Introduction
This general capstone course introduces you to a wealth of fascinating literature about Nevada, placing it in the context of Nevada history, geography, and culture. As we read, we will explore a variety of concerns: What does it mean to possess a “sense of place,” and how do you get one if you don’t have it? How is Nevada portrayed in literature? Who are the major Nevada authors? How have different groups experienced Nevada's landscape? How is Nevada’s literary history tied to its economic and political history? Do insiders and outsiders write and respond to Nevada literature differently? Does the literature of a state create an identity for it? Will reading about Nevada change the way you experience the state? Films, guest speakers, and possible field trips complement the readings.

Goals
• To ponder “sense of place”
• To learn about Nevada’s literary history and major authors
• To broaden knowledge and appreciation of Nevada through literature
• To sharpen critical reading and writing skills
• To perfect the art of intelligent “book talk”
• To develop a taste for regional literature
• To cultivate the next generation of Nevada writers (you!)

Capstone Features
As a capstone course—one of two culminating courses in the core curriculum—this course has distinctive characteristics and expectations. First, this course will ask you to bring to bear knowledge that you’ve gained in other courses to inform our exploration of Nevada and its literature. Second, this course is multi-disciplinary, including not only literature but also history, natural history, films, field trips, and guest speakers. It will be our collective challenge to integrate these perspectives into a broadly focused understanding of Nevada. Third, the course includes an ethical dimension as we consider the relationship between how a place is represented and how it is treated, a particularly hot issue for Nevada, given the Yucca Mountain Nuclear Waste dump plan. Fourth, this course promotes critical thinking, challenging you to question stereotypes of Nevada, to scrutinize the language we use to refer to place, and even to rethink your own assumptions about what it means to reside in Nevada. Finally, the course includes a rigorous writing component, featuring a variety of assignments that range from creative writing, to informal reading responses, to a discussion guide and book club report, to critical essays.

Texts
• Literary Nevada: Writings from the Silver State, ed. Cheryll Glotfelty
• One other book, chosen by your group
WebCampus
Course materials, including assignments, will be posted to WebCampus (CE6). I may occasionally contact you by email via your university email address. If you normally use another account, you must set your university account to forward messages to your active account.

Grading
30% Quizzes and Cogitations
15% Creative Paper
10% Discussion Guide
10% Book Club Report
15% Midterm
15% Final exam
5% Participation (includes presentation of Creative Paper)

Participation, Presentation, Attendance, and Late Papers
• This class aims for excellent discussion. Participation will be evaluated as follows: 5 = excellent contributions to class discussions, 4 = good contributions, 3 = fine contributions, 2 = occasional contributions, 1 = respectful listening.
• You are expected to give a public reading (in class) of your Creative Paper. Failure to do so will result in a participation score of zero.
• Attendance matters. Perfect attendance will raise your final course grade by a step (ex. “B” becomes “B+”). 1-3 absences has no effect on your final grade. More than three absences lowers your grade, the more absences the lower the grade. 2 tardies = 1 absence.
• Papers must be ready at the beginning of the class period in which they are due. Late papers will not be accepted.

Disabilities, Tragedies, and Trips
If you have a disability and will be requiring assistance, please contact me or the Disability Resource Center (Thompson Building 101) as soon as possible to arrange for appropriate accommodations. I will be happy to work with you. Similarly, if you have a death in the family or other tragedy this semester, please tell me, and we will work out a plan. If you are on a sports team or have another legitimate reason to miss class, let me know in advance (and in writing) so we can make arrangements.

Quizzes, Cogitations, and Extra Credit
A discussion class works well only when everyone has done the reading attentively. I have found that classes are much better when I create an incentive for students to do the reading on time. Accordingly, 30% of your grade will be based on your performance on reading quizzes and cogitations (response papers). Quizzes will be given at the beginning of class on the day we begin a new unit; missed quizzes may not be made up. Cogitations (normally due on Thursdays) should be one page, typed, double-spaced. Focus your cogitation on one, two, or three pieces, selected by that week’s discussion guides. (First, reread those pieces and mark them up in your book, underlining key phrases, jotting down comments in the margins, interacting with the text.) Cogitations should not be a summary of the piece; rather, they should be your response to the piece and analysis of it. Practice close reading skills--discuss images, characters, tone, setting, themes, tensions, striking phrases, etc. Use your cogitation to focus your attention on the text, digest the reading, and create ideas—open up lines of thinking--for worthwhile, probing class discussions. Unless otherwise announced, each cogitation will be worth a maximum of three points: 3 = good job, 2 = acceptable job, 1 = weak. Cogitations are due at the beginning of class. I do not accept late work. I will announce Extra Credit opportunities from time to time.
Creative Paper: Personal Essay, Creative Prose, or Poetry about Nevada

I would like to encourage you to submit your work to the James MacMillan writing contest, which honors "the best poetry or prose about the state of Nevada." The deadline for submissions is in March, and the winner will be announced at the end of the semester. The creative paper in this class will prepare you to submit your work to this contest. I will encourage you to write creative nonfiction (a personal essay) or a short story, and we will have a series of writing exercises and workshops leading up to your finished paper. You may submit poetry, but class exercises will center on prose. As you work on your paper, you, as a writer, will gain a special insight into the course readings as you will have faced many of the choices and challenges that other Nevada authors confront.

The Creative Paper should be typed, double-spaced. Your paper should be suitable for anonymous submission, which means that you should have a title page that provides a title and lists your name, your contact information, and the date. Somewhere on the title page should be the words, "Submission to the James MacMillan Scholarship." The title of your paper should be retyped on the first page, but your name should not appear anywhere except the title page. Pages should be numbered in the upper right hand corner. This paper should be at least 1,500 words, but it may be substantially longer if necessary to do justice to your idea. We'll be talking more about this paper in the first weeks of the semester to clear up any questions you may have. You will read this paper to the class.

Discussion Guide

As a member of this class, you will be part of a project to develop teaching materials that other instructors can use to teach Nevada literature. A typical week in our class will use Tuesdays (beginning with a quiz on the assigned reading) to present a broad overview of a particular unit of the Literary Nevada anthology. Most Thursdays will be devoted to a much closer analysis and student-led discussion of one, two, or three selections from that week’s unit (cogitations on these works will be due). Early in the semester, you will sign up to be the discussion guide on a given day. For that day you will prepare supplementary materials and discussion questions for a particular selection and lead class discussion of that piece. You will submit both a hard copy of your Discussion Guide (for grading purposes) and a digital copy (attached as a Microsoft Word .doc) so that I can include it in a Teacher’s Guide that I will prepare (you will be credited by name). A sample Discussion Guide is posted to WebCampus. I’ll clear up any questions you have in class.

Book Club Report

1200-1500 words. Anthologies provide an outstanding overview of a field, but it is also rewarding to discuss a book-length work in its entirety. Accordingly, you will be part of a small-group Nevada book club in this class. Your book club will agree upon a book to read, read it by the specified date, and discuss it in class on our book club day. (Your group may choose to continue discussion via email or after class.) You will then write a report that reviews the book, shares your opinion of it, speculates on why you respond to it the way you do, and summarizes how your other group members responded to the book (and maybe why) and how their responses opened up new insights, challenging and enriching your understanding of the work. We’ll discuss this assignment further in class.

Exams

There will be a take-home midterm and final exam, consisting of several short essays in response to selected questions. Throughout the semester you will have input into formulating appropriate exam questions. These questions will ask you to synthesize and reflect upon the readings and the issues we raise in class. Exams should be typed, double-spaced, with pages numbered.
Tentative Schedule (subject to change)

T 1/19  Introduction
R 1/21  Sense of Place discussion; clarify course requirements. See handout for instructions.

T 1/26  Wild Nevada (63 pp.) 723-786
R 1/28  selected pieces: ___________________, ___________________, ___________________

T 2/2  Travel Writing (65 pp.) 485-550
R 2/4  selected pieces: ___________________, ___________________, ___________________

T 2/9  Contemporary Fiction (103 pp.) 619-722
R 2/11  selected pieces: ___________________, ___________________, ___________________

T 2/16  Draft of Creative Paper due (bring 3 hard copies to class); writing workshops
R 2/18  Native American Stories (27 pp.) 1-28
  Discussion Guides: ___________________, ___________________

T 2/23  Creative Paper due; Exploration (35 pp.) 29-64
  Discussion Guides: ___________________, ___________________
R 2/25  Emigrants (35 pp.) 65-100
  Discussion Guides: ___________________, ___________________

T 3/2  Mining (77 pp.) 101-178
R 3/4  selected pieces: ___________________, ___________________, ___________________

T 3/9  Possible guest speaker
R 3/11  Midterms due; fieldtrip to Nevada Historical Society (details to follow)

March 16-20  SPRING BREAK—NO CLASSES

T 3/23  Rural Nevada, and Cowboy Poetry (83 pp.) 179-262
R 3/25  selected pieces: ___________________, ___________________, ___________________

T 3/30  Reno (75 pp.) 263-338
R 4/1  selected pieces: ___________________, ___________________, ___________________

T 4/6  Las Vegas (87 pp.) 339-426
R 4/8  selected pieces: ___________________, ___________________, ___________________

T 4/13  Film: *Leaving Las Vegas* (1997; 111 min.) (DVD 2292—on reserve in @One film desk)
  shown at 11:00 a.m. in MIKC 104 and 8:15 p.m. in MIKC 124 (or watch it on your own)
R 4/15  Book Clubs meet

T 4/20  Nuclear Nevada (57 pp.) 427-484
R 4/22  Book Club Report due; Book Clubs report to class

T 4/27  Contemporary Poetry (67 pp.) 551-618
R 4/29  selected poems: ___________________, ___________________, ___________________

T 5/4  Conclusion
R 5/6  Final Exam due to my office (FH 028), 9:00-9:30 a.m.