

Hello to the class members,

Welcome to the “Santa Fe Trail” class! I hope you’ll find it informative and enjoyable. This is an updated version of a course given at OLLI ten years ago. In the next eight weeks, we’ll look at the peoples and events of the American Southwest two centuries ago, with the Santa Fe Trail acting as a connecting link between them.

The syllabus showing each week’s topic is posted on the OLLI website. Our first class will look at the geology and geography that shaped human societies in the Southwest, at those diverse societies in peace and conflict, and at the origin of the trade route that brought them all together. The next three classes will take you along the Trail, using films showing significant events and sites.

Both peace and war are part of this story, and the fifth class will examine the types of violence that erupted along the Trail, from banditry and murder to troop movements in the Mexican War.

Two classes will cover the American Civil War on and near the Trail. This was the most remote area of combat during the War, with remarkable results involving interesting people. The final class will bring weary travelers to journey’s end: the Plaza at Santa Fe, with some conclusions about their (and your) experiences.

Each week’s PowerPoint show will be posted on the OLLI website, for you to examine at your leisure. In addition, I have a lot of handouts that can’t be put on the website for copyright reasons, but can be sent directly to you as email attachments (.pdf files). If you would like to receive these, please send your email address to

fchriste@illinois.edu

They will include essays and articles, as well as brochures and pamphlets from the National Park Service and from state travel and tourism offices.

Thanks for your attention, and I look forward to your presence in the class, whether Room or Zoom!

Best regards,

Fred Christensen