For Thomas Jefferson it was vital to American prosperity, the lifeblood of American commerce. To Ma-ka-tai-me-she-kia-kiak, or Black Sparrow Hawk, it was the site of his people’s slaughter by the United States Army and the Illinois Militia. To thousands of enslaved African Americans it signaled the route of those “sold South,” the path of the horrific internal slave trade. To Mark Twain it was “in all ways remarkable,” its basin the very “body of the nation.” It was as well the setting for his most famous work, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. For millions it has been the backdrop for the 1927 musical Show Boat, the “Ole Man River” that “jes’ keeps rollin’ away.” Today many know it as the cause of floods that endanger their lives and livelihoods, a force to be controlled and contained, while to the Houma people it has been the sustainer of their homeland, a world now threatened by dams upriver that are destroying the coastal wetlands. Named with an Ojibwa word meaning “Great River,” the Mississippi River is 2,320 miles long, its drainage basin covering 31 states and roughly 40 percent of the United States land mass. This course considers the river as both an historical and an imaginative site, a place where a diversity of peoples have lived, worked, loved, fought, and died, and also as a place that has played a role in the imaginations of those peoples. We will focus especially on the Mississippi River as it shaped the United States, and as Americans have constructed it, imagined it, and used it to tell stories about themselves and their worlds.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

In this course you will have the opportunity to:

- gain a comprehensive knowledge of the social, cultural, political and environmental history of the Mississippi River
- explore aspects of the popular representations of the river both past and present
- research a contemporary issue related to the river
- continue practicing the careful and close reading of sources, critical thinking and analysis, and the presentation and defense of your ideas in written and oral forms

Because this is a course that satisfies the **Connections** core area, we will take seriously our efforts at both interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary learning. As a result, by the end of this course, you will also have the chance to:

- explore the Mississippi River through multiple disciplinary lenses
- develop an appreciation for the interplay between academic disciplines
And finally, because this course also satisfies the Knowledge, Identity and Power, or KNOW, graduation requirement, you will also seek to:

- build an understanding of the dynamics and consequences of power differentials, inequalities and divisions in shaping the history of the river and its peoples.
- explore the conceptualization, production, construction and affirmation of knowledge as it relates to the dynamics and consequences of these differentials, inequalities and divisions.
- consider linkages between course themes, your own social positions, and contemporary local, national and global issues.
- cultivate your ability to engage in collaborative learning, in particular your capacity to communicate meaningfully about issues of power, disparity, and diversity of experiences and identities.

**REQUIRED READING**

The following books are available at the university book store, and are also available on reserve at Collins Memorial Library:

- John Barry, *Rising Tide: The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 and How It Changed America*
- Blackhawk, *Blackhawk: An Autobiography*
- Calvin R. Fremling, *Immortal River: The Upper Mississippi in Ancient and Modern Times*
- Eddy Harris, *Mississippi Solo: A River Quest*
- Robert A. Holland, *The Mississippi River in Maps and Views: From Lake Itasca to the Gulf of Mexico*
- Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom*
- Christopher Morris, *The Big Muddy: An Environmental History of the Mississippi and its Peoples*
- Solomon Northrup, *Twelve Years a Slave*
- Thomas Ruys Smith, *River of Dreams: Imagining the Mississippi Before Mark Twain*
- Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*

**CLASS PARTICIPATION**

Discussion is in many ways the heart of this course, for it is here that we will have the opportunity to pursue together answers to the multitude of questions the readings will produce. Working together, we have the opportunity to learn from one another, to consider opinions different from our own, and to build on one another's ideas. Successful class participation is facilitated by the following elements:

* **Preparation for class:** This includes not only reading all assignments before class, but
also thinking about that reading. It is often useful to write down a few thoughts and questions about what you have read before coming to class. This not only forces you to think critically about what you are reading, but will often make it easier to speak up during discussion.

* **Class attendance:** Unless you are in class, the rest of us cannot benefit from your ideas, and you will miss the opportunity to benefit from the ideas of your classmates. Attendance is an important factor in your participation grade for the course.

* **Participation in discussions:** We can only know your ideas if you express them. Several minds are always going to be better than one. For this reason, we will all benefit from this course to the extent to which each of you participates in our discussions, and does so with sincerity and commitment to our shared learning efforts. Each of you has a great deal to contribute to the class, and each of you has a social responsibility to share that potential with the other class members.

* **Listening to your classmates:** The best discussions are not wars of words, but are a cooperative effort to understand the issues and questions at hand. While we will often disagree with one another, you should always be sure to listen to each other. Use the ideas of others to help you develop your own ideas. Sometimes this will involve building on the ideas of others. Other times you may choose to revise or disagree with the ideas of others. In any case, always treat your classmates, and their opinions, with the respect they deserve. Remember, we are a learning community, and that means we have significant responsibility to one another.

**GRADING STANDARDS FOR CLASS PARTICIPATION**

* A student who receives an “A” for her or his participation typically comes to every class with questions and ideas about the readings already in mind. She or he engages other students and the instructor in discussion of their ideas as well as her or his own. This student is under no obligation to change their point of view, yet respects the opinions of others. This student, in other words, takes part in an exchange of ideas, and does so on a regular basis. This student also makes use of specific texts during the discussion, providing depth and support to their contributions.

* A student who receives a “B” for his or her participation typically has completed all the reading assignments on time and is a steady participant. This student may not come to class with questions or ideas ready, or having considered the readings carefully. Often this student waits for others to raise interesting issues. Other “B” discussants are courteous and articulate but do not listen to other students, articulating their ideas without reference to the direction of the discussion. Still others may have a great deal to contribute, but participate only sporadically, or may not regularly connect their contributions to particular texts or specific examples.

* A student who receives a “C” for discussion typically attends every class and listens attentively, but participates more sporadically in the discussion. Other “C” discussants would earn a higher grade, but are too frequently absent from class.

* A student who receives a grade lower than “C” is consistently unprepared, unwilling to participate, often seems distracted from the discussion, is too frequently absent, or displays a disregard for her or his classmates.
ASSIGNMENTS (in order of due date)

Reflections on the River (two page reflection paper)
Your first assignment asks you to reflect on your own knowledge/understanding/relationship to the Mississippi River. What do you know about it? Has it played a role in your life? If not, what are the impressions you have of it, if any? These reflections will help to situate us in relation to our purposes this semester.

Issues of the Mississippi River: 2017 (Group project and presentation)
You will work in small groups to complete this first assignment, which asks you to locate one news report relating to the Mississippi River, and to read three additional secondary sources related to one of the issues it raises. This can be focused on anything from the tourist industry of St. Louis to this year’s flooding in the Mississippi River valley, from the ongoing questions about rebuilding New Orleans to the environmental problems resulting from the damming of the river. Our purpose will be to use the resulting presentations to begin to familiarize ourselves with the contemporary issues confronting the river and its peoples. What, put simply, is happening on the river today?

Cultural Representations of the River (5 page paper)
The Mississippi River has long been an important subject for the American imagination. In class we will spend time reading parts of Mark Twain’s famous novel, Adventures of Huckleberry Finn and his autobiographical Life on the Mississippi, and will view other popular representations of the river to explore how Americans have conceptualized the river and its meaning. Then, to allow us a much broader understanding of American cultural representations, each of you will write a paper on a cultural artifact of your choice, investigating the particular representations of the river and/or its peoples, and of the play of knowledge, identity and power, in that representation.

Knowledge, Identity and Power: Engaging the History of the River (5 page paper)
In the third unit of our course we will be exploring the history of the river. This is an enormous subject, and one to which we will not be able to do complete justice. As a result, it will be important for each of you to have a chance to explore one aspect of this history that you find particularly interesting or important. Your job will be to locate three primary sources about a particular event, person, location or issue related to the Mississippi River, and explore what we can learn about the functions of identity and power in the history we have been studying. We will talk in class both about how to locate historical primary sources and how to move from your interests to a focused paper.

Contemporary “Geography” of the Mississippi
Learning the geography of the Mississippi is integral to understanding about its history and its contemporary issues. For this assignment you will create your own map of the Mississippi River, one that is factually accurate and reflects contemporary circumstances. We will define “geography” broadly, allowing you to imagine what your map will include in relation to your own interests in the river. For instance, you might map endangered species living along the river, or the economic levels of counties that touch the river, or the dams and their impact on the
ecology of the river. While you are free to select a topic of your choice, your maps will need to engage in some way with the interplay of knowledge, identity, and/or power. These maps can be done either as electronic maps using an online digital mapping tool, or as a poster. This project includes three requirements:

1. Statement of Purpose and Annotated bibliography of your three outside sources
2. Completion of the map
3. Presentation of the map in class.
4. Presentation of the map in a public “poster session” in late April.
5. Completion of a final paper of roughly 5 pages that explains the meaning of the map in the context of the work we have done this semester. Here you will link the map to at least two sources we have read.

GRADING STANDARDS FOR WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

- A typical “A” paper is clearly written and well organized, and most importantly contains a perceptive and original central argument supported by a well-chosen variety of specific examples that are fully explained. It demonstrates that the student has grappled with the issues raised in the course, has engaged in significant analysis of appropriate sources, has formulated a compelling and sophisticated argument, and has articulated and defended that argument fully and effectively.
- A typical “B” paper is very good work that shows the student has grappled with the issues raised by the assignment, has analyzed appropriate sources, and has developed significant and creative insights. A “B” paper will offer a thoughtful argument, and will present it clearly and convincingly. The paper, though, may need a bit more polish in its organization or prose, or may need a bit fuller development of its evidence or a bit more complexity in its thinking.
- A typical “C” paper has a good grasp of the course material and responds appropriately to the assignment’s requirements. The author may not have developed his/her ideas deeply, though, or the paper may need more thorough evidence. Alternatively, the paper may be fully developed, but may have some more serious problems in presentation such as frequent errors, unclear writing, or poor organization.
- A paper that receives a grade lower than “C” typically does not respond adequately to the assignment, is insufficiently developed, is marred by frequent errors, unclear writing, poor organization, or some combination of these problems.

POLICIES

- In this course, we will operate according to my “48 hour rule.” This means that you can turn in one paper up to 48 hours late without penalty or explanation. Beyond this, though, late papers and memos will be accepted only in cases of illness or emergency, or when prior arrangements have been made, and generally will be penalized except in cases of illness or emergency. You must contact me to make arrangements for any late assignments, and presentations cannot be postponed.
- You must complete all writing and presentation assignments in order to successfully complete this course.
Illnesses and emergencies are excused absences, as are those due to approved, university-related activities. Beyond these, though, other absences are unexcused, and will count against your participation grade. In addition, too many unaccounted for absences may lead to your being withdrawn from the course, so please send me an email if your absence falls under an excused circumstance.

Accessibility and Accommodations: If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Peggy Perno, Director of the Office of Accessibility and Accommodations, 105 Howarth, 879.3395. She will determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.

Bereavement Policy: We all hope this policy will not come into play, but if this should occur, the University of Puget Sound recognizes that a time of bereavement can be difficult for a student. Therefore, the university provides a Student Bereavement Policy for students facing the loss of a family member, which this course follows. Students are normally eligible for, and I would of course grant, three consecutive weekdays of excused absences, without penalty, for the death of a family member, including parent, grandparent, sibling, or persons living in the same household. If you need additional days, you should let me know, and also request additional bereavement leave from the Dean of Students or the Dean’s designee. In the event of the death of another family member or friend not explicitly included within this policy, know that you can petition for grief absence through the Dean of Students’ office for approval, and I am very open to granting it for the course as well. To request bereavement leave, a student must notify the Dean of Students’ office by email, phone, or in person about the death of the family member. If you need any help with this process, please just ask and I will supply whatever support I can.

For any policy issue not covered here, check with our Academic Handbook, The Logger.

GRADING SCALE
In assigning grades, both during the semester and at its end, I will use the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>97-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
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<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63-66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>below 60</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

A WORD ABOUT ACADEMIC HONESTY
It is assumed that all of you will conform to the rules of academic honesty. Plagiarism and any other form of academic dishonesty will be dealt with severely in this course. Plagiarizing on a paper or memo will be reported to the university, will generally result in an automatic F on that assignment and potentially in the course, and may lead to more substantial university-level penalties. Because academic dishonesty is such an egregious offense, the penalty is not negotiable. As a member of this academic community, your integrity and honesty are assumed
and valued. Our trust in one another is an essential basis for our work together. A breach of this trust is an affront to your colleagues and to my integrity and that of this institution, and so will be treated harshly. Rest assured that I will make every effort to familiarize you with the rules surrounding academic honesty. If at any time you have questions about these rules, too, know that I am anxious to help clarify them.

ASSIGNMENTS OVERVIEW

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Due Dates</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Grade Distribution</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Reflection on the River</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Issues of the Mississippi River, 2017</td>
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<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Cultural Representations Paper</td>
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<td>Week 10</td>
<td>Historical Paper</td>
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<td>Week 12</td>
<td>Map: Statement of Purpose and Bibliography</td>
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<td>Week 14</td>
<td>Map and Research Notes</td>
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<td>Week 14</td>
<td>Presentation of Map</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Map Paper</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Classroom Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SCHEDULE FOR CLASSES, READINGS, AND ASSIGNMENTS

Unit One
Introductions:
The Mississippi River Today

WEEK ONE  Introductions to the River and to Adventure: Mississippi River
Reading:
- Eddy Harris, Mississippi Solo: A River Quest
Viewing:
- Trailer for film about Harris’s second trip on the river.
WEEK TWO       Hurricane Katrina: Environmental Crisis/Social Crisis

Reading:
• Christopher Morris, *The Big Muddy*, ch. 11 (“Nature’s Return: Hurricane Katrina and the Future of the Big Muddy”)
• Cedric Johnson, “Introduction” and Eric Ishiwata, “We are Seeing People We Didn’t Know Exist’: Katrina and the Neoliberal Erasure of Race” in *The Neoliberal Deluge: Hurricane Katrina, Late Capitalism, and the Remaking of New Orleans*, ed. Cedric Johnson
• David Dante Trout, *After the Storm: Black Intellectuals Explore the Meaning of Hurricane Katrina*, excerpts
• Alice Fothergill and Lori Peek, *Children of Katrina*, excerpt
• Nikky Finney, “Left”

Viewing and Listening:
• *Trouble the Water* and excerpts from *When the Levees Broke*
• Mos’ Def, “Katrina Klap / Dollar Day ”

Due:
• Reflection on the River

WEEK THREE       Identity and Power: Contemporary Issues

Reading:
• Primary sources on the racial crisis in Ferguson, MO
• Primary sources on the 2016 floods in the Mississippi Basin

Viewing and Listening:
• Visit the Voice of the Wetlands website at: [http://www.voiceofthewetlands.org/](http://www.voiceofthewetlands.org/)

Due:
• Issues of the Mississippi River paper and presentations
## Unit Two

**Cultural Representations:**

*The Mississippi in the American Imagination*

### WEEK FOUR

**Early Representations**

**Reading:**
- Robert A. Holland, *The Mississippi River in Maps and Views: From Lake Itasca to the Gulf of Mexico*
- Thomas Ruys Smith, *River of Dreams: Imagining the Mississippi Before Mark Twain*

**Listening:**
- Select and listen to any five of the Songs of the Mississippi River on the National Park Service website at: https://www.nps.gov/miss/learn/education/songs-of-the-mississippi-river.htm

### WEEK FIVE

**Mark Twain’s Mississippi River: The Construction of Two Icons**

**Reading:**
- Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*
- Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*
- Harry L. Katz, *Mark Twain’s America*, excerpt
- Peter Schilling, *Mark Twain’s Mississippi River: An Illustrated Chronicle of the Big River in Samuel Clemens’ Life and Works*, excerpt

### WEEK SIX

**The Mississippi on Stage and Film: Show Boat**

**Viewing:**

**Due:**
- Cultural Representations Paper

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## Unit Three

**The History of the Mississippi River**

### WEEK SEVEN

**An Overview: The Environmental History of the River**

**Reading:**
- Christopher Morris, *The Big Muddy: An Environmental History of the Mississippi and Its Peoples*
- Calvin R. Fremling, *Immortal River: The Upper Mississippi in Ancient and Modern Times*, Part 4
WEEK EIGHT Native Peoples of the Mississippi Basin

Reading:
- Calvin R. Fremling, *Immortal River: The Upper Mississippi in Ancient and Modern Times*, Part One
- Black Hawk, *Life of Black Hawk, or Ma-ka-tai-me-she-kia-kiak, Dictated by Himself*

SPRING BREAK!! ENJOY!!

WEEK NINE The River of Slavery and Empire

Reading:
- Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom*
- Solomon Northrup, *Twelve Years a Slave*

WEEK TEN Engineering the River

Reading:

Due: Historical Paper

WEEK ELEVEN Engineering Difference and Disparity

Reading:
- John Barry, *Rising Tide: The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 and How It Changed America*, Parts 4-9
- Robert Moton’s First Report, 1927
- Robert Moton’s Second Report, 1927
- Colored Commission Advisory Report, 1929

Viewing:
- Signal Corps video of the flood, available on Youtube at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHzqHf5eEM8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHzqHf5eEM8)
Unit Four
Mapping the Mississippi

WEEK TWELVE
Maps, Maps, Maps: Getting Started

Reading:
- Each of you will identify the sources on which you will base your work on your maps, and report on these in class.

Due:
- Statement of Purpose and Annotated Bibliography

WEEK THIRTEEN
The Continuing Catastrophes of the River’s Containment

Reading:

WEEKS FOURTEEN and FIFTEEN
Presentations!!!
Students will present their posters to their classmates and at a public poster session organized by the class.

Remember:
Your MAP Papers are due during our Final Exam Time

INFORMATION ON CAMPUS EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS
Please review university emergency preparedness, response procedures and a training video posted at [www.pugetsound.edu/emergency/](http://www.pugetsound.edu/emergency/). There is a link on the university home page. Familiarize yourself with hall exit doors and the designated gathering area for your class and laboratory buildings.

If building evacuation becomes necessary (e.g. earthquake), meet your instructor at the designated gathering area so she/he can account for your presence. Then wait for further instructions. Do not return to the building or classroom until advised by a university emergency response representative.

If confronted by an act of violence, be prepared to make quick decisions to protect your safety. Flee the area by running away from the source of danger if you can safely do so. If this is not possible, shelter in place by securing classroom or lab doors and windows, closing blinds, and turning off room lights. Lie on the floor out of sight and away from windows and doors. Place cell phones or pagers on vibrate so that you can receive messages quietly. Wait for further instructions.