Sample Syllabus

English 117
California and the West

Professor Blake Allmendinger

Catalogue Course Description: Lecture, four hours; discussion, one hour (when scheduled). Enforced requisite: English Composition 3 or 3H. Study of literature in English dealing with the exploration, settlement, and emergent cultural concerns of the western United States. P/NP or letter grade. Historical/Breadth: depends on topic.

For many people, California is a land of golden dreams. It is a popular tourist destination, a haven for immigrants, and a place where adventurers seek riches and fame. For others, California is a land of illusion, a toxic dystopia—throughout history, a site of contestation and strife. The works in this course span the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, tracing the history of California, beginning in the Mission era; continuing through the Gold Rush, the early settlement period, the rise of Los Angeles, and the emergence of Hollywood as a cultural force; and concluding with works that chronicle contemporary political and social unrest.

September 25
Introduction

September 30, October 2
John Rollin Ridge, The Life and Adventures of Joaquín Murieta
Corky Gonzalez, “I Am Joaquín”

October 7, 9
Helen Hunt Jackson, Ramona

October 14, 16
John Steinbeck, The Pastures of Heaven

October 21, 23
Nathanael West, The Day of the Locust
Film (TBA)

October 28
Midterm

October 30, November 4
Raymond Chandler, The Big Sleep

November 6
Chester Himes, If He Hollers Let Him Go

November 11
Veteran’s Day

**November 13**
Chester Himes, *If He Hollers Let Him Go*

**November 18**
*Killer of Sheep*
First paper due

**November 20**
Joan Didion, *Slouching Toward Bethlehem* (selected essays)

**November 25**
T.C. Boyle, *The Tortilla Curtain*

**November 27**
Thanksgiving

**December 2**
T.C. Boyle, *The Tortilla Curtain*

**December 4**
*Twilight: Los Angeles*
Second paper due

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There is an in-class essay midterm, two five-page papers, and a final essay exam. Each assignment counts for 25% of your grade.

Office hours are T/Th 2-4 in the Humanities Building, Room 260.
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