

HIS3035-1 History of Surfing and Surf Culture
Spring 2025
Course Time and Location: T/R 3-4:15pm BAC151
Instructor: Ben Cater, Ph.D.
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Office hours: drop-ins and by appointment

PLNU Mission: To Teach, Shape, & Send

Point Loma Nazarene University exists to provide higher education in a vital Christian community where minds are engaged and challenged, character is molded and formed, and service becomes an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we aspire to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

Course Description

This course introduces students to the history and culture of surfing from the early nineteenth century to the present. It explores the origin and evolution of riding waves as it developed in Polynesia before spreading to Southern California, Australia and beyond to become a global cultural phenomenon. Readings, films, and discussions will concentrate on the key people, places, ideas, and events that precipitated, embodied, or reflected changes in surfing. Since the history and culture of wave riding is rich and broad enough to constitute a major course of study, this class serves only to introduce students to a vast ocean of knowledge. My hope is that you will wade in, paddle out and catch a few waves, not just now but for the rest of your life.

Course Catalog Description

This course introduces students to the history of surfing and surf culture from early modern times to the present. It explores the origin and evolution of wave riding as it developed in the Pacific Rim, eventually expanding to become a global athletic and ethical tradition. Key participants in surfing culture, as well as political, economic, environmental, and spiritual aspects of surfing will be analyzed.

Foundational Explorations (General Education) Learning Outcome #2c

1. Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the complex issues faced by diverse groups in global and/or cross-cultural contexts.

Student Course Learning Outcomes

1. Analyze significant primary texts concerning surf history and culture from pre-history to the 1900s.
2. Evaluate and articulate the diversity of human experience across this range of historical periods.

3. Use a historical perspective to understand the world today and address contemporary problems/issues.
4. Critically evaluate several of the major beliefs, ideologies, and values that have influenced the modern world.
5. Assess your own culture within the context of the process of globalization since 1800.
6. Examine historical developments with a particular emphasis on values and ethical choices, in light of being global citizens.
7. GELO 2(c): Demonstrate an understanding of the complex issues faced by diverse groups in global and/or cross-cultural contexts.
8. Analyze (analysis) the social, cultural, ethnic, gendered, and/or historical contexts of the works and their authors, and connect (synthesis, evaluation) the texts with their own lives.

Required Texts

Kenvin, *Surf Craft* (9780262027601)

Nunn, *Tapping the Source* (9781451645552)

Tomson and benShea, *The Surfer and the Sage* (9781641706551)

Links to additional readings/films provided in class

Weekly Participation

Weekly participation is vital to success in this course. Showing up on time, contributing to class conversations, and taking notes are all ways to participate. HIS3035 is a three-unit course, which means it will require about **six hours** of studying per week. Completing the assigned readings and written work on time, and taking advantage of office hours and free events are all ways to study well.

Course Communication

Students are responsible for all messages from and to their PLNU email and Canvas accounts. Since Dr. Cater frequently provides clarifying notes about course content and assignments, please check your accounts daily. If you have questions or comments, please contact him at: bcater@pointloma.edu. However, please do not expect Dr. Cater to respond during the weekend (Friday evening to Sunday evening) unless it's an emergency. If that's the case, indicate it in the subject line of your email.

Grading Policy (Scale and Weights)

A	94-100%
A-	90-93%
B+	87-89%
B	84-86%
B-	80-83%
C+	77-79%
C	74-76%
C-	70-73%

D+	67-69%
D	64-66%
D-	60-63%
F	0-59%

Participation	10 pts.
Quizzes	50 pts.
Reflection	50 pts.
Weekly Assignments	100 pts.
Midterm	100 pts.
Final	100 pts.

A: Weekly assignments are intended to help students stay on pace with learning goals while deepening the educational experience. Assignments entail written responses to questions that Dr. Cater provides in advance, and form the stuff of daily or weekly class discussions.

B: Regular quizzes help assess students' comprehension of readings, viewing, and lectures. Quizzes take place at the beginning of class and take no longer than 5 minutes.

C: A written reflection will come due by the end of the semester. The reflection can be completed in one of two ways (your choice) - see below for details. Due May 1.

(A) Session

Borrow a board from Dr. Cater. The board must be different from your daily driver in terms of outline, fin set-up, bottom contour, and/or length. During your session, pay attention to the following questions and answer them in your reflection:

- 1) Compared to your daily driver, how does the board paddle, float, get into waves, turn, and accelerate? What kind of wave is the board ideally designed for (flat, hollow, small, big)? How do you know?
- 2) What athletic adjustments are necessary to ride it well? Did you make the adjustments and succeed?
- 3) Does the board seem to be crafted with skill? Does it manifest a deep understanding of the ocean? How can you tell?
- 4) How did the session impact you morally? Did it make you a better or worse person? What did you learn about yourself? Can surfing help deepen your faith or not?

Your reflection should be 2-3 pages and include a picture of you with the board you rode. The purpose of this assignment is to help you think about surfing as not simply a sport or culture but a liberal art that prepares us for life.

(B) Surf Check

Check surf conditions for an hour, take notes, and respond to the following prompts:

- 1) What surf break are you observing (name, location, a left or right, a beach break or reef break, etc)

- 2) Describe the conditions (calm/stormy; clear/murky; rising or falling tide; wave height and direction; and water temperature).
- 3) Are there surfers in the water? If so, where are they sitting and why? What kinds of boards are they riding and why (long, short; specific type/s, etc.)? Do you see anything else in the water - fish, sea birds, boaters, fishermen, etc?
- 4) Take some time to contemplate the ocean's horizons, stirring waves, and mysterious depths. How do they make you feel? What do they inspire you to think? Does the ocean conjure feelings of peace, joy, confidence, and hope? Or unsettling thoughts? Your reflection should be 2-3 pages and include a selfie of you checking the surf. The goal of this assignment is to encourage an oceanic sensibility that can prepare you for the business of Life.

Incomplete and Late Work

Don't submit incomplete or late work. Incomplete work can be completed and resubmitted for reduced credit (5% off) within one day of its original due date. Late work can be submitted for reduced credit (5% off each day) until two days of the original date; after that, it counts as an incomplete.

PLNU Attendance and Participation Policy

Regular and punctual attendance at all class sessions is considered essential to optimum academic achievement. If the student is absent for more than 10 percent of class sessions, the faculty member will issue a written warning of de-enrollment. If the absences exceed 20 percent, the student may be de-enrolled without notice until the university withdrawal date or, after that date, receive an "F" grade.

See [Academic Policies](#) Links to an external site. in the Undergraduate Academic Catalog.

Final Exam Policy

Successful completion of this class requires taking the final exam on its scheduled day. No requests for early examinations or alternative days will be approved.

Academic Honesty Policy

Students should demonstrate academic honesty by doing original work and by giving appropriate credit to the ideas of others. Academic dishonesty is the act of presenting information, ideas, and/or concepts as one's own when in reality they are the results of another person's creativity and effort. **All work submitted electronically is automatically checked against Turn-It-In.** A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been detected may assign a failing grade for that assignment or examination, or, depending on the seriousness of the offense, for the course. Faculty should follow and students may appeal using the procedure in the university Catalog. For more information, see the following link:

https://catalog.pointloma.edu/content.php?catoid=41&navoid=2435#Academic_Honesty Links to an external site.

University Copyright Policy

Point Loma Nazarene University, as a non-profit educational institution, is entitled by law to use materials protected by the U.S. Copyright Act for classroom education. Any use of those materials outside the class may violate the law.

Artificial Intelligence Policy

If it is part of your creative process, you are allowed to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools (e.g, ChatGPT, iA Writer, Marmot, Botowski, etc.) in this course. However, I would like you to speak to me before about how you plan to use this tool in your work. Another thing to note: most publications DO NOT allow use of AI in creative works. At this current cultural moment, using AI will limit where you can publish and work.

Any work that utilizes AI-based tools must be clearly identified as such, including the specific tool(s) used. For example, if you use ChatGPT, you must cite ChatGPT including the version number, year, month and day of the query and the statement "Generated using OpenAI. <https://chat.openai.com/Links to an external site..>"

Further, you must include with your work the sequential prompts and methodology that you used to generate it. Failure to indicate AI as part of the work will be considered plagiarism. It is important that you protect your colleagues' intellectual property. Providing AI with samples of your colleagues' works will result in an F in this course.

PLNU Academic Accommodations Policy

PLNU is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all its programs, services, and activities. Students with disabilities may request course-related accommodations by contacting the Educational Access Center (EAC), located in the Bond Academic Center (EAC@pointloma.edu or 619-849-2486). Once a student's eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, the EAC will issue an academic accommodation plan ("AP") to all faculty who teach courses in which the student is enrolled each semester.

PLNU highly recommends that students speak with their professors during the first two weeks of each semester/term about the implementation of their AP in that particular course and/or if they do not wish to utilize some or all of the elements of their AP in that course.

Students who need accommodations for a disability should contact the EAC as early as possible (i.e., ideally before the beginning of the semester) to assure appropriate accommodations can be provided. It is the student's responsibility to make the first contact with the EAC.

Language and Belonging

Point Loma Nazarene University faculty are committed to helping create a safe and hospitable learning environment for all students. As Christian scholars we are keenly aware of the power of language and believe in treating others with dignity. As such, it is

important that our language be equitable, inclusive, and prejudice free. Inclusive/Bias-free language is the standard outlined by all major academic style guides, including MLA, APA, and Chicago, and it is the expected norm in university-level work. Good writing and speaking do not use unsubstantiated or irrelevant generalizations about personal qualities such as age, disability, economic class, ethnicity, marital status, parentage, political or religious beliefs, race, gender, sex, or sexual orientation. Inclusive language also avoids using stereotypes or terminology that demeans persons or groups based on age, disability, class, ethnicity, gender, race, language, or national origin. Respectful use of language is particularly important when referring to those outside of the religious and lifestyle commitments of those in the PLNU community. By working toward precision and clarity of language, we mark ourselves as serious and respectful scholars, and we model the Christ-like quality of hospitality.

You may report an incident(s) using the [Bias Incident Reporting Form](#)[Links to an external site.](#).

Sexual Misconduct and Discrimination

In support of a safe learning environment, if you (or someone you know) have experienced any form of sexual discrimination or misconduct, including sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, or stalking, know that accommodations and resources are available through the Title IX Office at pointloma.edu/Title-IX. Please be aware that under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, faculty and staff are required to disclose information about such misconduct to the Title IX Office.

If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact Counseling Services at counselingservices@pointloma.edu or find a list of campus pastors

Use of Technology

In order to be successful in the online or hybrid environment, you'll need to meet the minimum technology and system requirements; please refer to the [Technology and System Requirements](#) information. Additionally, students are required to have headphone speakers, microphone, or webcams compatible with their computer available to use. Please note that any course with online proctored exams requires a computer with a camera (tablets are not compatible) to complete exams online. Problems with technology do not relieve you of the responsibility of participating, turning in your assignments, or completing your class work.

Below is an approximate schedule of units, topics, assignments, and assessments. Dr. Cater reserves the right to make adjustments if necessary.

PART I: Surf History

Jan 14 – Course Introduction

Jan 16 – "The Cradle of Surfing"

- Reading and Discussion: Cater, [Surfing, Ancient to Modern .docx](#) Download [Surfing, Ancient to Modern .docx](#)

- According to the article, what does it mean to be an ancient person? a modern person?
- Describe how surfing became modern. Be specific.
- Are you ancient, modern, or a mix of both? If the latter, in what way(s)?

Jan 21 – "The Cradle" continued, and "Duke, Dillingham, and the Waikiki Dream"

Jan 23 – "The Duke . . ." continued

- Viewing and Discussion: "Waterman: Duke - Ambassador of Aloha" (<https://www.pbs.org/video/waterman-duke-ambassador-of-aloha-djus8w/>)Links to an external site.
- username: bcater@pointloma.edu
- password: SurfHistoryPLNU2025
 - What is a "waterman," according to the documentary?
 -
 - Provide two examples of how Duke contributed to the rise of modern surfing. Be specific.
 - Reflect on what allowed Duke's popularity to become worldwide, according to the documentary.

Jan 28 – "The Dark Side of Paradise"

- Reading and Quiz: Hawk, "Duke's Ulcers" (<https://www.surflines.com/surf-news/dukes-ulcers-surfings-central-icon-dealt-white-supremacy/93994>)Links to an external site.

Jan 30 – "Inventing Surfurbia: Surfing to California"

- Reading and Discussion: Verge, "George Freeth: King of the Surfers and California's Lost Hero" (<https://www.pbssocal.org/shows/lost-la/george-freeth-king-of-the-surfers-and-californias-forgotten-hero>)Links to an external site.)
 - What does Verge call Freeth, "king of the surfers?"
 - Based on the reading, what is "beach culture?" How did Freeth contribute to it?

Feb 4 - "San Diego Surf History, 1900-1945"

- Reading and Discussion: Cater, "Combo Swell" (<https://viewpoint.pointloma.edu/combo-swell/>)
 - Summarize how PLNU students have contributed in "unique and overlapping" ways to the surf history of the Cliffs.

- Watch for fun: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pFGrzfHblZg&t=1s>Links



[to an external site.](#)

Feb 6 - "War and Surfing"

- Reading and Quiz: Warshaw, "We Sacrificed the Best Wave in California to Save Democracy" (<https://www.eos.surf/feature/we-sacrificed-the-best-wave-in-southern-california-to-save-democracy-the-rise-and-fall-of-long-beach-flood-control>Links to an external site.)
- username: bcater@pointloma.edu
- password: SurfHistoryPLNU2025

Feb 11 - "The Surf Boom"

Feb 13 - "The Surf Boom" continued

- Viewing and Discussion: Watch ONE of the following documentaries and submit a half-page of notes (under "documentary" in Assignments) based on your observations. Come to class prepared to discuss the documentary you watched.
 - "Beach Culture" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KoBhr4CC6GM>Links to an



- [external site.](#))
- "A Line in the Sand" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pEQexleYSQ>Links to an



[external site.](#)

Feb 18 - "Charlie Don't Surf: Surfing and Counterculture"

- Reading and Quiz: Kempton, "Thirteen O'Clock" (<https://www.surfersjournal.com/editorial/thirteen-oclock/>)Links to an external site.

Feb 20 – "Charlie Don't Surf" continued

- Viewing (in-class) and Discussion: *Morning of the Earth* (1972)

Feb 25 – "Going Pro"

- Reading and Discussion: Duane, "The Long, Strange Tale of California's Surf Nazis" (<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/28/opinion/sunday/surf-racism.html>)Links to an external site.
 - - According to Duane, what is a "surf nazi"?
 - How did they emerge and to what extent do they or their mentality exist today?
 - Reflect on how this aspect of surf history has influenced your view of surfers, both in the past and today.

Feb 27 - 1980s Newport: Echo Beach and the Hottest Hundred Yards

- - Guest discussion with Juan Casas, Founder and CEO of The Mars Group

March 4 – "Beating the Crowds"

- Reading and Discussion: DeNuccio, "Paradise Lost" (<https://www.surfersjournal.com/editorial/surf-travel-paradise-lost/>)Links to an external site.
 - - When and why did surf guides become normative in Salina Cruz?
 - Clearly explain why the Fijian government decided in 2010 to make Cloudbreak and Restaurants accessible to the public. Do you agree with it?
 - List a few pros and cons of capping the number of surfers in a given surf spot, according to Claude Graves.

March 4 - Review

March 6 - **Midterm Exam**

March 18 – "Surf Tech"

- Reading and discussion: Johnson, "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly of Surfing Taking Over Surfing" (<https://www.theinertia.com/surf/the-good-the-bad-and-the-ugly-of-wave-pools-taking-over-surfing/>)Links to an external site.
 - Summarize the article. Do you agree with his assessments about the good, the bad, and the ugly? State them and explain your position.

March 20 – "Women and Surfing"

- Film and Discussion: "Trouble: The Lisa Andersen Story"<https://youtu.be/HoexYSti21Q?si=SzJZ-kdMDH7qj7TE>Links to an



[external site.](#)

Part II: Surf Culture (Film, Novels, Movies, Skateboarding, Music, Ethics, and Spirituality)



March 25 – TBA [Links to an external site.](#)

March 27 - Surf Novel

- Reading, Discussion, and Quiz: *Tapping the Source*, pgs. 1-150

April 1 - Surf Novel

- Reading, Discussion, and Quiz: *Tapping the Source*, pgs. 151-300

April 3 - Hollywood Surf Films

- Viewing (in-class): *Point Break* (1992)

April 8 – "Skateboarding as Surf Culture"

- Viewing (in-class) "Dogtown and Z Boys"

April 10 – "Surf Music from Old Hawaiian Standards to Dick Dale and Beyond"

April 15 – Guest Conversation with XXX About Surf Localism and Etiquette

- Reading: San Diego Tribune, May 15, 1998, "Surfer, 22, and Father Arrested in Altercation"
- Viewing: Watch the last five minutes, and listen to Devon Howard's thoughts about localism and being old or new to a local break<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WCeyPcbCuVIL>Links to an external



[site.](#)

- Reading: [https://www.dailybreeze.com/2024/09/20/palos-verdes-estates-settles-surf-localism-lawsuit-agrees-to-make-lunada-bay-welcoming-to-public/Links to an external site.](https://www.dailybreeze.com/2024/09/20/palos-verdes-estates-settles-surf-localism-lawsuit-agrees-to-make-lunada-bay-welcoming-to-public/Links%20to%20an%20external%20site.)

April 17 - "The Surfrider Foundation"

- Reading: "Surfing and the Environment" ([https://nef.org.uk/surfing-and-the-environment/Links to an external site.](https://nef.org.uk/surfing-and-the-environment/Links%20to%20an%20external%20site.))

April 22 – Daoism and Surfing

- Reading: selections from *Tao Te Ching*.

April 24 – Christianity and Surfing

- Reading: Selections from *Surfing With Jesus* (to be handed out in class)

April 29 - "Daoism and Surfing" continued

- Viewing (at-home): "The Ying and Yang of Gerry Lopez"

May 1 - TBA

- Written reflection due by 3pm

May 6 – **FINAL EXAM** 4:30-7PM