

## History 492: Spring 2011 Imagining America from Jefferson to Turner

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### **Description:**

The United States of America is at least partly an idea of the mind as well as a real place on the ground. This has been true since the founding of the Republic. In fact at times the “imaginary republic” seems to have shaped the tangible one in ways that are startling, maybe even scary. This reading seminar looks at some classic works of description, projection, and imagination from the founding era through the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We will ask what these authors “saw” as the American nation? How did their visions square with reality? How did these visions *affect* reality over time? Featured authors will include Thomas Jefferson, Lansford Hastings, Horace Greeley, Theodore Roosevelt, and Frederick Jackson Turner.

### **Objectives:**

My objectives include 1) discussing a selection of imaginary texts about America in the long nineteenth century; 2) discovering how serious readers of history approach both primary texts and secondary treatments; and 3) writing a critical assessment of some aspect of this literature.

### **Readings:** (bold are available for purchase)

#### **Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia***

Jedediah Morse, *The American Geography* (Google Books online)

Jervis Cutler, *Topographical Description of the State of Ohio*. . . (Google Books online)

Caroline Kirkland, *A New Home—Who’ll Follow?* (Google Books)

#### **Francis Parkman, *The Oregon Trail***

**Lansford Hastings, *Emigrants Guide to Oregon and California***

**Annette Kolodny, *The Land Before Her***

**Horace Greeley, *An Overland Journey***

James Sanks Brisban, *The Beef Bonanza: or, How to Get Rich on the Plains* (Google Books)

Theodore Roosevelt, *The Wilderness Hunter* (Purdue catalog, electronic resource)

William E. Smythe, *The Conquest of Arid America* (Google Books online)

#### **John Mack Faragher, *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner***

**Writing:** In-class writing will occur each week in the context of discussing the readings. A major term paper also will be due built around a critical reading of a central primary text and its supporting literature.

**Participation:** Simple attendance is essential in a once-a-week class. Beyond that, engagement in discussion is necessary for the class to be successful.

**Grades:** Weekly writing 30%; discussion participation 40%; final paper 30%.

**Special Note:** In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances. Here are ways to get information about changes in this course: email larsonjl@purdue.edu, my office phone 494.4127 and my cell phone 765.412.9166.

## Calendar of Assignments

- Jan 12           ORIENTATION
- Jan 19           **Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia***  
Select readings from Jedediah Morse  
Discuss term paper projects
- Jan 26           Jedediah Morse, *The American Geography* (Google Books online)
- Feb 02           Jervis Cutler, *Topographical Description of the State of Ohio. . .* (Google Books online)
- Feb 09           Caroline Kirkland, *A New Home—Who'll Follow?* (Google Books)  
Update on term paper projects
- Feb 16           **Francis Parkman, *The Oregon Trail***
- Feb 23           **Lansford Hastings, *Emigrants Guide to Oregon and California***  
Donner Party film, selections
- Mar 02           **Annette Kolodny, *The Land Before Her***
- Mar 09           **Horace Greeley, *An Overland Journey***  
Select readings from James Brisban
- Spring Break**
- Mar 23           CONFERENCES—no class this week
- Mar 30           James Brisban, *The Beef Bonanza: or, How to Get Rich on the Plains* (Google Books)  
Select readings from Teddy Roosevelt
- Apr 06           Theodore Roosevelt, *The Wilderness Hunter* (Purdue catalog, electronic resource)
- Apr 13           William E. Smythe, *The Conquest of Arid America* (Google Books online)
- Apr 20           **John Mack Faragher, *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner***
- Apr 27           WRAP UP