The American West
Competing Visions
Karen R. Jones and John Wills

March 2009
Pb  978 0 7486 2252 8  £24.99
320pp  234 x 156 mm
15 b&w illustrations
Hb  978 0 7486 2251 1  £75.00

Description

The American West used to be a story of gunfights, glory, wagon trails, and linear progress. Historians such as Frederick Jackson Turner and Hollywood movies such as Stagecoach (1939) and Shane (1953) cast the trans-Mississippi region as a frontier of epic proportions where ‘savagery’ met ‘civilization’ and boys became men.

During the late 1980s, this old way of seeing the West came under heavy fire. Scholars such as Patricia Nelson Limerick and Richard White forged a fresh story of the region, a new vision of the West, based around the conquest of peoples and landscapes.

This book explores the bipolar world of Turner’s Old West and Limerick’s New West and reveals the values and ambiguities associated with both historical traditions. Sections on Lewis and Clark, the frontier and the cowboy sit alongside work on Indian genocide and women’s trail diaries. Images of the region as seen through the arcade Western, Hollywood film and Disney theme parks confirm the West as a symbolic and contested landscape.

Tapping into popular fascination with the Cowboy, Hollywood movies, the Indian Wars, and Custer’s Last Stand, the authors show the reader how to deconstruct the imagery and reality surrounding Western history.

Selling Points

• The American West is a popular option on American Studies and American History courses - this is a rare genuine textbook introduction to the area
• Uses popular subjects (the Cowboy, Hollywood westerns, the Indian Wars, and Custer’s Last Stand) to enliven the text
• Includes 15 b+w illustrations
• Interdisciplinary approach covers film, literature, art and historical artefacts

The Authors

Karen R. Jones is a Lecturer in American History at the University of Kent. She is author of Wolf Mountains: A History of Wolves Along the Great Divide (2002).

John Wills is a Lecturer in American History at the University of Kent. He is co-author, with Karen Jones, of The Invention of the Park: Recreational Landscapes from the Garden of Eden to Disney’s Magic Kingdom (2005) and author of Conservation Fallout: Energy and Protest at Diablo Canyon, California (2006).

Readership

American Studies

Undergraduates in American Studies and History
The American West
Competing Visions
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Table of Contents
Introduction: Navigating the New West and the Old West
1. Revisiting Lewis and Clark on their Bicentennial
2. Is the Frontier really an ‘F Word’?
3. The Indian Genocide Debate
4. Dressing up the Female Frontier
5. Guns and Masculinity, Cowboy Style
6. Cowboy Politics and the Crucifix
7. The City on the Edge of Civilisation
8. Atomic Pioneers
9. Greening the West
10. Replaying History (I) Watching Westerns
11. Replaying History (II) Tourism and the Simulated West
12. Replaying History (III) The Virtual West

Conclusion: Competing Visions

Courses
The American West (which appears on numerous American Studies and American History degree courses) e.g. ‘The American West’ (Hull); ‘The West’ (Ulster); ‘History of the American West’ (Keele).
The American West (which crops up on numerous American Studies and American History degree courses).

Some specific courses in the UK include:

University: Warwick
Department: Comparative American Studies
Course name: The American West
Level: Undergraduate
Core or optional module: Optional
Lecturer name: Dr Jennifer Smyth
Lecturer email: j.e.smyth@warwick.ac.uk

University: Keele University
Department: School of Humanities
Course name: The History of the American West
Level: Undergraduate
Core or optional module:
Lecturer name: Dr Alex Schaefer
Lecturer email: A.Schaefer@ams.keele.ac.uk

University: Aberystwyth University
Department: English Literature
Course name: Literature of the American West
Level: Undergraduate (to be run in 2009/2010)
Core or optional module: Optional
Lecturer name: Dr Martin Padget
Lecturer email: mtp@aber.ac.uk

University: York University
Department: English
Course name: American Cinematic Myths of Landscape and City: The Western and film noir.
Level: Taught MA
Core or optional module: Option
Lecturer name: Judith Buchanan
Lecturer email: jrb7@york.ac.uk

University: University of Newcastle upon Tyne
Department: English Literary and Linguistic Studies
Course name: American Literature of the Southwest
Level: Undergraduate
Core or optional module: Option
Lecturer name: John Beck
Lecturer email: J.M.Beck@ncl.ac.uk
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University: University of Derby
Department: American Studies
Course name: The American West
Level: Undergraduate
Core or optional module: Option
Lecturer name: Simon Philo (course leader)
Lecturer email:

University: University of Ulster
Department: American Studies
Course name: The West
Level: Undergraduate
Core or optional module:
Lecturer name: Tony Emmerson
Lecturer email: wa.emmerson@ulster.ac.uk

University: The University of Hull
Department: American Studies
Course name: The American West
Level: Undergraduate
Core or optional module: Option
Lecturer name: Dr Jenel Virden
Lecturer email: J.Virden@hull.ac.uk

University: University of Central Lancashire
Department: English Literature
Course name: Images of the American West
Level: Undergraduate
Core or optional module: Option
Lecturer name: Will Kaufman
Lecturer email: wkaufman@uclan.ac.uk

University: King’s College London
Department: American Studies
Course name: The American West
Level: Undergraduate
Core or optional module: Option
Lecturer name:
Lecturer email:

University: University of Kent
Department: American Studies
Course name: How the West was Won (or Lost): The American West in the 19th Century and From Buffalo Bill to Bison Burgers: The American West in the 20th Century
Level: Undergraduate
Core or optional module: Option
Lecturer name:
Lecturer email:

University: University of Dundee
Department: American Studies
Course name: The Early American Frontier 1615-1815
Level: Undergraduate
Core or optional module:
Lecturer name: Dr Tim Morris (Course convener)
Lecturer email: T.J.Morris@dundee.ac.uk

University: University of Edinburgh
Department: English Literature
Course name: Western Fictions
Level: Undergraduate
Core or optional module: Option
Lecturer name: Dr Kenneth Millard
Lecturer email: K.Millard@ed.ac.uk

E.g. ‘The American West’ (Hull); ‘The West’ (Ulster);
‘History of the American West’ (Keele).