

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

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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