Seminar in the History of the American West

This seminar is designed to introduce you to the historiography of what many have called the American West. But the places we study here have long been contested by a variety of peoples—residents, migrants, politicians, image makers, travelers, activists, and, of course, historians. So we also will have occasion to talk about places called by such names as El Norte, the frontier, the North American West, Gam Saan, the Pacific Rim, the Great West, the Middle Place, and Aztlan. We will be reminded constantly that there is power in naming.

Course requirements

1. General: Faithful attendance, prompt completion of weekly readings, interactive and respectful participation in discussion (class is a place for collective learning). If you must miss a class during the semester, please inform me before the class meeting, please do the assigned reading, and please submit a 3-4 page analytical paper on that reading the following week when you return.

2. Cofacilitation: Each week, one or two of you will serve as cofacilitator(s) for class discussion. In the week that you cofacilitate, you will also read and report on one of the supplemental texts assigned. Your report should last no more than 10 minutes, and it should serve as both an introduction to the book you've read and a springboard for discussion of the readings assigned to the whole class. In other words, you'll be responsible for making connections between the reading you've done on your own and the assigned weekly readings.

3. The journals project: Most weeks, one or two of you will make a 10-minute presentation on academic journals that publish articles in western history and in related fields of American studies, Canadian studies, Latin American studies, ethnic history, gender history, labor history, environmental history, and the history of sexuality. The journals on which you will present are: Amerasia; American Indian Culture and Research Journal; American Indian Quarterly; American Historical Review; American Quarterly; Aztlan; Canadian Historical Review; Environmental History; Ethnohistory; Feminist Studies; Frontiers; Gender and History; Genders; GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies; Great Plains Quarterly; Hispanic American Historical Review; International Labor and Working-Class History; Journal of American History; Journal of Canadian Studies; Journal of Ethnic History; Journal of Women’s History; Journal of the History of Sexuality; Labor History; Latin American Perspectives; Pacific Historical Review; positions; Radical History Review; Signs; Southwestern Historical Quarterly; Western American Literature; Western Historical Quarterly; and the various state history journals, such as New Mexico Historical Review; Montana, The Magazine of Western History; California History, and the like.

4. Written work: You will write two kinds of papers for this class.

   First, you will write a 2-3 page (500-750 word) book review of one of the books assigned to the class as a whole (of the style you might find in American Historical Review, Journal of American History, Western Historical Quarterly, or Pacific Historical Review). This paper should be double-spaced, with standard one-inch margins. It should have no grammatical or typographical errors or misspellings. When in doubt, please consult: William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White, Elements of Style, 4th ed.; and Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 10th ed. (If you don’t own these reference works, I suggest that you purchase them, as you’ll use them throughout your career.) Your review is due on Thurs. Oct. 24, and it should be written about a book that will not be considered in your second paper.
Your second paper will be a 12-15 page (3000 to 3750 word) historiographical essay that situates an issue or controversy of current concern to western historians in relation to scholarship that has addressed similar issues or controversies before the 1980s and 90s. Please discuss your interests with me by Oct. 15, and turn in a complete bibliography by Thurs. Nov. 7. The completed essay is due on Thurs. Dec. 5. Unless you turn in a perfect paper, expect to receive this paper back with my comments on Thurs. Dec. 12. You will have until Tues. Dec. 17, at 4 p.m. to revise your paper and turn it in to my mailbox on the fifth floor of Humanities. Your historiographical essay should be double-spaced, with standard one-inch margins. It should have no grammatical or typographical errors or misspellings. It should include footnotes or endnotes. Please use the standard humanities style of documentation as detailed in Kate Turabian, A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 6th ed., or The Chicago Manual of Style, 14th ed. (If you don’t own one of these guides, I suggest that you purchase one, as you’ll use it throughout your graduate career.)

Readings

The following books can be purchased at the University Book Store, and are on reserve at the State Historical Society Library:


Valerie Matsumoto and Blake Allmendinger, eds., Over the Edge: Remapping the American West (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). [Abbreviated as OTE in syllabus.]

Maria Montoya, Translating Property: The Maxwell Land Grant and the Conflict Over Land in the American West, 1840-1900 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).


If you feel that you need some background in western history to supplement the assigned readings, you might consider purchasing one of the following overviews:


If you need a reference work in western history, the very best is:


### Calendar and Assignments

**Sept. 5**

Course introduction

**Sept. 12**  **Whose West?**

Reading:

Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier*


Book reports:


Elizabeth Jameson and Susan Armitage, eds., *Writing the Range: Race, Class, and Culture in the Women’s West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997).

Journal reports:

*Western Historical Quarterly*

*Great Plains Quarterly*
Sept. 19  Which West?

Reading:

Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis*


Book reports:


Journal reports:

*Pacific Historical Review*
*Environmental History*

Sept. 26  Border Crossers

Reading:

Peck, *Reinventing Free Labor*

*OTE*: Anne Goldman, “‘I Think Our Romance is Spoiled,’ or Crossing Genres: California History in Helen Hunt Jackson’s *Ramona* and María Amparo Ruiz de Burton’s *The Squatter and the Don*”; Jesús Martínez-Saldaña, “La Frontera del Norte”

Book reports:


Emma Pérez, *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999). [Please note that Professor Pérez will be speaking at UW on Sat. Sept. 28 as part of the one-day conference, “Headwaters: The Past and Future of Women’s History.” Please plan to attend.]

Journal reports:

*American Historical Review*
*Ethnohistory*
*Journal of American History*
Oct. 3 This Land is Whose Land?

Reading:
Montoya, Translating Property

OTE: Blake Allmendinger, “Toga! Toga!”; Peggy Pascoe, “Race, Gender, and the Privileges of Property: On the Significance of Miscegenation Law in the U.S. West”

Book reports:

Journal reports:
Aztlan
Hispanic American Historical Review
Latin American Perspectives
Southwestern Historical Quarterly

Oct. 10 California Dreams

Reading:
Gregory, American Exodus
Guerin-Gonzales, Mexican Workers and American Dreams


Book reports:

Journal reports:
International Labor and Working-Class History
Journal of Ethnic History
Labor History
Radical History Review
Oct. 17

No class meeting: work on first and second papers.

Oct. 24 Middle Grounds

Note: First paper due in class.

Reading:

White, The Middle Ground

OTE: Ramón Gutiérrez, “Crucifixion, Slavery, and Death: The Hermanos Penitentes of the Southwest”

Book reports:

Lucy Eldersveld Murphy, A Gathering of Rivers: Indians, Métis, and Mining in the Western Great Lakes, 1737-1832 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000).

Journal reports:

American Indian Culture and Research Journal
American Indian Quarterly
Canadian Historical Review
Journal of Canadian Studies

Oct. 31 Edge Places

Reading:

Johnson, Roaring Camp

OTE: Mary Murphy, “Making Men in the West: The Coming of Age of Miles Cavanaugh and Martin Frank Dunham”; Miroslava Chavez, “‘Pongo mi demanda’: Challenging Patriarchy in Mexican Los Angeles, 1830-1850”

Book reports:

Mary Murphy, Mining Cultures: Men, Women, and Leisure in Butte, 1914-41 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997).

Journal reports:

Feminist Studies
Frontiers
Journal of Women’s History
Signs
Nov. 7  

**Roots, Branches, Visions**

*Note: Bibliography for second paper due in class.*

**Reading:**

*West, Contested Plains*

**Book reports:**


**Journal reports:**

*Amerasia*

*positions*

*American Quarterly*

*Western American Literature*

Nov. 14  

**Is it Catching?**

**Reading:**

*Nayan Shah, Contagious Divides*

*OTE*: Jennifer Watts, “Mae West’s (re)Presentation of Western Religion”; William Deverell, “Plague in Los Angeles, 1924: Ethnicity and Typicality”

**Book reports:**


**Journal reports:**

*Gender and History*

*Genders*

*GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*

*Journal of the History of Sexuality*
Nov. 21 Making Change

Reading:

Child, Boarding School Seasons


Book reports:

K. Tsianina Lomawaima, They Called it Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994).


Journal reports:

various western state history journals, such as,

California History
Montana, The Magazine of Western History
New Mexico Historical Review

Nov. 28

No class meeting: Thanksgiving

Dec. 5 Racial Fault Lines

Note: Second paper due in class.

Reading:

Foley, The White Scourge

Book reports:


Dec. 12  Creating New Wests

Note: Papers will be returned to you in class.

Reading:

Wilson, The Myth of Santa Fe

OTE: Patricia Nelson Limerick, “Seeing and Being Seen: Tourism in the American West”

Book reports:

Krista Comer, Landscapes of the New West: Gender and Geography in Contemporary Women’s Writing (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

Tues. Dec. 17  Final draft of second paper due in my mailbox (5th floor Humanities) by 4 p.m.