



Crossroads of Earth Resources and Society
 EPS 170AC & L&S 170AC

Lect. 20: Manifest Destiny- An Interpretation of How the West Was Won

Review of the history of land acquisitions by the U.S.
 Attitudes & policies that shaped the opening of the West
 The role of Thomas Jefferson
 The place of Native Americans
 Manifest Destiny (1845)- the completion of the West
 Mexican-American War of 1846-1848.
 What meaning Manifest Destiny may have in today's world ?
 Is this just *history* or the *futurism* of earth resource policy ?
 Questions about how a multicultural, pluralistic society reaches consensus on current issues ?
 Difficult issues, room for disagreement, polarized debate

Thomas Jefferson's America

(Undaunted Courage-Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West by Stephen Ambrose

When Jefferson became President in 1801 the census showed that there were 5,308,482 Americans in the US.

One out of five was a Black slave

The US was roughly 1000 by 1000 miles wide

Two thirds of the people lived within 50 miles of the sea

The potential of the country was almost limitless, if not vast

Even greater if the trans-Mississippi portion was added to the country



The Voyage of Discovery The Lewis and Clark Expedition



Contestants for Louisiana Territory:

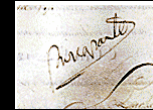
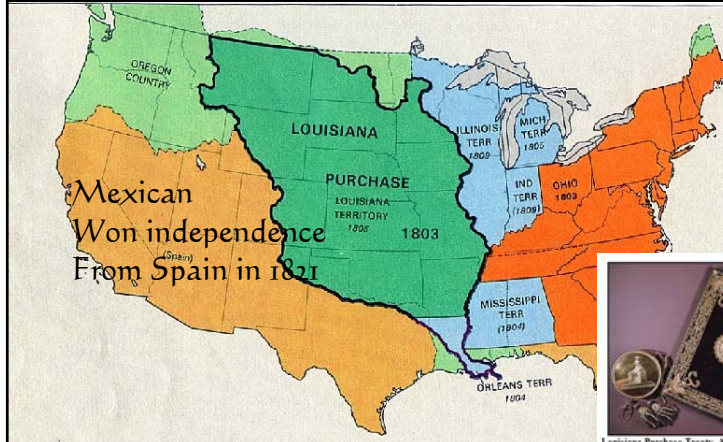
British out of Canada

Spanish up from Texas and Mexico

French up from New Orleans

Why did the US offer win ?

The Louisiana Purchase added the land between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains



Napoleon's signature



Attitudes & policies that shaped the opening of the West The role of Thomas Jefferson, Place of Native Americans

President Jefferson's attitudes about Indians (S. Ambrose)

were opposite those about Black slaves

Indians were thought to be noble savages who could be civilized and brought into to US as full citizens:

"I believe the Indian then to be in body and mind equal to the whiteman"

Their "savage" behavior he attributed to the environment in which they lived

Jefferson was keenly interested in Indian ethnology and language

His mind "encompassed the continent" and its Native people stretching from sea to sea

Not like Europe divided up in nation states

The US would be an empire without colonies, an empire of equals

Jefferson aspired beyond the ambition of nationality and embraced the future of mankind within a new golden age (Henry Adams)



Context of evolution in attitudes about Native Americans:

1492 Columbus (Read from People's History of the United States by Howard Zinn p. 1, 3-4. (in **Good Will Hunting**)

1801 President Thomas Jefferson: Indians as full citizens

1820 President Andrew Jackson- gold was discovered in Cherokee territory in Georgia- policy of "removal"
Read from People's History of the United States by Howard Zinn, p. 135-136)

A time when Indians rights fell from grace

Manifest Destiny defined in 1845; a time when American ideals expanded across the continent, but soon abandoned Jefferson's sentiments about Native Americans being part of the citizenry
Indians became the victims of American Progress

In 1845, an influential editor, John L. O'Sullivan, gave this movement its name. In an attempt to explain America's thirst for expansion, and to present a defense for America's claim to new territories he wrote:
"... the right of our manifest destiny to over spread and to possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and federaltive development of self government entrusted to us. It is right such as that of the tree to the space of air and the earth suitable for the full expansion of its principle and destiny of growth."

Manifest Destiny became the rallying cry throughout America.

The idea of Manifest Destiny Doctrine became the torch, that lit the way for American expansion.





There is an interesting symbolic portrayal of Manifest Destiny that shows "Columbia," the great American angel or woman, floating over the plains. Ahead of her, in the West, is a great darkness populated by wild animals. There are bears and wolves and Indian people, who are fleeing her light. In her wake come farms, villages and homesteads and in the back are cities and railroads. As the figure progresses across the land, the light of civilization dispels the darkness of ignorance and barbarity.

In this painting, Native American people are portrayed along with the animals and the darkness. They have to be removed before Columbia can bring the prosperity promised to the United States.

David Edmunds

Expansion and Indian removal created some phenomenal problems for the new American nation in terms of its moral character.

How can this unique experiment in the new world -- this nation that prided itself upon its democratic institutions, force Native American people westward?

How do you rationalize the taking of land and the usurpation of property?

The argument that was used was, "This had to be done to save these poor Indian people.

They don't fit in the East, so we have to move them out beyond the frontier where they can do their Indian thing unmolested. This is the only possible way to save them."

To understand Manifest Destiny, it's important to understand the United States' need and desire to expand. The following points illustrate some of the economic, social and political pressures promoting U.S. expansion:

High birth rate and increases in population due to immigration. Since agriculture provided the primary economy, large families to work the farms were considered an asset.

U.S. population grew from more than 5 million in 1800 to more than 23 million by mid-century. There was a need then to expand into new territories to accommodate this rapid growth.

Nearly 4,000,000 Americans moved to western territories between 1820 and 1850.

The United States suffered two economic depressions -1818 & 1839. These crises drove some people to seek their living in frontier areas. Frontier land was inexpensive or, in some cases, free.

Expansion into frontier areas opened opportunities for new commerce and individual self-advancement.

Land ownership was associated with wealth and tied to self-sufficiency, political power and independent "self-rule."

Maritime merchants saw an opportunity to expand and promote new commerce by building West Coast ports leading to increased trade with countries in the Pacific.

"The American people having derived their origin from many other nations, and the Declaration of National Independence being entirely based on the great principle of human equality, these facts demonstrate our disconnected position as regards any other nation; that we have, in reality, but little connection with the past history of any of them, and still less with all antiquity, its glories, or its crimes.

On the contrary, our national birth was the beginning of a new history, the formation and progress of an untried political system, which separates us from the past and connects us with the future only; and so far as regards the entire development of the natural rights of man, in moral, political, and national life, we may assume that our country is destined to be the great nation.

It is so destined, because the principle upon which a nation is organized fixes its destiny, and that of equality is perfect, is universal."

"It presides in all the operations of the physical world, and it is also the conscious law of the soul -- the self-evident dictates of morality, which accurately defines the duty of man to man, and consequently man's rights as man.

Besides, the truthful annals of any nation furnish abundant evidence, that its happiness, its greatness, its duration, were always proportionate to the democratic equality in its system of government. .

America is destined for better deeds....We have had patriots to defend our homes, our liberties, but no aspirants to crowns or thrones; nor have the American people ever suffered themselves to be led on by wicked ambition to depopulate the land, to spread desolation far and wide, that a human being might be placed on a seat of supremacy. We have no interest in the scenes of antiquity, only as lessons of avoidance of nearly all their examples."

"The expansive future is our arena, and for our history. We are entering on its untrodden space, with the truths of God in our minds, ...with a clear conscience unsullied by the past.

We are the nation of human progress, and who will, what can, set limits to our onward march? Providence is with us, and no earthly power can. We point to the everlasting truth on the first page of our national declaration, and we proclaim to the millions of other lands, that "the gates of hell" -- the powers of aristocracy and monarchy -- "shall not prevail against it."

In its magnificent domain of space and time, the nation of many nations is destined to manifest to mankind the excellence of divine principles; to establish on earth the noblest temple ever dedicated to the worship of the Most High -- the Sacred and the True. Its floor shall be a hemisphere -- its roof the firmament of the star-studded heavens ...governed by God's natural and moral law of equality, the law of brotherhood -- of "peace and good will amongst men."

"This is our high destiny, and in nature's eternal, inevitable decree of cause and effect we must accomplish it. All this will be our future history, to establish on earth the moral dignity and salvation of man -- the immutable truth and beneficence of God.

For this blessed mission to the nations of the world, which are shut out from the life-giving light of truth, has America been chosen; and her high example shall smite unto death the **tyranny of kings**, hierarchs, and oligarchs, and carry the glad tidings of peace and good will where myriads now endure an existence scarcely more enviable than that of beasts of the field. Who, then, can doubt that our country is destined to be *the great nation of futurity?*"

The people of the United States felt it was their mission to extend the "boundaries of freedom" to others by imparting their idealism and belief in democratic institutions to those who were capable of self-government.

It excluded those people who were perceived as being Incapable of self-government,

As the population of the original 13 Colonies grew and the U.S. economy developed, the attempts to expand into new land increased.

For many colonists, land represented potential income, wealth, self-sufficiency and freedom.

Expansion into the western frontiers offered opportunities for self-advancement.

It is dangerous to underestimate the power of an idea.

Especially one which captures the imagination of a people. Manifest Destiny was such an idea.

To extend American democracy to the rest of the continent was to place a mantle of legitimacy on what was essentially an insatiable ambition for land.

Some have argued that it was **villainy clad in the armor of a righteous cause**, to use an expression by Lippman.

It is difficult to argue against democracy and its extension to the farthest reaches of the continent although historians have pointed out that, at least in this case, extending the area of freedom also signified extending the area of slavery.

Miguel Gonzalez-Quiroga

Mexican-American War (1846-1848)

Manifest Destiny -- revitalized a sense of "mission" or national destiny for many Americans. And while the United States put into motion a quest for its Manifest Destiny, Mexico faced quite different circumstances as a newly independent country.



Mexico achieved its independence from Spain in 1821, but suffered terribly from the struggle. Recovery was difficult.

Manifest Destiny did not necessarily call for violent expansion.

In 1835 and 1845, the US offered to purchase California from Mexico, for \$5 million and \$25 million, respectively. The Mexican government refused the opportunity to sell half of its country to Mexico's most dangerous neighbor.

<http://www.pbs.org/kera/usmexicanwar/dialogues/prelude/manifest/dzaeng.html>

Was this really a "hostile take over bid" or an honest deal ?

Mexico won vast northern territories with its independence from Spain. These borderlands were underpopulated, so amid its internal political struggles and economic deficits, Mexico was also challenged to colonize these territories and guard its borders.

Protecting and colonizing Mexico's northern territories proved to be Nearly impossible

Due to Mexico's economic system, there were fewer opportunities for individual self-advancement in the frontier regions and people were less motivated to relocate.

Colonization was pushed primarily as part of the government's political agenda.

Constant warfare with Native Americans discouraged people from settling into the areas.

The national military system was unable to provide support to guard the country's vast borders.

Both the Catholic Church and Mexico's military, the main guardians of the nation's traditions, were unable to exercise authority in the border areas.

Frontier communities were poor, for the most part, and these poverty-stricken areas could not support the complex institutions that the central government tried to put in place.

The communications necessary to unify the regions were slow and unreliable.

Manifest destiny was part of the cause of the Mexican-American War

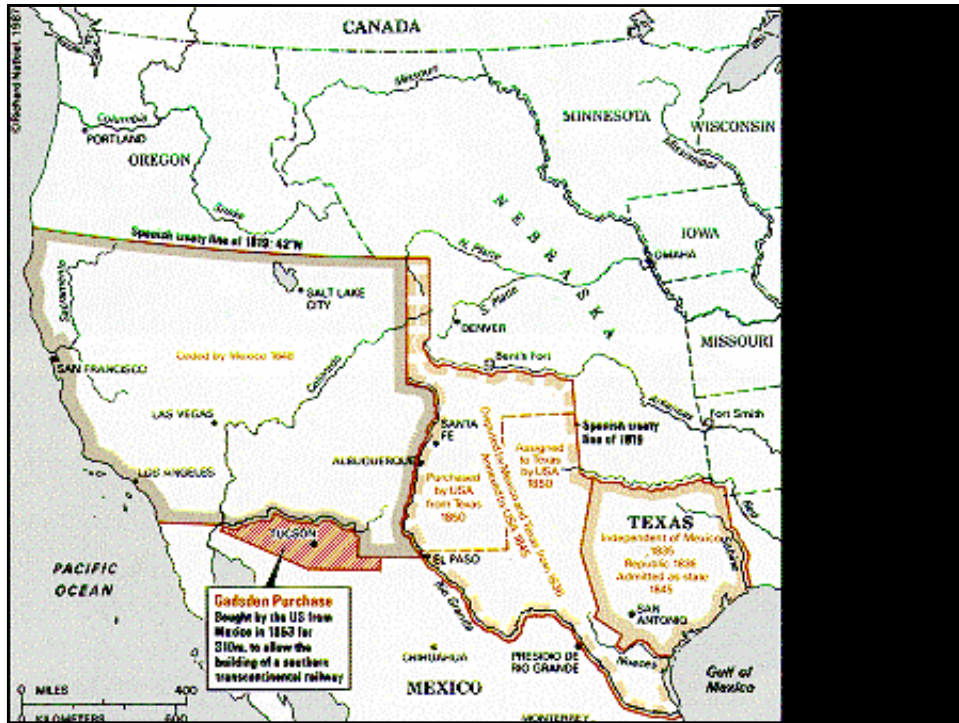
Belief that Americans had a divine right to bring the western hemisphere under their influence because of their superior level of industry and culture.

Before the war there was advocacy for the annexation of all of Mexico and Manifest destiny was further encouraged with the election of Polk prior to the war.

Polk was a confirmed expansionist; he was elected on the platform of bringing both Oregon and Texas into the union.

Polk initiated the commencement of the war and disregarded British claims to Oregon

Polk sent a contingent of American troops under the command of General Zachary Taylor into Texas (now annexed to guarantee its sovereignty)



Views about Manifest Destiny:

The assertion of the superiority of the American race and the concomitant denigration of Mexico is another element of Manifest Destiny.

Walt Whitman who stated: "What has miserable, inefficient Mexico—with her superstition, her burlesque upon freedom, her actual tyranny by the few over the many--what has she to do with the great mission of peopling the new world with a noble race? Be it ours, to achieve that mission!"

The hypocrisy of this is obvious because many of the people, though not all of them, who were removed were very sophisticated and relatively "civilized" people. For example, the literacy rate of the Cherokee nation is higher than that of the white South up through the Civil War, yet the tribe was moved westward as an uncivilized people, so that their land could be open for American expansion.

Many of the tribes in the Southeast were farmers, who were very successful and "civilized," yet they were moved to Oklahoma. In Indiana, Illinois and Michigan, Native American people who were very active in trade, who were trilingual and very good entrepreneurs, were forced to the plains of Kansas. Many of the people who went into the West became Native American pioneers. They transformed the West because their cultures had been so transformed in the East that they brought many tenants of American "civilization" into the West themselves. It did have an impact upon the West. These people, however, forced many of the tribes indigenous to the region further West and South against the Mexican frontier

More broadly stated, Manifest Destiny was a conviction that God intended North America to be under the control of Americans.

It's a kind of early projection of Anglo-saxon supremacy and there's a racist element to it.

But there was also an idealistic element. It was very hard to measure the two, since it would differ from person to person. If you asked a person to define Manifest Destiny, he might tell you it is an ideal, or he might say, "Well, we want the land and this is the easiest way to justify our taking it."

David Pletcher

Although the United States had no shortage of unoccupied lands, expansionists argued that the republic must continue to grow in order to survive.

Echoing the political philosophy of Thomas Jefferson, they viewed an abundance of land as the mainstay of a prosperous republic, and warned against the concentration of political and economic power.

Sam Haynes

Southerners anxious to enlarge the slave empire were among the most ardent champions of the crusade for more territory.

New slave states would enhance the South's political power in Washington and, equally important, serve as an outlet for its growing slave population.

For American commercial interests, expansion offered greater access to lucrative foreign markets.

Washington policy-makers, anxious to compete with Great Britain for the Asia trade, had long been convinced of the strategic and commercial advantages of San Francisco and other ports on the Pacific coastline of Mexican-owned California.

Most important of all, perhaps, was the growing sense of anxiety which Americans felt toward Great Britain.

Americans had always been suspicious of British activities in the western hemisphere, but inevitably this fear had grown as the United States began to define its strategic and economic interests in terms that extended beyond its own borders.

Great Britain's claim to the Pacific Northwest and its close relationship with Mexico were matters of great concern to American interests, which viewed Great Britain as the United States' only rival for control of the Pacific coastline.

Fearful of being "hemmed in" by Great Britain, Democratic leaders saw Her Majesty's government poised to block American territorial ambitions at every turn.

Elements of Manifest Destiny in modern terms:

Extend the "boundaries of freedom"

An ideology of American leadership

A divine right to exert influence over other people

Based on growth as the main measure of success

The best chance for world peace is with the power of freedom

Expansion of opportunities, but for whom ?

Who are the main beneficiaries ?

At what price and who pays the price ?

What lessons might we learn from this chapter of history relevant to today especially in the domain of earth resources ?

What is behind Manifest Destiny with regards to power ?

Where do power and influence reside in the US ?

Does this expansive attitude about American Ideology exist today ?

Are there policies today where a logical person might see similar attitudes of the "great experiment of Liberty" expressed as a "mantle of legitimacy for villainy"... clad in the armor of a righteous cause" or are the motives behind foreign policy sincere, grounded in truth and fundamentally based on American ideals ?

About which issues is the apparent agenda really framed ?

Are there victims in the way of progress ?

Poster projects

Please fill out the sheet coming around about whether you or your group plans to do a talk or give a poster presentation