

EN 271: The Frontier in American Literature
Instructor: Dr. Peter L. Bayers
Office: DM 110
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Office Hours: M: 11:00-12:00; W: 10:00-12:00; Th: 11:00-12:00

Course Purpose and Description

I think one could argue that myths and ideas regarding the “frontier” are very much ingrained in the U.S. collective unconscious. Hollywood movies, 4x4 vehicles, and cigarette ads all attest to the fact that the mythology of the frontier permeates our daily existence. But these ideas did not emerge in a vacuum; rather, they are rooted in complex myths and realities in U.S. cultural history. The purpose of this course is to investigate ideologies of the "frontier" in American literature and culture from the Early National Period to the present. In this course, we will not look at the “frontier” through a monolithic perspective. Depending on the specific needs of an author or peoples, the frontier, both as term and “place,” could have radically different meanings. For instance, from some historical perspectives, the frontier was perceived as an “open space” of “free land,” but ethnohistorians have recently redefined the “frontier” as a place where cultures meet and grapple with one another. We will, I hope, rigorously investigate the assumptions regarding these and many other ideas as we study many different manifestations of the frontier in literature, film, painting, and sculpture. Keep in mind, however, that we’re only sampling these genres. Finally, while I will certainly help guide class discussions, this course is *your* course. You must keep up with the reading and read all the introductions to the various writers. Do not expect me to lecture. Rely on yourself and each other, and I have no doubt we can have an exciting, enriching course.

Required Texts

Black Hawk, Black Hawk, an Autobiography
Child, Lydia Maria. Hobomok and Other Writings on Indians
Cooper, James Fenimore. The Last of the Mohicans
Eastman, Charles Alexander. From the Deep Woods to Civilization
Grey, Zane. Riders of the Purple Sage
Love, Nat. The Life and Adventures of Nat Love
Lyons, Greg, ed. Literature of the American West
Welch, James. Fools Crow

Assignments:

Analytic Response (AR):

For **specific** reading assignments, you are **required** to hand in your typed response to a particular reading. The dates for these responses are indicated on the syllabus (**AR**). **These responses are due on the day that a particular reading is due. There are no exceptions to this rule.** If you are going to miss class, you must find a way to hand in

your assignment by the due date (i.e. give it to a friend, put it in the mailbox on my door). The **AR** is a space for you to develop and fertilize *critical* ideas through writing, and these ideas which will eventually be transposed to a formal essay. Do not be overly concerned with grammar, punctuation, etc. However, this is **not** a place for banal free-writing..

Format: 1-2 pp., typed, date in upper-right hand corner.

Essays:

I will not assign essay topics for essays. The topics will be generated by your notebook entries and class discussions. Your essays should follow the MLA format. Be sure to have a title, a clear opening paragraph, a clear thesis, and lots of evidence and reasoning for support. These are not research papers.

Drafts:

You are required to bring to class a fully developed draft for draft due dates. This means that the draft should be the approximate length of the final paper.

Every student must write up a response to each essay they read, and these responses must be submitted to me with the final essay. *It is the writer's responsibility* to make sure that all essay responses are handed in with the final essay.

On a separate piece of paper, a peer response must:

- Indicate 2 things you liked about the essay
- Indicate 2 things you think would help improve the essay

Grading

Analytic Notebook:

AR: See Due Dates 15%
(I will not accept late assignments).

3 Essays, 6-8 pp. 25% Each

Late Papers: For each class day an essay is late, you will receive 1 letter grade deduction.

Your rough draft must be attached to each of your essays—Otherwise, you will NOT receive credit for your essay

Drafts 5%
Draft Responses 5%

Attendance:

You are allowed 4 unexcused absences. For each absence beyond the first 4 you will receive a 3 pt.

grade deduction off your final grade. **Come to class on time.**

Academic Honesty:

Plagiarism is the appropriation of ideas, data, work, or language of others and submitting them as one's own to satisfy the requirements of a course. Plagiarism constitutes theft and deceit. Students are often confused by just what constitutes plagiarism. When the ideas or writings of others are presented in assignments, these ideas or writing should be attributed to that source. Special care should be taken, when cutting and pasting materials or when paraphrasing, to cite sources correctly and to use quotation marks around exact words from source materials. Actions that result in plagiarism may be intentional or unintentional. Consequently, students must understand the concept of plagiarism. When reading, processing, or using materials from any source, appropriate documentation is always essential. If you plagiarize, the penalty can be severe. For starters, the penalty could include your failing the course and a letter to the Dean documenting your plagiarism. See also the Student Handbook, p. 38-39.

Course Schedule

Week 1

9/3 Introduction to Course

Week 2

9/10 **AR** Boon, The Adventures of Colonel Daniel Boon.
<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/909>)

Week 3

9/14 Crèvecoeur, from Letters from and American Farmer, from "What is an American" in Lyons, p. 7; Lewis and Clark, Read journal entry Monday, August 19, p. 24.
9/17 **AR** Child, Hobomok

Week 4

9/21 Hobomok
9/24 **AR** Cooper The Last of the Mohicans

Week 5

9/28 **AR** Cooper The Last of the Mohicans

10/1 No Class

Week 6

10/5 Draft Paper 1 Due

10/8 **AR** Black Hawk. Black Hawk: an Autobiography

Week 7

10/15 Turner, from “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” in Lyons, p. 12; Wister, “The Jimmy John Boss” in Lyons, p. 95 ***Paper 1 Due

Week 8

10/19 **AR** Love, The Life and Adventures of Nat Love

10/22 The Life and Adventures of Nat Love

Week 9

10/26 **AR** Eastman, From the Deep Woods to Civilization

10/29 **AR** Grey, Riders of the Purple Sage

Week 10

11/2 **AR** Grey, Riders of the Purple Sage

11/5 Draft Paper 2 Due

Week 11

11/16 Stagecoach (in class film)

11/19 ***Essay 2 Due; **AR** Movie Discussion, Shane

Week 12

11/23 **AR** Unforgiven Discussion

Week 13

11/30 **AR** Dances with Wolves Discussion

12/3 **AR** Welch, Fools Crow

Week 14

12/7 Fools Crow

12/10 Draft 3 Due

*****Paper 3 Due the day of the Final Exam