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HSTR 300.01: Reading and Writing Montana History

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HSTR 300: Reading and Writing Montana History

Professor Jeff Wiltse

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Office hours: M: 1:30-3:00, F: 10:00-11:00

Course Description and Objectives

This writing-intensive course examines the last 1,000 years of Montana history through a variety of sources, including historical syntheses and monographs, diaries and travel accounts, personal memoirs, and popular histories. Class meetings will be devoted primarily to discussing the assigned readings and the historical topics they cover. This is an “approved writing course” and fulfills requirement two of General Education Requirements Group I: English Writing Skills. As such, students will write several different types of papers, including short reading responses, a primary-source analysis paper, a critique of a secondary source, and an essay that synthesizes several articles about a chosen topic in Montana history. The primary learning objectives of this course are:

- Develop a sophisticated understanding of Montana history
- Develop the ability to write clear and convincing papers
- Improve your basic intellectual skills, especially critical reading and analytical thinking
- Improve your ability to communicate ideas verbally and in writing
- Learn to assess and utilize different types of historical sources
- Learn to enjoy using your mind

Readings

Copies of the following books are available at the bookstore. They are the texts for the course.

K. Ross Toole, *Montana: An Uncommon Land*

Theodore Binnema, *Common and Contested Ground: A Human and Environmental History of the Northwestern Plains*

Writers Project of Montana, *Copper Camp: The Lusty Story of Butte, Montana*

Alma Hogan Snell, *Grandmother's Grandchild: My Crow Indian Life*

Jonathan Raban, *Bad Land: An American Romance*

Brad Tyler, *Opportunity, Montana: Big Copper, Bad Water, and the Burial of a Montana Landscape*

You will also be reading a set of documents and a book chapter that are available as pdf files on the course Moodle page. These items are identified by an “(x)” in the course schedule below.

Course Requirements

Students must come to class each week having studied the assigned readings and be prepared to discuss them. Study does not mean simply read. Rather, it means read carefully, highlight key passages, take notes, and think about the readings in relation to the questions that will be posted each week on the course Moodle page.

- Reading Responses: At the beginning of seven class sessions, you will write a one-to-two page essay in response to a question about the assigned reading(s).
- Source Analysis Paper: Four-page paper analyzing the primary-source documents assigned for Sept. 17. An assignment sheet will be handed out in class. **Due in class on September 24**
- Collapse Paper: Four-page paper assessing Jared Diamond's analysis of Montana in his book *Collapse*. An assignment sheet will be handed out in class. **Due in class on October 29**
- Final Paper: Eight-page paper examining a selected topic in Montana history based mainly on articles in *Montana: A Magazine of Western History*. An assignment sheet will be handed out in class. Draft of the paper will be due **Wednesday, November 19**, and the final version will be due **Wednesday, December 10 by 5:00 pm.**

Grading

All students must take this course for a grade. Your final grade will be the weighted average of your individual grades for the term. Final letter grades are figured at 90%=A, 80%=B, 70%=C, 60%=D. The dividing line for minuses is _3%; the dividing line for pluses is _7%. Your grades will be weighted as follows:

Reading Responses	14 percent
Primary-Source Paper	20 percent
Collapse Paper	15 percent
Draft of Final Paper	10 percent
Final Paper	25 percent
Class Participation	16 percent

*Attendance is required. More than two unexcused absences will result in a failing grade for class participation. Late assignments will automatically be reduced one full letter grade and must be turned in within one week of the original due date.

Academic Honesty

Neither plagiarism nor any form of cheating will be tolerated. The work you submit in this course must be your own. When you draw from the words and thoughts of others, acknowledge it in footnotes. Plagiarism or cheating will result in a failing grade for the course. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please contact me.

DSS Accommodation

If you have a documented learning disability, contact me as soon as possible so we can arrange suitable accommodation.

Drop Deadlines

The last day to drop this course using Cyberbear is September 15. The last day to drop with instructor and advisor signature is October 27. A WP or WF will appear on your transcript for courses dropped after this date. December 5 is the last day to drop by petition.

Course Schedule

- Wed, Aug. 27: Course Introduction
- Wed, Sep. 3: Classic Interpretation of Montana History
Read: Toole, *Montana: An Uncommon Land*
- Wed, Sep. 10: Montana Indians Before Contact
Read: Binnema, *Common and Contested Ground*
- Wed, Sep. 17: The Arrival of Non-Indians
Read: (x) William Kittredge and Annick Smith, eds., *The Last Best Place: A Montana Anthology*, 170-89, 199-203, 216-22, 233-53, 280-97, 341-64, 383-88, 399-405.
- Wed, Sep. 24: The Arrival of Non-Indians, Continued **Source Analysis Paper Due**
- Wed. Oct. 1: Butte and Industrial Montana
Read: Writers Project of Montana, *Copper Camp*
- Wed, Oct. 8: A Crow Indian Family in Modern Montana
Read: Snell, *Grandmother's Grandchild*
- Wed, Oct. 15: Homesteading
Read: Raban, *Bad Land*
- Wed, Oct. 22: Environmental Legacies of Copper Mining
Read: Tyer, *Opportunity, Montana*
- Wed, Oct. 29: Montana and Jared Diamond's *Collapse* **Collapse Paper Due**
Read: (x) Diamond, "Under Montana's Big Sky," in *Collapse*, 27-75.

Wed, Nov. 5: Individual meetings to discuss final paper

Wed, Nov. 12: No class (Work on final paper)

Wed, Nov. 19: Individual meetings **Draft of Final Paper Due**

Wed, Nov. 26: No class (Thanksgiving Break)

Wed, Dec. 3: Panel Discussions

Wed, Dec. 10: **Final Paper Due**