



ENG 461-02 Senior Seminar: Literature of the Wild West Fall 2018

"American social development has been continually beginning over again on the frontier. This perennial rebirth, this fluidity of American life, this expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society, furnish the forces dominating American character."

~Frederick Jackson Turner



"I was guts and juice again and ready to go." ~Jack Kerouac, on heading West

"Ambivalence and ambiguity, like deception, bear upon all definitions of the American West." ~N. Scott Momaday (Kiowa/Cherokee)

Professor: Meredith K. James
Tuesdays, 4:00-6:45

Course Description: Geronimo. Billy the Kid. Wyatt Earp. Calamity Jane. Sacagawea. Davey Crockett. Sitting Bull. Jesse James. Cherokee Bill. Pancho Villa. Wild Bill Hickock. Crazy Horse. Sam Houston. Santanta. Deadwood Dick. Zitkala Sa. Jeremiah Johnson. Chief Joseph. Annie Oakley. Buffalo Bill. Mourning Dove. Emiliano Zapata. George Armstrong Custer Al Swearingen. Brigham Young. Chief Seattle. Pat Garrett. Cochise. Kit Carson. Quannah Parker. Teddy Roosevelt. Chew Ng Poon. Black Kettle. Buggy Segal. Sam Dreben. Cesar Chavez. Anna May Wong. Tupac Shakur.

Their names and deeds have been greatly exaggerated, misrepresented, underrepresented, or exploited for the sake of national myth and legend. Some of these historical figures have themselves used the images of an imaginary West as a tool to forward their own political, economic, and./or artistic agendas. This seminar explores their stories and the stories and legends of others who have created or reinvented our perceptions of the American West. Our point of departure will be the Jackson Turner Thesis of 1893 as we explore the various literatures of the West.

Throughout the course, we will examine representations of the West in fiction, non-fiction, poetry, film, and other forms of popular culture in order to understand the West's place in contemporary national discourses and in the American imagination.

