

MENG 6240 WSU Fall 12 20806

Dr. Becky Gesteland

Class meetings: M 5:30-8:10 pm (EH 205)

Office: Elizabeth Hall 449

Office hours: MW 9:00-10:30 am; M 4:30-5:30 pm; TR 9:00 am-11:30 am

Phone: 801-626-7083

Email: bmcshane@weber.edu = best way to reach me in an emergency

Course description



In 1893, historian Frederick Jackson Turner declared America's geographical frontier closed (based on the most recent census); however, he also argued that American writers before and since have used the concept of "the Frontier" as a metaphor for self-reliance and philosophical searching. As a class, we will explore how American writers around the turn-of-the-20th century used the myth of the frontier as a strategic response to concerns and anxieties about a then modernizing, urbanizing, and industrializing nation. We will read these texts using an American Studies approach, paying close attention to issues of gender, ethnicity, class, cultural position, and so on. Moreover, we will incorporate film and other media to help us envision this intersection of wilderness and civilization, this edge, this dropping off place—both as a physical place and as a psychological, spiritual, even virtual space.

Course outcomes

You will

1. Investigate the literary history of "the Frontier" through weekly reading responses (~2 pages each) and class discussions
2. Analyze and interpret texts from various perspectives and appreciate how differences in context can produce multiple readings of a text
3. Conduct scholarly inquiry and produce two literary research papers (~10 pages each) in the manner of a literary critic and in the style recommended by the current MLA
4. Report your research to the class

Texts - at WSU Bookstore unless otherwise hyperlinked

- Louise Amelia Knapp Smith Clappe *The Shirley Letters: From the California Mines, 1851-1852*
- Mark Twain *Roughing It* (1871)
- Maria Amparo Ruiz de Burton *The Squatter and the Don* (1885)
- Frederick Jackson Turner [The Significance of the Frontier in American History](#) (1893)
- Owen Wister [Evolution of the Cowpuncher](#)   (1895)
- James Mooney *The Ghost Dance Religion and Wounded Knee* (1896)
- Zitkala-Ša *American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings* (1901)
- Mary Austin *The Land of Little Rain* (1903)
- John Muir [The Hetch Hetchy Valley](#) (1908)

- Zane Grey *Riders of the Purple Sage* (1912)
- Willa Cather *O Pioneers!* (1913)

Other media

- [The West](#) – Ken Burns series (1996) – shown in class
- [We Shall Remain](#) – American Experience series – available online

Assignments

We will use Canvas for all paper assignments; that is, all position papers and research papers will be submitted online. My goal is to make this a paperless class.

All assignments must be submitted on or before the deadline! You will be penalized for late work unless you have had a genuine emergency or have worked out an alternative arrangement with me.

Graded assignments	Points possible	Learning outcomes
Weekly position papers (10 @ 20 points each)	200	#1 & 2
Presentations to class (2 @ 100 points each)	200	#4
Research papers (2 @ 300 points each)	600	#2 & 3

Grading scale

Specific criteria will be provided for each assignment. At the end of the semester, I will add up the points you've received on the above assignments and convert them to a letter grade based on the following scale.

A = 95-100
 A- = 91-94
 B+ = 88-90
 B = 85-87
 B- = 81-84
 C+ = 78-80
 C = 75-77
 C- = 71-74
 D+ = 68-70
 D = 65-67
 D- = 61-64
 E = 0-60

Absence policy

Since this is a graduate class that meets only once a week, your attendance is extremely important. You will defend your position papers in class (weekly), present to the class (twice), and evaluate classmates' presentations (weekly). Thus any absences will decrease your grades substantially.

ADA note

If you require accommodations or services due to a disability you *must* contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) in room 181 of the Student Services Center. SSD can also arrange to provide course materials (including the syllabus) in alternative formats if necessary. For more information about the SSD, contact them at 801-626-6413, ssd@weber.edu, or <http://departments.weber.edu/ssd>.

Core beliefs

According to PPM 6-22 IV, students are to “[d]etermine, before the last day to drop courses without penalty, when course requirements conflict with a student's core beliefs. If there is such a conflict, the student should consider dropping the class. A student who finds this solution impracticable may request a resolution from the instructor. This policy does not oblige the instructor to grant the request, except in those cases when a denial would be arbitrary and capricious or illegal. This request must be made to the instructor in writing and the student must deliver a copy of the request to the office of the department head. The student's request must articulate the burden the requirement would place on the student's beliefs.”

Emergency closure

If for any reason the university is forced to close for an extended period of time, we will conduct our class via [Canvas](#). Look for announcements through the class website and your Weber email account.

Plagiarism

WSU subscribes to TurnItIn.com, an electronic service that verifies the originality of student work. Enrollment in this course may require you to submit some or all of your assignments to it this semester, and documents submitted to TurnItIn.com are retained, anonymously, in their databases. Continued enrollment in this course constitutes an understanding of and agreement with this policy. Plagiarism is a violation of the [WSU Student Code](#) and is not acceptable in this course (IV.D.2.b). If your writing appears plagiarized, or if sources are not documented properly, you may receive an E on the assignment. If repeated offenses occur, you will receive a failing grade for the class and I will notify the WSU Due Process Officer.

Sustainability & technical support

As part of my ongoing efforts to work toward sustainability, this will be a paperless class. To read more about WSU's commitment to sustainability, see the [Environmental Issues Committee website](#). All assignments (reading responses and papers) must be submitted to the online course management system, [Canvas](#). I will orient you to the system on the first day of class; however, if you have any technical difficulties please consult the experts. For

- Technical assistance, contact the IT Help desk 801-626-7777 or csupport@weber.edu
- Canvas-related issues, contact WSU Online Help desk 801-626-6499 or wsuonline@weber.edu