

## **HIST 468: History of the Pacific Northwest**

The Pacific Northwest has been viewed by many as a utopia, a place of great natural abundance where different groups have tried to create their own visions of paradise. Native peoples managed fish and forests; traded along river and coastlines; and created abundance. Euro-Americans took to the Oregon Trail dreaming of farms, homesteads, and easy living.

Industrialists saw untapped wealth in the forests and mountains; workers from around the world hoped to carve out new, prosperous lives in a new place; environmentalists hoped to create and recreate a green “ecotopia” away from the ravages of pollution and people.

But every utopia has its dark side. Visions of paradise came with exclusion, expulsion, and violence. Settlers created their new world by trying to exterminate Native peoples and exclude African Americans. White workers fighting for their rights also rioted against people of color from Latin America and Asia, as all workers fought an uphill battle for a decent living. People pursuing a living wage participated in the destruction of the environments upon which they depended. And those fighting to preserve the environment have often demeaned and attacked those who are only trying to feed their families, and ignored the extent to which all lives are dependent upon natural resources.

In this class we will look at the social, political, economic, and environmental history of the Pacific Northwest, and especially Oregon, from eighteenth through the twentieth century. We will investigate the ways that race, gender, and class have shaped peoples’ vision of the Northwest. We will explore how these visions spurred different social movements, policies, and approaches to nature and space in the Pacific Northwest. The hope is that by carefully engaging with the complex history of the Northwest, this class will help us to think critically and creatively about the conflicts of the present and the future.

## **Learning Objectives**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Obtain a working knowledge of the complex history of the Pacific Northwest.
- Analyze sensitive issues with respectfulness and tact.
- Engage in critical discussions about the Northwest's present-day problems and to think about how history can help us better understand and creatively address those problems.
- Gain an understanding of how history is made—how we know what we know—from a wide variety of perspectives, fields, and academic disciplines.
- Sharpen their skills in reading, writing, and critical thinking.
- Understand how to craft, defend, and critique a historical argument.
- Create academically rigorous work that engages the public.

## **Assignments**

A note on readings: This class does not have an assigned textbook. There will be short one- to two-page readings that accompany many discussion questions, and longer roughly thirty-page readings once per week. Most of the reading you do for this course will be in pursuit of your individual projects. If you would like to read more about a particular subject, I would love to recommend books or articles for you.

Discussion forums (28%, 7% per week): After each lecture, I will post a discussion question related to the topic(s) of the day. This might be a question about methodology, historical

interpretation, comparative history, or other topics. Frequently, this question will be paired with a page or two from a relevant primary source. I will then ask you to post responses to these questions, responses to the responses of your peers, or even questions of your own.

The purpose of this assignment is simulate class discussion in an online format and help you to hone your ability to make specific arguments (and maybe even disagree with your peers, or me) in a respectful way. One advantage of the online format of this class is that it lets us have these discussions with time to collect our thoughts. One disadvantage is that it is harder for me to cajole you to participate than it would be in a physical classroom. We can definitely have great discussions using this method, but it works only as far as we make it work.

To receive full credit for this assignment, you must make **four** substantive contributions each week, at least **one** of which should be in response to or in conversation with another student's contribution or question. You do not need to respond to every discussion question, and you are welcome to contribute multiple times to single discussion; I would much rather have an in-depth multi-sided debate about a particular topic than to have one mediocre response to each day's question. While quality matters more than length, it is usually difficult to get your point across in less than a paragraph. For this assignment and all assignments in this course, you are welcome to reach out for help and/or clarification.

Midterm and Final Exam (30%, 10% for the Midterm, 20% for the Final): The mid-term and the final will each be timed online exams (two hours for the mid-term, three hours for the final). There will be approximately **six** randomized (to minimize cheating) short answer questions drawn from the lectures and readings for each exam. The mid-term will have **one** broader essay question; the final will have **two**, one of which will span material from the entire course.

Students are encouraged to use whatever notes or materials they would like. Outside sources should not be necessary. While you are welcome to study together, you may **not** interact with any other member of the class when you are taking the exam itself.

Historical Interpretation Project (42%) For your major project in this course, you will assemble an online exhibit on a particular historical person, place, object, or event from the Pacific Northwest that interests you. You will study this person, place, object, or event using both primary and secondary sources, which you will find through your own efforts, my assistance, and the help of staff from the University of Oregon library. While every topic will be different, you can expect to read around 300 pages of material—plan accordingly! After you have done your research, you will create an online exhibit for an audience of your choosing. You can create something aimed at academic audiences, something more like what a museum might have, or even something aimed at children.

Project Description (Week 1, 3%): In **one** page or less, tell me which historical person, place, object, or event from the Pacific Northwest you will be studying, and what sources you plan on using.

Progress Report: (Weeks 1, 2, and 3, 3% each): Each week, either in a one-on-one online meeting **or** in a **one to two** page summary, tell me what progress you've made, what challenges you're facing, and what questions you have as you complete your project. To get full credit, you need to have actually made progress. Plan to have the majority of your reading done by the end of week 2.

Academic Write-Up: (Week 3, 15%): In a brief paper (at least **three** pages, no more than six), 1) synthesize what the primary and secondary sources have said about your topic,

using specific evidence from each source; 2) tell me what you're going to highlight and argue; 3) tell me what audience you plan to write for. Note that there does need to be some sort of argument in your project, even if it as simple as “\_\_\_\_ is important to understanding the history of the Pacific Northwest because...”

Final Project: (Week 4, 15%): Craft an online exhibit on your chosen historical person, place, object, or event. The specific requirements for this assignment will vary depending on how you've conceptualized your project, but you should expect to use some pictures and the equivalent of at least **three** pages of text. While the writing style will vary based on your intended audience, it still needs to be professional-grade; don't forget to check your work!

## **Rough Course Schedule**

Week 1: Race and the Making of the Northwest (1500s – 1880s)

Course Introduction/Software Tutorial

Making *Illahee*: Native Commerce and Politics Before and After European Arrival

Making Oregon: Pioneer Dreams and American Genocide

Making Whiteness: Exclusion Laws, Reservations, and Anti-Asian Sentiment

Read: Excerpt from Gray Whaley, *Oregon and the Collapse of Illahee*.

Week 2: Capitalism and State Power (1890s – 1930s)

Whose democracy? Women's rights and other progressive politics.

Whose paradise? The Great War, the Klan, and the NAACP in the Northwest

Whose nature? Fish Fights and Lumber Wars

Whose land? Dreaming of Dams in the Depression

Read: Excerpt from Robert Johnston, *The Radical Middle Class*.

Week 3: Boundaries Visible and Invisible (1940s – 1970s)

Japanese Internment, the *Bracero* Program, and Vanport

Red Lines and Fault Lines: Housing, Zoning, and Land Use

The Cold War and the Nuclear Northwest

Public for Who? National Parks and Beach Battles

Read: Excerpt from Kate Brown, *Plutopia*.

Week 4: Green, Red, and Blue (1970s – 2000s)

Agricultural Workers' Movements

Ecotopia, Ecotage, and the Fight Over Forests

Rural Protest and the Deepening Divide

The Pacific Northwest at the Turn of the Century

Read: Excerpt from Mario Sifuentez, *Of Forests and Fields*