The American West is both an idea and a place, and although it is difficult to define, it is central to an understanding of how Americans see themselves and are viewed by people around the world. This course focuses on the trans-Mississippi West, but recognizes these are imposed boundaries and that the region is shaped by decisions and policies imposed by Easterners. This study moves across time, examining the lives and cultures of the earliest peoples, the effects of immigrants who competed for land and resources, and the legacy of this westward experience for modern society. The West, too, is real and imagined, and the course will consider its impact on American popular culture.