

Lecture #1

Where is the West? What is Religion?

Sandos, *Converting California*

Where is The West?

Show series of slides—why doesn't this designation work?

East-o-centric

Saul Steinberg—history written from East to West

Not clear, various definitions

Geographical

100th meridian marks the “line of aridity” that determines regional development dependent on water. No growing without irrigation

[Question: What's wrong with this definition?

Answer: Excludes San Francisco; Northwest? Hawaii?]

Census Bureau: 13 mountain and Pacific states—Montana south to New Mexico, and everything west of them including Alaska and Hawaii—not including Great Plains tier from North Dakota to Texas.

[Question: What's wrong with this definition?

Answer: People who think they are “Western” Texas? Oklahoma? Dakotans? Kansans?
The “when” of the West]

Political

Geographical ignores variety, Northwest as well as creative nature of landscape and political determination of area

Richard White: “that contiguous section of the continent west of the Missouri River acquired by the United States beginning with the Louisiana Purchase of 1803; continuing through the acquisition of Texas, the Oregon Territory, and the Mexican Cession of the 1840s; ending with the Gadsden Purchase of the lands between the Gila River and the present Mexican boundary.” (4)

Oregon Territory, treaty with Britain 1846

[Question: Why Missouri River?]

New Western Historians: place not processes (making the “frontier, not with end of frontier in 1893);

[Question: What's wrong with this definition?

Imagination

“The West is a thing of imagination, not of boundaries” Shirl Kenke, “western” writer

Notion of the “frontier” –the “old West” West of the Appalachian mountains
Frederick Jackson Turner argued in 1893 (paper read at American Historical Association in Chicago; went to teach at Wisconsin and then Harvard (historians know what is dead)

- spirit and success tied to Western expansion
- unlimited free land in the zone was available
- psychological sense of unlimited opportunity
- optimism
- future orientation
- shedding of restraints

Connected with “manifest destiny”

Process not place, a concept not a geographical area; wherever the mind puts it, state of mind

Frontier as the great American creation myth, story that orders our reality our understanding, myth as what is “natural”

Violent and romantic with happy ending—world of writers not new historians

[Question: What's wrong with this definition?

Answer: new western history “Free Land”? conquest and conflict not progress

NoWhere and Everywhere

Survey 1991 by Walter Nugent (“Where is the American West? Report on a Survey”
Montana 42 (Summer 1992): 2-23 reproduced in his *The American West: A Reader*)

Scholars, including Great Plains, more eastern to 98th parallel

Journal, newspaper editors, Rockies west (46%)

Writers of Western fiction—exclude coastal states of CA, WA, OR states, all large or “plastic” cities (Las Vegas, Aspen)

50% said AL and HI not in West

Reflections on Course:

Beyond current boundaries of the United States— Mexican borderlands

Little of each one mostly “census” description

More stress on creation of concept “the West”—religious studies looks at symbols not just institutions; especially use of religion and how religious people in defining West; importance of “frontier” for development of evangelical Prot.
Difficulty of escaping California
Wider focus in book notes (or closer focus)

What is Religion?

Religion in the West

In most textbooks

Almost nothing on religion, not relevant

Patricia Limerack, *Legacy of Conquest*: look for religion get, “religious discrimination” see also Mormons and Mormonism

Revisions—per religion, a frontier with single men

East to West—focus on the Mormons

Religion dies out—Spanish priest explorers, missions, Mormons, . . .

Definitions of Religion

Supernatural

By religion, then, I understand a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of Nature and of human life.

- J.G. Frazer.

Religion is the recognition that all things are manifestations of a Power which transcends our knowledge.

- Herbert Spencer

Religion is the belief that there is an unseen order, and that our supreme good lies in harmoniously adjusting ourselves thereto. –

William James

“The Sacred”—beyond Judeo-Christian concept of God, 19th early 20th century
Romantics openness to non-Western traditions (not just primitive, incomplete God); there is a there, there—or is there? Religion as not reducible to politics, economics, the group.

Institutionalization—Impossible task of making the sacred hold still

Creed: Beliefs, stories, myths

Code: morality, ethics, legal codes

Cultus: rituals, practices, ceremonies, ordinances, sacraments

Community: history of the group, ethnicity, class,

Culture

[A] religion is: a system of symbols
which acts to establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men
by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.

Religion does not need to be connected to “world religions” which historians explain were created in the 18th century anyway

System of meanings that both express and shape social reality
Complex, relational, shifting, composite, involves multiple identities
What people do more than what they think

Ultimate Concern

ultimate seriousness, unconditional seriousness. Tillich: What, for instance, would you be ready to suffer or even die for?"

Religion — namely, an ultimate concern about the meaning of one’s life and the meaning of "being" as such — also appears in other forms

Religion can be defined as a system of beliefs and practices by means of which a group of people struggles with the ultimate problems of human life. It expresses their refusal to capitulate to death, to give up in the face of frustration, to allow hostility to tear apart their human aspirations.

- J. Milton Yinger

Background for: *Converting California* by James A. Sandos

1) What if history—If the Spanish and French—America as Catholic

2) The Unplanned and the Religious—A Story

[Slide One] **Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca** and crew of 300 shipwrecked in Florida. They begin eight years of wandering back to Mexico, travelling Texas and New Mexico. Only four eventually reached Mexico City. De Vaca, two soldiers, and the personal black slave of one of the soldiers, called “Estevanico” a former Muslim from Morocco who had been Christianized. Because of his role in the journey—as guide, healer, translator, and “smart person to have around,” Estevanico is given his freedom.

In the autumn of 1538 Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza appoints Marcos de Niza with the task of investigating rumors of wealth beyond the northern frontiers of New Spain—rumors fueled by the recent return of de Vaca. De Niza was a Franciscan Friar ,

considered a Frenchman by his contemporaries and apparently born in Nice (hence "de Niza"), Fray Marcos had served in Central America and in Peru before settling in Mexico City in 1537.

To guide **Fray Marcos**, Mendoza sent **Estevanico** (the other three were less enthused about returning, they themselves had been enslaved by the Indians), and so the pair set out in the spring of 1539. Before the year was out de Niza returned Mexico City, claiming to have seen a place called Cíbola, "bigger than the city of Mexico." Fray Marcos did not, however, claim to have entered Cíbola because the residents had killed Estevanico. He observed the city from a prudent distance and pronounced it spectacular. Modern scholars believe Marcos saw one of the Zuni villages.

[Slide Two] Francisco Coronado, Governor of northwest section of New Spain (Mexico) launches expedition, using his own money and that of some friends (and his wealthy wife), to find Cíbola. Niza traveled to Cíbola with **Coronado**. Point of going: to steal whatever riches they could. Early scouting forces tell him it's doubtful, but he presses on February 23, 1540 at the head of a large expedition composed of 335 Spaniards, 1300 natives, four Franciscan monks (the most notable of whom were Juan de Padilla and the newly appointed provincial superior of the Franciscan order in the New World, Marcos de Niza), and several slaves, both natives and Africans. Deposits troops along way because land cannot support.

When the expedition reached the Zuni villages in July 1540, a disappointed Coronado pronounced Fray Marcos a liar. Soldiers want to kill but Coronado sends him back to Mexico. Eventually Coronado returns after 100 men left, he remains governor but is bankrupted by expenditure.

Only temporarily disgraced, Fray Marcos returned to Mexico City where, for a time, he apparently held the highest local office in the Franciscans that of provincial. According to one source, he died on March 25, 1558, after suffering bad health for over a decade. (The Handbook of Texas Online <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/NN/fni9.html>)

Take away: "A black man leading a white man among the Indians: this is a fitting beginning for the diverse, complex West." (White, *Your Misfortune* 5)

Take away: What would US History look like if it started in the West? More importantly? What would religious history look like?
People are lost, mixed up races from not clear places,
Catholic, religious orders (but not priests), unification of Church and State, imaginative world of religion, hierarchy in religion

3) Catholic Worldview: Primacy of Works

Works

Works then Faith

Sacrament: Outward sign, instituted by Christ, to give grace.

3) Franciscans

Secular and Religious

St. Francis of Assisi (1181/1182 – October 3 , 1226) thus referred to his followers as "Fratricelli", meaning "Little Brothers"

St. Clare for women, priests "Fathers" ordained "Brothers" not ordained (like Francis)

Jesuits— Portuguese expel 1759); suppressed in France 1764; New World 1767 (house arrest back in Spain)

(restored 1814) Pierre-Jean De Smett originally from Belgium

4) Enlightenment