters Home"(1849), pp.11-12.

Augustus M. Heslep, "Letters"(1849), p.15.

Tabitha Brown, "Diary" (1847), pp.52-57.

Thomas Farnham, "A Mutiny" (1849), pp.90-93.

Addison Pratt, "Diary" (1849), pp.111-12.

Abigail Scott, "Oregon Journal" (1852), pp.143-44.

Thomas Reid, "Letter from California" (1849), p.1.

Alfred DeWitt, "Letter to His Brother" (1849), p.1.

GROUP PRESENTATIONS ASSIGNED

F March 16 **Group Presentations**

Written Assignment Handed Out

M March 19 Reader's Theater: Reading the Letters

W March 21 Reader's Theater: Reading the Letters

Written Assignment Due

F March 23 Reader's Theater: Reading the Letters

M March 26 Introduction to the Cattle Drives

Reading: Richard White, "The Great Plains," *Its Your Misfortune*, pp.216-27.

George Duffield, "Diary" (1862), pp.592-95.

Charles Siringo, "Return to Texas, 1880," pp.324-28.

James Briskin, "How to Make Money Raising Cattle," (1881), pp.320-24.

W March 28 Cowboy Culture

Reading: J.T. Armstrong, 'The Big North,' pp.36-39, 45.

Andy Adams. "Log of a Cowboy," pp.24, 320.

Ike Blasingame, "Dakota Cowboy," pp.205-06, 255.

Teddy Blue Abbott, "We Pointed Them North," pp.8, 35-6, 81-2, 89, 107-13, 141-43, 207-08, 230.

Folksongs: "I Ain't Got No Use For The Wimmen." "Bucking Broncho." "The Stampede."

F March 30 Indian Cowboys, Female Cowboys, and Black Cowboys

Reading: Kenneth Porter, "The Labor of Negro Cowboys," pp.343-57.

Peter Iverson, "When Indians Became Cowboys," pp.16-31.

Elsie Lloyd & Amy Chubb, Oral History, pp.2-12.

Catherine McCarty, "Her Cattlemen Neighbors," pp.409-11.

Folksongs: "Little Old Sod Shanty on the Claim." "Woman's Reply to 'Little Old Sod Shanty on the Claim.'"

M April 2 Scripting and Rehearsing the Performance Piece

W April 4 Scripting and Rehearsing

F April 6 Scripting and Rehearsing

M April 9 Scripting and Rehearsing

W April 11 Scripting and Rehearsing

April 12-15 **Easter Break**

M April 16 Scripting and Rehearsing

W April 18 Scripting and Rehearsing

F April 20 Scripting and Rehearsing

M April 23 Scripting and Rehearsing

W April 25 Scripting and Rehearsing

F April 27 Scripting and Rehearsing

Performance, 7pm

Scripting and Rehearsing

Scripting and Rehearsing

Scripting and Rehearsing
Performance, 7pm