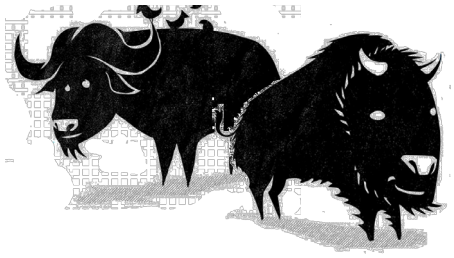
Unit 9: *Conquest of the Plains*

Name: _____

Lecture 9.1 • *Tribes of the Great Plains*

Background

- By 1860, nearly all of the Indians east of the Mississippi River, and along the west coast, had been relocated, assimilated, subjugated or exterminated.
- On the Great Plains and in the Rockies however, as many as 150,000 Indians still lived as they had for thousands of years.
- The largest tribes in the West were the **Arapaho**, **Kiowas**, **Cheyennes**, **Crows**, **Lakota Sioux**, **Utes**, and **Comanches**.



What's the difference between a "bison" and a "buffalo".

Indian Culture

- Over the centuries, Indian cultures became tied to the rhythms and cycles of nature. The natural world was something to be revered and worshiped, not conquered and subdued.
- The Plains Indians had acquired the horse from Spanish explorers in the 1600s, and with it they became lords of the buffalo.
- It is impossible to overstate the importance of the buffalo to the Plains Indians. <u>The entire existence of the Plains Indians was tied directly to the existence of the buffalo</u> ... <u>they were inseparable</u>.

<u>Personal Reflection</u>:

The Calm Before the Storm

- Most of the Indians had gotten along fine with the white trappers and traders that came west in the 1820s and '30s.
- Even during the era of the wagon trains, most of the plains Indians were happy to trade with the pioneers.
- It's important to remember though that none of these white were <u>stopping</u> on the plains.
- But even during these years of relative peace, most people — white <u>and</u> Indians alike — there was still a profound difference between "us" and "them".

Lecture 9.2 • *The "Indian Problem"*

First Signs of Trouble

- Conflict between the Indians and white Americans began to rise during the 1840s and '50s as white settlers and miners began moving west.
- The conflict was constant during this early period, but it was small scale, with "only" 360 pioneers and 420 Indians having been killed in two decades.

Sports tradition? Or racial insensitivity?

Hopes for Peace

- In 1851, the **Laramie Treaty** was signed between the U.S. government and the Plains Tribes. In exchange for food, trade goods, money, and legal title to their land, many of the tribes agreed to settle in one place, and give up their old way of life.
- During the 1850s, as **gold** was discovered across the West, more and more whites began to trespass on Indian land. Without the government there to stop them, prospectors and settlers routinely violated the Laramie Treaty.
- So, the government had a difficult choice to make: either support the Indians because it had signed treaties with them, or support the white settlers and miners because they were white, and they were voters.

Personal Reflection:

The Path to War

- Fairly quickly, the lack of cultural understanding on the part of both the whites and the Indians led to mistrust and fear of the "other".
- As fear took hold of both groups, they started seeing each other as stereotypes, and not as their true selves…

  The Indians became "redskins" ... and the Americans became the greedy "pale-faces".
- Western newspapers fueled the fear, and dehumanized the Indians by printing wild accounts of attacks by the "painted savages".

  Fear of course, led to **hatred**.
- And unfortunately, it was only a matter of time before that hatred would explode into widespread violence and open warfare.

Lecture 9.3 • *Month of the Freezing Moon*

Colorado: 1864

- From 1862 to ’64, Indian raids cut off Colorado Territory from the East. Coloradans pleaded with President Lincoln to send troops, but none could be spared due to the Civil War.
- So, in the summer of 1864, Governor John Evans authorized the creation of a 100-day Indian-fighting *militia*. Command of the Colorado 3rd Regiment was given to **Colonel John Chivington**.

Sand Creek Massacre

- On November 29th of that same year, the 700 men of the 3rd attacked a camp of 550 Cheyenne & Arapahoe Indians at Sand Creek.
- The civilian militia quickly lost control, killing Indians indiscriminately and mutilating many of the Indians for trophies. Some soldiers refused to attack the camp.

After Sand Creek

- As word of Sand Creek spread, many of the Cheyenne & Araphoe returned to the warpath.
- But some people still fought for a peaceful resolution to the trouble. Most notable were Maj. Edward Wynkoop, Lt. Silas Soule, and Chief Black Kettle.
- By 1866 however, the moderates were shut out. Wynkoop was reassigned to a remote outpost, Black Kettle was losing power to the Cheyenne war chiefs, and Silas Soule was assassinated in Denver.

Battle of the Washita

- With the Civil War over, a whole new group of officers headed west to deal with the Indians. One of these officers was the dashing and arrogant **George Armstrong Custer**.
- In November of 1868, Custer’s 7th Cavalry attacked the last large camp of Cheyenne near the Washita River in western Oklahoma.
- Washita marked the end of Indian resistance on the Southern Plains. Most of the Cheyenne moved onto reservations, while some of the warriors moved north to join the Lakota Sioux.

Who is this?

Personal Reflection:

Lecture 9.4 • *The Great Sioux War*

1868

- Four years after Sand Creek, another big treaty was signed, and many plains tribes agreed to abandon the buffalo hunt, relocate to reservations, and take up farming.
- As part of the Treaty of 1868, chief Red Cloud convinced the government to leave the sacred Black Hills region to the Lakota.
- But even as peace once again descended on the plains, forces were in motion which would destroy that peace ...

There are two of these hot dog restaurants in Colorado. Where?

The Rising Tide

- In 1869, the transcontinental railroad was completed.
- In the early 1870s, white hunters and businessmen began the whole sale slaughter of the bison. Millions are killed.
- In 1874, Gold was discovered in the Black Hills of the Dakotas. Thousands of miners stream onto land that was promised to the Lakota in 1868.
- Not surprisingly, as white settlers continued to ignore reservation boundaries and occupy Indian land, the tribes responded with renewed warfare.

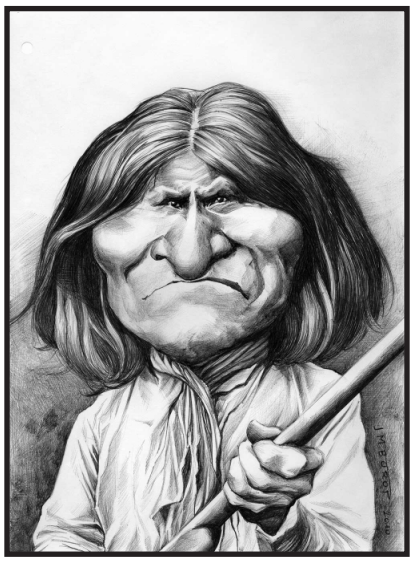
Personal Reflection:

The Last Battle

- In 1876 Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse led the Lakota off the reservations and back onto the plains.
- George Custer and the 7th Cavalry were ordered to forcibly return the Sioux to their reservation.
- They clashed at the Battle of the Little Bighorn, and Custer's command was completely wiped out.
- But what appeared as a great Indian victory would also spell the end of any interest on the part of whites to find a peaceful solution to the "Indian problem."

Lecture 9.5 • *"The Indians Must Go!"*

While the tribes of the Great Plains struggled to adjust to reservation life, or continued to resist that life altogether, other smaller western tribes were fighting their own battles for survival.



Who is this?

The Utes

- When Colorado became part of the U.S., the Army forcibly relocated the Utes out of the high mountains and onto the Western Slope.
- In the 1860s, gold was discovered in the San Juan Mountains, and thousands of settlers moved in.
- After a rogue band of warriors killed a dozen whites at the "Meeker Massacre" in 1879, a treaty was "negotiated" with Chief Ouray, and most of the Utes were forced to move to Utah.

The Nez Perce

- Led by Chief Joseph, the Nez Percé lived in northern Idaho.
- When they were ordered to relocate to Oklahoma, they refused, and fled to Canada, dozens dying from exposure along the way.
- Just a few miles shy of the border, they were intercepted by the cavalry, and "escorted" to Oklahoma.

The Apache

- *The Apache lived in New Mexico and Texas, and were led by* **the famous war-chief Goyathlay, or Geronimo.**
- After years of evading the U.S. Army, the Apache were forced to relocate to Florida. They were the last of the major tribes forced into abandoning their traditional way of life.

Personal Reflection:

Lecture 9.6 • *Tragedy in Dakota*

The Reservations

- As early as 1861, the government sought to solve the "Indian problem" by moving the tribes onto reservations.
- By 1880, even the bands of the mighty Sioux nation had resigned themselves to fate, and joined the Cheyenne & Arapahoe on the reservations.
- On the reservations, Indians faced disease, starvation, and dis honest officials who stole their government-issued supplies.

Desperate Hopes

- In 1889, ten years after the Sioux surrendered, an Indian mystic had a vision of the arrival of an Indian messiah who was going to eradicate the whites, and bring back the old way of life.
- To hasten the arrival of the messiah, many Indians turned to the **Ghost Dance**, a celebration of the past, and a prayer for the return of the buffalo, and the rebirth of the dead.
- Some whites thought that the Ghost Dance was part of the preparation for war and sent in troops to stop it.

Wounded Knee

- The Ghost dancers and the army squared off all throughout the fall and winter of 1890. The final confrontation came on December 29th at the Pine Ridge Reservation near Wounded Knee Creek in southern Dakota Territory.
- As the groups faced off against one another, someone fired a shot, and the Battle of Wounded Knee began.
- By the time the chaos was over, abut 200 Sioux and 30 soldiers lay dead in the snow. Wounded Knee was the last "battle" of the Indian Wars.

Do you think that the Lakota Ghost Dancers were stupid to think that the ghost shirts would protect them from cavalry bullets?

Personal Reflection:

Lecture 9.7 • *Conquest by Kindness*

The Reservations

- On the reservations, Indians faced disease, starvation, and dishonest officials who stole their government-issued supplies.
- The Dawes Act of '87 attempted to reform the reservations by ...
  1. It gave white Indian agents the authority that the tribal chiefs used to have.
  2. It divided the reservations into small plots of land for individual Indian farmers to own.
  3. It provided money to "Americanize" the Indians by teaching them white customs and language, and converting them to Christianity.

Some historians believe that the Nazis looked to the Indian reservations as an inspiration for what?

A New Kind of War

- So, what started out in the 1860s as a military war, a war of direct action, by 1890 turned into a war of self-image and cultural transformation.
- The chief weapon used against the Indians was no longer the rifle. In its place came the boarding school.

Personal Reflection:

Boarding Schools

- From the moment Indian children arrived at boarding school, everything from their old life was destroyed.
  1. Their clothes were taken and replaced with school uniforms.
  2. Boys and girls alike had their hair cropped short.
  3. Children were given new English names.
  4. And Christianity was forced upon them as the only acceptable religion.
- Without a new generation to carry on the old traditions, the Indian way of life came closer & closer to vanishing completely.

The End?

- But ... it's impossible to completely destroy a culture, and on the reservations, over the last 120 years, the old ways have refused to die ...