The expansion of empires and nations constitutes one of the most compelling themes in North American history. This team-taught interdisciplinary seminar considers widely varying examples of expansion at the intersection of environmental history and environmental literature. Using the disciplinary tools available to both historians and literary scholars, we will explore the means by which expanding indigenous, colonial, and postcolonial cultures have reshaped nature in ways intended and not, fought with one another over the morality and prerogatives of doing so, and represented these processes for themselves and others. Our area of interest will be North America and the Pacific.

Please note: this seminar is listed under two different departments, English 256 (CRN 43941) and History 202H (CRN 27634). Students should sign up for whichever version works best with the requirements of their particular program. For English graduate students, the course may fulfill either the early or later national requirement, depending on the subject of the final paper.

**Required Texts (Available at the Campus Bookstore and online)**


**Recommended:**


**Requirements**

Participation 50%

Final Paper 50%

**NOTE:** This syllabus and all other course handouts will be posted on ENL256/HIS202H’s SmartSite webpage. Important reading links, images, etexts, writing guides, class policies, and FAQs will also be posted there. Make it a habit to check the site on a regular basis.
Readings
[* = in the Resources folder on the ENL 256 SmartSite, by author’s last name. For books, please note the specific pages recommended. Texts listed in optimal reading order.]

Week 1 (Jan. 3) Thinking West: Empires, Expansion, and Violence

*Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” (1893)*


Week 2 (Jan. 10) Natives, Empires, and Native Empires

Pekka Hamalainen, Comanche Empire (1-67, 141-238, 292-361)
Cormac McCarthy, Blood Meridian

[recommended film: The Searchers (Ford)]

Week 3 (Jan. 17) Border Romance

Hackel, Children of Coyote
Helen Hunt Jackson, Ramona

Week 4 (Jan. 24) The Plains

William Cronon, Nature’s Metropolis
Frank Norris, The Pit
*Dan Flores, “Bison Ecology and Bison Diplomacy Redux: Another Look at the Southern Plains from 1800 to 1850”
*From W. P. Webb, The Great Plains (1931)

Week 5 (Jan. 31) Hydraulic Civilization

Worster, Rivers of Empire
Mary Austin, The Ford
Week 6 (Feb. 7) Contemporary Borderlands

Ruben Martinez, *Crossing Over*

*From William Vollmann, *Imperial*

Week 7 (Feb. 14) Suburbia

Mike Davis, *City of Quartz*
DJ Waldie, *Holy Land*

*From Lawrence Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure*

Week 8 (Feb. 21) Working Landscapes

Kosek, *Understories: The Political Life of Forests in Northern New Mexico*
Kesey, *Sometimes a Great Notion*

*White, “Are You an Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living? “

Week 9 (Feb. 28) Northern Frontiers

Rob Campbell, *Darkest Alaska*


Week 10 (March 7) Pacific Expansion

*Rob Nixon, *Dreambirds*