History 316, History of California

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Course Description:

History 316 deals with the history of California from the prehistoric era to the twenty-first century and from the coming of Spain to the conquest and domination of the United States since the mid-nineteenth century. Topics to be discussed include the impact of the state's geography and climate upon its development, decline of the California Indian under European contact, the eras of Spain and Mexico, manifest destiny, statehood, the Gold Rush of 1849 and its legacy, political, social, and economic reform during the twentieth century, and the impact of World War II.

Today, California's history and future appear to be at a crossroads. It is undergoing rapid demographic change, and its multicultural and multiethnic composition is placing great strains on its social and political institutions. The state has been beset by economic crises and political gridlock, and the easy optimistic expansion of the past has been replaced by caution and a sense of limitations. A strong sense of anger among the electorate toward local and state leaders is indicated by the recent recall of Governor Gray Davis. To many Californians, government no longer functions to meet the needs of the people. Historian Kevin Starr, who is the State Librarian, noted a few years ago that California is "experiencing a prophetic probe, for better or worse, of the larger American experience. Let us vow not to repeat the sins of our fathers... that for all the entangled burden of the past, we still have California: a California stained by sin, true, but a California as well that is struggling toward redemption and the light. Here then, is the California Gold Rush. And here is the California Dream."

Assessment Plan:

The course grade will be based on the following work:

1. Two midterm examinations
2. Three written book reviews.
3. A written critique of a major library, museum, or historical site.
4. A term paper.
The final grade will be computed as follows:

- 450 - 500 = A
- 400 - 449 = B
- 350 - 399 = C
- 300 - 349 = D
- 299 and below = F