

## The Frontier Thesis: Assignment Help Notes

### Target Objective

The target objective for this essay is for students to evaluate Frederick Jackson Turner's "Frontier Thesis". Students should arrive at a judgment about its influence on U.S. historiography.

### Brief Indicative Content

Students need to weigh the relative importance of the Frontier Thesis – the view that the presence of the open frontier drove American democracy and gave it a particular character – against other historiographical views, paying careful attention to which seem most significant.

- *Germ Theory*. Historians including Herbert Baxter Adams and George Louis Beer, whose work preceded the Frontier Thesis, argued that American society was shaped by European (especially Germanic or Anglo-Saxon) cultural habits and customs.
- *Economic Interpretation*. Charles and Mary Beard advanced an interpretation contemporaneous with the Frontier Thesis suggesting that American history was conditioned by economic incentives among groups in society.
- *The "New" Western School*. A recent view originating in the 1980s that the history of the American West resulted from a collision between several cultural and ethnic groups, including Anglo-American, African-American, Hispanic, American Indian and Asian, resulting in the formation of current borders between the US and Mexico.

Students should also note how politicians have used these historiographical debates for their own purposes, thereby widening the Turnerian discourse beyond academia.

### Suggested Resources

To sustain a well informed and analytical discussion, students will need to go beyond the material in the extracts by using a variety of books, including those from which the extracts are taken, e.g.:

- (a) Books [Check Google Books: <https://books.google.com/>]

Beale, Howard K., Ed., *Charles A. Beard: An Appraisal* (New York: Octagon Books, 1976)

Beard, Charles A. and Mary R. Beard (1921) *The History of the United States* (New York: Macmillan) pp. 445, 449, available at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/16960/16960-h/16960-h.htm>

Bender, Thomas (2006) *A Nation Among Nations: America's Place in World History* (New York: Hill and Wang)

Billington, Ray Allen and Martin Ridge (1982) *Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier*, 5<sup>th</sup> Ed. (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc.)

Boyer, Paul S. (2001) *The Oxford Companion to United States History* (New York: Oxford University Press)

Brands, H. W. (2010) *American Colossus: The Triumph of Capitalism 1865-1900* (New York: Doubleday) pp. 427-428.

Fernández-Armesto, Felipe (1995) *Millennium: A History of the Last Thousand Years* (New York: Scribner)

Gilderhus, Mark T. (2003) *History and Historians: A Historiographical Introduction, Fifth Ed.* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall) pp. 111-113.

Gressley, Gene M. (1958) "The Turner Thesis – A Problem in Historiography" in *Agricultural History*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (Oct. 1958)

Johnson, Paul (1997) *A History of the American People* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers)

Malone, Michael P. and Richard W. Etulain (1989) *The American West: A Twentieth-Century History* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press)

McClay, Wilfred M. (2006) "West, American" in Bruce Frohnen, Jeremy Beer, and Jeffrey O. Nelson, Eds., *American Conservatism: An Encyclopedia* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books) pp. 917-918.

Milner II, Clyde A., Carol A. O'Connor and Martha A. Sandweiss, eds. (1994) *The Oxford History of the American West* (New York: Oxford University Press)

Nobles, Gregory H., *American Frontiers: Cultural Encounters and Continental Conquest* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1997; paperback edition 1998; also published in UK by Penguin UK, 1998)

Philbrick, Francis S. (1965) *The Rise of the West 1754-1830* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers)

Reynolds, David (2009) *America, Empire of Liberty: A New History of the United States* (New York: Basic Books)

Schlesinger, Arthur Meier (1922) *New Viewpoints in American History* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, Publishers)

Taylor, George Rogers (1972) *The Turner Thesis: Concerning the Role of the Frontier in American History*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath and Company)

Thomas, Evan (2010) *The War Lovers: Roosevelt, Lodge, Hearst, and the Rush to Empire, 1898* (New York: Little, Brown and Company) pp. 58-59.

Turner, Frederick Jackson (1921) *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt and Co.), available at: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/22994/22994-h/22994-h.htm>

(b) Articles, Chapters and Papers

Buhle, Paul (1998) "American Studies" in Mari Jo Buhle, Paul Buhle, and Dan Georgakas, Eds., *Encyclopedia of the American Left*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (New York: Oxford University Press) p. 40.

Cronon, William (1987) "Revisiting the Vanishing Frontier: The Legacy of Frederick Jackson Turner", *The Western Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No. 2, pp. 157-176. [Blackboard Seminar Two Resources]

Ford, Lacy K. (1993) "Frontier Democracy: The Turner Thesis Revisited" in *Journal of the Early American Republic*, Vol. 13, No. 2, pp. 144-163. [Blackboard Seminar Two Resources]

Hofstadter, Richard (1949) "Turner and the Frontier Myth" in *The American Scholar*, Vol. 18, No. 4, Autumn 1949, pp. 433-443, available at <http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/41206669?sid=21105568130633&uid=3739256&uid=4&uid=70&uid=2&uid=3739744&uid=2134> [Register for free access]

Hutton, T. R. C. (2002) "Beating a dead horse?: the continuing presence of Frederick Jackson Turner in environmental and western history", *International Social Science Review* Vol.77, No. 1, pp. 47-57. [Blackboard Seminar Two Resources]

Nobles, Gregory H. (1993) "Beyond Myth and Master Narrative: Toward a New History of the American Frontier" *Quaderno 6: Historiography: Practitioners and Public*, pp. 47-57. [Blackboard Seminar Two Resources]

Ridge, Martin (1992) "Frederick Jackson Turner: 'The Significance of the Frontier in American History', and the Gilded Age" in *Hayes Historical Journal: A Journal of the Gilded Age*, Vol. XII, No. 1. [Blackboard Seminar Two Resources]

Turner, Frederick Jackson (1893) "The Significance of the Frontier in American History", *Annual Report of the American Historical Association*, available at: <https://archive.org/details/significanceoffr00turnuoft>

(c) Web Pages

Kovacovic, Laurie (1997) "An Annotated Bibliography of the American Frontier Heritage", available at: <http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/tbacig/urop/bibtrner.html>

Students are not required to conduct internet-based research for this assignment, and indeed are discouraged from using electronic sources beyond those identified above. However, if students find an electronic source that they wish to use and have any questions about the reliability of the material found online, they should consult their instructor.

Technical Requirements

Students must follow the advice given in (a) the *History Study Skills* guide on "Researching, planning and writing essays"; and (b) the *Student Guide for History Courses On Ground*, which contains writing exemplars. In brief, essays must conform to the following requirements:

- Between 2,000 and 2,500 words i.e. 8-10 double spaced pages with one-inch margins, and font size of 11 or 12. A word count must be provided at the end of the paper.

- Referenced using APA (Harvard) system. See Indiana University Bloomington, Campus Writing Program, 'APA Style: A Quick Guide', available at: <http://www.indiana.edu/~citing/APA.pdf>
- Bibliography of sources used (which is the convention for APA).
- A clear structure with an obvious introduction, middle section, and conclusion.
- The introduction must establish a thesis and indicate the content that will be discussed.
- Each subsequent paragraph should discuss only one analytical point, or two closely-related points.
- The conclusion should reiterate the line of argument and should highlight what is most significant.

### **Late Assignment Policy**

Research essays that have not been through the structured drafting and review process (further details below) will not be accepted for submission, and any research essay submitted after the deadline will receive zero points. If there are extenuating circumstances that are properly documented, you will be permitted to write another research assignment on a completely different topic to the first submission (i.e. you will have to start all over again).

### **Plagiarism Policy**

Students are reminded about Baker College policies on academic honesty (syllabus, p.2):

“Academic honesty, integrity, and ethics are required of all members of the Baker College community. Academic integrity and acting honorably are essential parts of professionalism that continue well beyond courses at Baker College. They are the foundation for ethical behavior in the workplace. There are four possible consequences for violating Baker College's Honor Code:

1. Failure of the assignment
2. Failure of the course
3. Expulsion from the College
4. Rescinding a certificate or degree”

Your instructor may require you to submit your essay to Turnitin, as stated in the syllabus:

“Baker College utilizes plagiarism detection services and has the authority to submit any papers or assignments to such services to determine authenticity. Some assignments may need to be submitted electronically for this purpose.”

### **Assessment**

Essays will be assessed on the basis of three criteria:

- *Analysis and evaluation* (80 points). The significance of the information deployed must be analyzed consistently and a clear line of argument maintained throughout the essay.
- *Factual knowledge and understanding* (80 points). The information deployed must be accurate and relevant to the question.

HIS 201 Research Assignment: Reynolds (2009), Ch. 10, Q. 6(c)

- *Communication and presentation* (40 points). The essay must be properly structured, free of spelling and grammatical errors, and supported by a sufficient number of references and a bibliography consistent with the APA style guide.

In addition, 50 points are available for the structured drafting and review process, which will be assessed EITHER by using the “Milestones” rubrics, OR the submission of a prospectus. Your instructor will advise you which method will be used. Students should familiarize themselves with the detailed descriptors in the rubrics, which are available on Blackboard under “Course Information”.