

Our Nation State by State

Spring 2026

PARADISE: Wed 12:45 - 2:15 Rm. Feb 4 – Apr 15

ZOOM: Thurs 10:45 – 12:15 Feb 5 – Apr 16

Instructor: Muree Reafs – mreafs@cox.net



The Mountain West/Southwest - a very large area quite different from any place we have been before.

Overview will attempt to get acquainted with the land – no more flat prairies!

So much history ties this territory together.

This area was admitted as territories by Congress in 1850 so what was the delay for statehood?

A drier region with prickly plants & unique critters.

Gold & Silver important to their history but water more so.

For some it was territory to cross to somewhere else; for others it was an opportunity to learn the history of the earth & in doing so opened up knowledge for scientific fields & water resources.

Why people settled there I do not know but we will explore their reasons.

Course Content: The Details.....

Geography of this mountain & desert region is complex & the scenery is fantastic.

Is this region the epitome of Manifest Destiny? Sea to Sea. Or had California already claimed that fame?

The Conceptual framework: Intro, Geography, Natural environment; Early History.

How Territories & States were organized, shaped & settled. The people who were there, those who came – from where, how & why.

Modern States, People, Economy, Tamales & Tequila.

Power Point presentations are created by the instructor for each class. Each weekly PowerPoint and

List of optional reading & other resource materials sent to <https://classes.oli.unlv.edu> site.

Sessions for In-Person & Zoom are now one hour & 30 mins. Do not hesitate to share your questions & thoughts or take a break – I get wrapped up & forget the time.

Preliminary Schedule

WED - In Person – THUR - Zoom

Week 1: Feb 4/5 - Announcements, How the West came to be.

Week 2: Feb 11/12 - Colorado: Part 1: Overview, History

Week 3: Feb 18/19 - Colorado: Part 2: Government, People, Economy

Week 4: Feb 25/26 - Utah: Part1: Early Settlement,

Week 5: Mar 4/5 - Utah Part 2: People, Economy

Week 6: Mar 11/12 - New Mexico: Part 1: Early History, Newcomers

Week 7: Mar 18/19 - Spring Break

Week 8: Mar 25/26 - New Mexico: Part 2: People, Economy

Week 9: Apr 1/2 - Arizona Part 1: History, Settlement

Week 10: Apr 8/9 - Arizona Part 2: People, Economy

States covered in the previous years:

2022 Spring: The Growing Nation overview, Louisiana Purchase & the changing map, Lewis & Clark Expedition, Louisiana, Missouri, Arkansas, US development 1750-1836.

2022 Fall: Territorial expansion: Concepts, trails & travelers (Oregon trail), Mexican-American War, Treaty with Britain leading to Oregon Territory, New States: Texas, Iowa.

2023 Spring: Compromise of 1850. Admission of California. Designation of Territories. Overview of California.

2023 Fall: Minnesota & Oregon

2024 Spring: Kansas, West Virginia, Nebraska.

No class Fall 2024 & Spring 2025

Fall 2025: Northern Great Plains: South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, ~Idaho.