

GEOGRAPHY 334: Historical Geography of the Great Plains

Class Hours: 8:00 – 9:15 a.m. Tuesday/Thursday
Office Hours: 9:30 – 11:00 a.m. Tues/Thurs
Classroom: Bessey Hall 108

David Wishart
933 Oldfather
472-7387

The object of this course is to understand the emergence of the Great Plains as a region, an area with a distinctive character that sets it apart from other regions. The approach is that of a historical geographer, looking at the way people, from the earliest times, have perceived, used, and changed the physical environments of the Plains. Native Americans, the original Plains people, are given as much attention as incoming European Americans, and the interaction between the two sets of cultures, from the 1600s to the present, is a central theme in the course. Attention is also given to Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, and African Americans as parts of Great Plains regional identity, and the theme of Gender runs through the entire course.

As a Historical Geography class, this course satisfies Student Learning Outcome 5 in ACE: Use knowledge, historical perspectives, analysis, interpretation, critical evaluation, and the standards of evidence appropriate to the humanities to address problems and issues. Through readings and lectures students engage the historical geography of the occupancy of the Great Plains region. The time scale is extensive, from the earliest residents some 18,000 years ago to the present. Class discussion, possible in a class of 40 students, will be encouraged at all times, giving students an opportunity to discuss commentary on what is viable in the answer and what is not. Diversity of opinion is inherent in the course content and the readings and also encouraged in class. Themes of time and space run through the entire course. Humanistic approaches, dealing with how people have perceived, used, and shaped the Great Plains region are central, as is the understanding that the Plains landscape is the unwitting autobiography of the inhabitants. Student achievement will be assessed by the scores of their ten quizzes, designed to ensure that they do the readings and attend class. The essay examinations take this further, testing not only factual content but also the ability to interpret, synthesize, and write.

Two books must be bought and read: David Wishart. *An Unspeakable Sadness: The Dispossession of the Nebraska Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), and Jonathan Raban. *Bad Land: An American Romance* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1996). In addition, a book of readings must also be purchased. Please note my office hours—I'm always available to see you on issues of the course during these hours, or at other times if you can't make it then.

The other information for the course will be presented in the lectures, which are based on the readings but will take off from them. Attendance is your own business, of course, but one-quarter of your final grade will come from 10 quizzes on the subject matter of the readings and the lectures that will be given periodically during the semester. The other three-quarters of your grade will come from three examinations, all essay (a single essay, chosen from two essay

questions), each covering about one-third of the semester. The final, therefore, will deal only with the last third of the semester. The quiz grades will be assigned via a frequency distribution. The essays will be assigned grades based on factual content, logic and coherence of the narrative, and originality. My objective is that by the end of the course you will have a sound understanding of how diverse groups of people have used and shaped the Great Plains region over the last 18,000 years.

One other matter, if anyone is found cheating, in any form, they will receive an F for the entire class. Also, any student with a disability should contact me for discussion of their needs for academic accommodation.

Geography 334: Historical Geography of the Great Plains

Course Outline

(Note: Numbers are units and may involve more than one lecture.)

A. Setting and Early History

1. The Great Plains Region

Reading:

David J. Wishart, "The Great Plains Region," *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004, XIII-XVIII.

2. Physical Setting

Readings:

M. J. Blum, "Physiography," *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains*, 636-7.

Daniel J. Leathers, "Climate," *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains*, 624-5.

Kenneth F. Dewey, "Tornadoes," *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains*, 641.

R. F. Diffendal Jr. "Ogallala Aquifer," *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains*, 857-8

G. Malcolm Lewis, "The Great Plains Region and Its Image of Flatness," *Journal of the West*, 6 (1967), 11-26.

3. Traditional Native American Occupancy

Readings:

W. J. Wedel, "The High Plains and Their Utilization by the Indian," *American Antiquity* 29 (1963), 1-15.

Wishart. *An Unspeakable Sadness: The Dispossession of the Nebraska Indians*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1-37.

4. Early Interventions

Readings:

John L. Allen, "New World Encounters: Exploring the Great Plains of North America," *Great Plains Quarterly* 13 (1993) 69-80.

Wishart. *An Unspeakable Sadness: The Dispossession of the Nebraska Indians*, 39-69.

5. Impact on Native Americans

Reading:

Wishart. *An Unspeakable Sadness: The Dispossession of the Nebraska Indians*, 71-100.

***First Examination**

B. Nineteenth Century Frontiers

1. Dispossession of Native Americans: Confinement to Reservations

Reading:

Wishart. *An Unspeakable Sadness: The Dispossession of the Nebraska Indians*, 101-140.

2. The Settlement (Resettlement) Process

Readings:

John Hudson, "Who was 'Forest Man'? Sources of Migration to the Plains," *Great Plains Quarterly* 6, 1986, 69-83.

Gilbert Fite, "Agricultural Pioneering in Dakota: A Case Study," *Great Plains Quarterly* 1, 1981, 169-80.

John C. Lehr, "The Landscape of Ukrainian Settlement in the Canadian West," *Great Plains Quarterly* 2, 1982, 94-105.

E. Elaine Lindgren, "Ethnic Women Homesteading on the Plains of North Dakota," *Great Plains Quarterly* 9, 1989, 157-73.

Michael Conzen, "Cities and Towns" *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains*, pp. 147-157.

John Hudson, "Towns of the Western Railroads," *Great Plains Quarterly* 2, 1982, 41-54.

3. Dispossession of Native Americans: Reservations and Removals

Reading:

Wishart. *An Unspeakable Sadness: The Dispossession of the Nebraska Indians*, 141-248.

***Second Examination**

C. Twentieth Century Frontiers

1. The Northern Great Plains

Readings:

J. Raban, *Badland: An American Romance*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1996.

2. The Southern Great Plains

Reading:

Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s*. New York: Oxford University Press, 10-63.

3. African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans

Readings:

Mel Yazawa, "Amache Internment Camp," *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains*, 138-9.

Malcolm Yeung and Evelyn Hu-DeHart, "African Americans," *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains*, 3-6.

Malcolm Yeung and Evelyn Hu-DeHart, "Asian Americans," *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains*, 135-8.

Malcolm Yeung and Evelyn Hu-DeHart, "Hispanic Americans," *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains*, 345-51.

4. Native Americans

Reading:

Wishart. *An Unspeakable Sadness: The Dispossession of the Nebraska Indians*, 239- 45.

5. Contemporary Scenes

Dan Barry, "A Rough Script of Life, if Ever There was One," *New York Times* (Sept. 2, 2007), p.10.

David J. Wishart, "Natural Areas, Regions, and Two Centuries of Environmental Change on the Great Plains," *Great Plains Quarterly*, 26 (2006) 147-57.

Cary W. DeWit, "Women's Sense of Place on the American High Plains," *Great Plains Quarterly* 21 (2001), 29-44.

*** Third Examination**