



## **AMS 325: “America, the West and the 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

**Professor Rich Megraw**

**TR 9:30-10:45**

Like the place itself, the American West as subject is a vast, almost limitless thing, infinitely contoured, richly textured, constantly shifting, and highly charged. Few topics in all the American experience have been so thoroughly researched and written about or so passionately argued over. Fewer still continue to exert the kind of power this one does, simultaneously inspiring pride, hope, anger, resentment, devotion and disdain. Yet, for all the different responses, there is at least one, bedrock agreement: the West is central to the meaning of America and those who wish to understand the latter must at some time confront the former.

Which is what this class is about, a specific place, the trans-Mississippi West, at a specific time, the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is divided into thirds, treating the West first as a place, then as an experience, and finally as an idea, holding the West throughout as a mirror to the highly volatile, rapidly-changing American society of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.