

Eureka!

A historical and cultural discovery of California's past and present

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Saturdays at 3:00pm – 4:30pm in 1-190 (first class is at 6:00pm – 7:00pm in 1-277)

Course Description

With a rich and varied history and culture, California, the 31st state, has attracted countless millions to its great land. From the first Native Americans to the Spanish missionaries to the gold seekers to the movie stars, many have called California home. And why is California so attractive to those who seek it out? Come and find out as you examine its vibrant past and present! Discuss its days as a Mexican territory; experience the adventure of its wild west lifestyle; be awed by its magnificent and breathtaking landscapes; travel the famed Route 66; enjoy its fruits and other agricultural gifts; participate in one of the world's ten largest economies; relax in its idyllic climate; live the Californian life. Students will be taught a large selection of themes and events related to the State of California and take part in in-class projects. No previous knowledge on California is necessary, but all are welcome to share any experiences and opinions they might have.

Course Outline

As a historical and cultural examination of California, this course will attempt to demonstrate a long and varied past and show how it has shaped what the state is now. To achieve this goal, each class will be divided into two parts. The beginning of class will be a presentation on the day's topic; while this presentation is something of a lecture, students will be encouraged to contribute their thoughts and ask questions. In addition to providing relevant factual information, classes will also discuss interesting people, literature, and events of the time. The latter part of the class will be a more hands-on activity or group discussion; the specific activity will depend on what was discussed earlier in class. The course is divided into two units: the first unit will provide historical context on how the Californian character has developed, and the second unit will examine how Californians are currently running their state and shaping the global landscape. Each weekly class, with the exception of the first, is ninety minutes in length.

Week One: Why California is Important

Sixty minute class

This class will serve to introduce the subject matter and show why California is a topic worth studying. Information introduced will include general facts such as geography, economic exports, plant and animal life, and other interesting trivia. It will also touch on California's significance in a national and global sense. Time permitting, we will use that background information on California's natural resources to get ahead on the history unit with an examination of how indigenous peoples made use of the region's gifts.

Unit One – California History

Week Two: Early 19th Century

The first class in the historical unit will begin with the Spanish arrival in California. The Catholic missions and El Camino Real will be particularly focused upon. Students will also construct model missions to truly visualize the time period.

Week Three: Independence and California as a New State

The third meeting of the course will be loaded with an exceptional large amount of material from the latter half of the 19th century. It will specifically cover the state's separation from Mexico, its brief status as the independent Bear Flag Republic, the Gold Rush, San Francisco's rapid growth, Chinese immigration, and the transcontinental railroad. Students will also participate in panning for gold.

Week Four: The Roaring Twenties

The first class of the 20th century will focus on Southern California. It will examine how Hollywood movies transformed the region from a dry deserts and vast orange groves to a bustling Los Angeles area, home of the rich and famous.

Week Five: The Great Depression and World War II

In the last installment of the historical unit will begin with entering the Great Depression. It will examine the effects of the influx of migrant workers (“Okies”) for agricultural work and New Deal public work programs. It will then enter World War II, highlighting the build up of military bases across the state and the practice of Japanese internment.

Unit Two – California Today

Week Six: Daily Life

With a strong historical background established, the course will begin the second unit by demonstrating how that history brought about the daily activities of Californians from every region. Powerful industries and the jobs they provide that make California one of the largest economies in the world will be brought to attention. The state's strong education system, including the massive University of California system, will be highlighted. And, the forms of entertainment that Californians enjoy and that attract tourists from around the world, including destination cities, beaches, theatres, sports teams, and Disneyland, will also be covered.

Week Seven: Challenges Facing the State

As the class approaches a close, it will examine the various problems, issues, and controversies troubling the people and legislators of the state. Specifically it will look at Governor Schwarzenegger's environmental policies, recent energy crises, illegal immigration, budget balancing, and other topics. It will also pay heavy attention to how Californians react to ineffective leadership as exemplified by the 2003 recall election of former Governor Gray Davis.

Week Eight: California as a World Leader

The last meeting of the course will consist of a brief demonstration of how California is leading the world in various fields from economic to technological. The remainder of the time will be devoted to presenting the research projects of those who opted to pursue the assignment.