

HISTORY 151
The North American West to 1850
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Spring 2022

Professor Allison Powers Useche

Monday/Wednesday/Friday 11-11:50am 1101 Mosse Humanities

Office Hours: 4120 Mosse Humanities Building Wednesdays 1pm-3pm (or by appointment)

Email: auseche@wisc.edu



This early 19th century map of North America commissioned by the British Crown reflects a lack of European knowledge about the continent's vast interior centuries after "discovery." It also represents an enduring myth that has distorted many popular understandings of America's past—the assumption that prior to United States annexation the region remained a mere frontier, static and empty. This course looks beyond that myth to instead consider how the diverse nations, empires, peoples and polities of the early West profoundly shaped the history of North America long before—and after—the creation of the current borders of the United States.

"A Map Exhibiting all the New Discoveries in the Interior Parts of North America" (1811)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides a broad introduction to the history of places that have been called the North American West, focusing on the period before 1850. Traditionally, historians often treated the early West as a mere hinterland of European empires. But we cannot begin to understand North America's past or present without attention to histories of the diverse Native nations whose homelands span the continent; Spanish, French, British, Russian, and United States aspirations to become Pacific as well as Atlantic imperial powers; the political communities forged across borders by fugitives from slavery; and the saltwater realms of coastal societies sharing ocean currents and exchanges with East Asia. Together we will investigate a complex and changing world shaped by Mexica nobles, shipwrecked Spaniards, French Jesuits, Anishinaabe diplomats, Black Seminole soldiers, and American land pirates, to name only a few examples. Students will learn to think like historians by analyzing primary sources, evaluating competing narratives, and formulating arguments about the past. We will ask how systems of knowledge, governance, and ecological management, forms of diplomacy and political belonging, modes of labor exploitation, varieties of unfreedom, ideas about race, gender, and sexuality, epidemics and environmental catastrophes transformed a continent repeatedly redrawn and unsettled. Along the way we will consider the ongoing legacies of the past—and the stories we tell about it—in the American West today.



FORMAT

The format for this course is in person, with four meetings per week. Three meetings with the professor will involve interactive lectures and research workshops. An additional discussion section led by a graduate student instructor will allow students to meet in smaller groups to talk about the readings in depth and to hone the skills of critical thinking, research, and writing necessary to do the work of historical analysis.

OBJECTIVES

- Identify major themes, patterns, processes, and events in histories of the North American West before 1850
- Explain the many transformations that rocked the North American West prior to and immediately following United States annexation, as well as how the legacies of these longer histories continue into the present
- Understand how historians make history and why our understandings of the past change over time
- Evaluate arguments about history and weigh in on existing historical debates
- Interpret primary and secondary sources to answer questions about the past

SECTION INFORMATION

TA: Winifred Redfearn

email: wredfearn@wisc.edu

Section Number	Day	Time	Location
DIS 301	Thursday	8:50-9:40am	6109 Sewell
DIS 302	Thursday	9:55-10:45am	6113 Sewell
DIS 303	Thursday	11:00-11:50am	6109 Sewell
DIS 304	Thursday	5:40-6:30pm	224 Ingraham

CREDITS

This course counts for four credits. The course meets as a group for 4 hours per week and carries the expectation that you will spend an average of 2 hours outside of class for every hour in the classroom. In other words, in addition to class time, plan to allot an average of 8 hours per week for reading, writing, preparing for discussions, and or studying for this class.

REGULAR AND SUBSTANTIVE STUDENT-INSTRUCTOR INTERACTION

Lectures will provide me with my main opportunity to engage in regular and substantive interaction with you. During our lecture meetings on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays I will provide direct instruction, clarify information about course content, facilitate discussion of the course materials, and lead research and writing workshops. I will additionally be available during my office hours each week for one-on-one meetings. If you cannot make my office hours but would like to meet, please email me and we can find an alternative time. I try to respond to all emails within 24 hours. If you have an urgent or time-sensitive matter to discuss me with, please include “URGENT” in the subject line of your email and I will reply as soon as possible.

COURSE WEBSITE, LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM & DIGITAL INSTRUCTIONAL TOOLS

All course materials are available on our [Canvas site](#).



If you would prefer to meet with me remotely (during office hours or otherwise) via Zoom, all meetings can be accessed here: <https://uwmadison.zoom.us/j/8395182126>

READINGS

All required readings will be posted to our course Canvas site. You can find the links arranged by week. Your reading assignment each week will consist of 1 book chapter or scholarly article written by a historian about the past—what we call “secondary sources”—in addition to 3-5 shorter “primary sources” produced during the period that we are studying. We will talk in class about how to approach the readings, but plan to read the secondary sources more quickly by focusing on each author’s argument and use of evidence. You will want to read the primary sources more closely. These documents are shorter but often take longer to interpret. A few questions to consider as you complete the readings each week include: how do the primary sources support, challenge, or expand on the historical narratives offered by the secondary sources? What can we learn from analyzing these documents together that we might not necessarily get from reading one source on its own? What do these sources leave out or obscure? If you are ever feeling overwhelmed by the readings or find that they are taking you too long to get through, please do not hesitate to come by my office hours so we can discuss strategies for completing each week’s assignment within a few hours.

GRADING SCALE

A (92.50+); AB (87.50-92.49); B (82.50-87.49); BC (77.50-82.49); C (69.50-77.49); D (60-69.49); F (Below 60)

ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

Lecture Attendance and Participation: 10%

Participation is critical to your success in this course and is required. Mondays and Wednesdays will be interactive lectures designed to introduce you to the topics and themes of the week. Fridays will be organized as research workshops where I will do less talking and instead invite you to develop the skills of historical analysis including analyzing primary sources, using digitized archival collections, and evaluating popular representations of the American West. These sessions are designed to give you the skills you need to do well on your assignments for the course—the quizzes and papers—and to learn from each other’s insights into the past. You can miss three lectures no questions asked before your participation grade begins to be affected. If you end up needing to miss more than three lecture meetings due to health issues (including mental health), quarantine, family commitments, or any other extenuating circumstances, let us know and we will create alternative assignments so that your participation grade will not be affected. No medical documentation of the illness will be required. Please take care of yourselves and let Winnie and I know how we can support you.

Discussion Section Attendance and Participation: 25%

Weekly discussion sections will provide an opportunity for you to clarify and consolidate your understanding of the material, flex critical thinking skills, and hear the viewpoints of your fellow students, and are also required. Please come to section ready to engage with the material, your peers, and your TA. Each week you will upload a one paragraph (200-300 word) response post to your section’s Canvas discussion board by Wednesday evening at midnight. This is a brief and informal first reaction to the week’s readings that you can then build on in your discussions, your quizzes, and your papers. Many past students suggest building on your discussion posts for quizzes and papers—this will allow you to deepen your understanding of the materials over the course of the semester and develop your own sense of what kinds of questions and methods of



historical inquiry interest you the most. You will have several options (listed below) for what this response might look like. Thoughtful completion of these assignments will contribute to your discussion section grade. *Post to canvas by Tuesdays at midnight. This will give Winnie the chance to read your responses before your discussion section meets.*

Options for weekly response posts:

- Answer one or more of the Friday questions that I will send out in weekly emails
- Respond to a classmate's post
- Analyze one or more of the week's primary sources
- Reflect on the readings—this could involve discussing something that interested you, confused you, or that you disagreed with
- Raise a series of questions related to the readings or lectures

Quizzes: 30%

Instead of a traditional midterm and final exam, this course will have four low-stakes “check-in quizzes” (each valued at 7.5% of your final grade). If you attend lecture and section regularly, read the assigned material, take good notes, and review those notes, you should do well on these. Each quiz will consist of two historical questions that I will ask you to answer in a few paragraphs by drawing on the readings and lecture materials. These will be interpretative rather than factual questions, and you will have access to your notes to consult as you craft your responses. If you are not happy with your grade, you may choose to retake one of these.

Primary Source Analysis (2 pages): 10%

Primary sources are the building blocks that all historians use to interpret the past, and in your first short paper for the course you will choose one primary source from the syllabus to analyze. You will use this primary source to answer a question that you have about the topics and themes we have discussed during the course. Who produced this source, when, and why? For what audience? How do you think it was received at the time? What can this source tell us about the past? Analyze particular quotes from the document to answer your historical question. You can find a detailed guidance on how to approach the assignment, including an outline and rubric, on our course Canvas site.

I encourage you to come to my and Winnie's office hours to discuss your papers as you begin writing—we love to talk through your ideas as you get started on the assignment. The History Lab also offers appointments for one-on-one meetings with graduate students who can help you at any stage of the writing process including choosing a topic, analyzing primary sources, developing arguments and thesis statements, citing evidence, and writing effectively. The Lab is equipped also to support challenges faced by English-language learners. You can schedule an appointment with the History Lab here: <https://history.wisc.edu/undergraduate-program/the-history-lab/>

Comparative Paper (5 pages) 15%:

For this assignment you will analyze two primary sources, either contemporary or successive, to make an argument about some aspect of United States history. One of these sources can be the document you analyzed in your first paper—you can use this assignment to expand on and nuance the argument that you made in your first paper. Draw on at least one secondary source from the syllabus to help you interpret the primary sources that you have chosen. We will be working on the skills you need to do well on this paper throughout the course. You can find more detailed guidance on how to approach the assignment, including an outline and rubric, on our course Canvas site.

Op-Ed (1-2 pages): 10%

Historians often weigh in on contemporary issues or policy debates through short “Opinion Pieces” published in major newspapers. For your final writing assignment for the course, I will ask you to do the same. It might seem like events that transpired centuries ago would hold little relevance for the world we find ourselves in today, but you would be surprised! Your goal in this assignment is to connect a contemporary issue, political debate or controversy to a historical topic, theme, or event covered in this course. How does the past help us to better understand political debates today?

There are a few different approaches you might take to this piece of historical writing:

- *Historical Origins*: Explain why we cannot fully understand a contemporary problem without considering what got us here. Consider how past policies, patterns, or power struggles laid the groundwork for the issue that we are facing today.
- *Historical Analogy*: Compare a contemporary problem with a similar issue from the past. How does attention to a previous period in the history of the North American West help us to make sense of the situation we are confronting today?
- *Forgotten Visions*: Explore how an individual or organization from the past proposed solutions to a problem we are facing today. Explain how attention to their visions and strategies might offer a roadmap for generating meaningful change.

DEADLINES AND EXTENSIONS:

You are welcome to request an extension on any of the graded assignments for the course if the requirements of other classes, workplace responsibilities, family commitments, health concerns, or other issues make it difficult to submit an assignment on time. All requests for extensions made 24 hours in advance of the deadline will be granted. Requests for extensions made on or after the deadline will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS

According to university policy, we all must be masked indoors. If you forget a mask, please come see at the beginning of lecture and I will provide you with one. Though attendance is required in lecture, please *do not come* if you experience any of the following symptoms:

Fever or chills
Cough
Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
Fatigue
Muscle or body aches
Headache
New loss of taste or smell
Sore throat
Congestion or runny nose
Nausea or vomiting
Diarrhea

According to the CDC, these symptoms might be indicative of a COVID-19 infection. If you have any of these symptoms and therefore must miss lecture or discussion section, please send me or Winnie an email to let us know, and we will excuse the absence—no questions asked.



Recognizing that certain students might have to miss more class this semester than in an ordinary semester, I will post lectures slides and lecture notes after each of our meetings. If you have questions about what you missed after you consult the slides and notes, please reach out to me or Winnie and we will schedule a meeting to help get you caught up.

STUDENTS' RULES, [RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES](#)

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION STATEMENT

I aspire to create a classroom strengthened by students who feel heard, safe, and supported. If you have concerns about any aspect of the course, please let me know. Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals. The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES STATEMENT

I am committed to providing any accommodations that will enable you to thrive in our course, including but not limited to those requested through the McBurney Disability Resource Center. The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform faculty [me] of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. Faculty [I], will work either directly with the student [you] or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA. (See: [McBurney Disability Resource Center](#))

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY STATEMENT

By virtue of enrollment, each student agrees to uphold the high academic standards of the University of Wisconsin-Madison; academic misconduct is behavior that negatively impacts the integrity of the institution. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these previously listed acts are examples of misconduct which may result in disciplinary action. Examples of disciplinary action include, but is not limited to, failure on the assignment/course, written reprimand, disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion.

[Academic Calendar & Religious Observances](#)

COURSE EVALUATIONS

You will be provided with several opportunities to evaluate this course and your learning experience. Your participation is an integral component of this course, and your confidential feedback is important to me. You will receive an official email two weeks prior to the end of the semester, notifying you that your course evaluation is available. In the email you will receive a link to log into the course evaluation with your NetID.



I strongly encourage you to participate in this anonymous course evaluation and will provide you with time in lecture to complete the evaluation.



SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Week 1: Vast Early America

No readings or section meetings this week

January 26 Introduction and Welcome

January 28 No Such Thing as Prehistory: Native America Before 1492

Week 2: First Encounters

Section meetings begin this week

January 31 Myths of the Spanish Conquest

February 2 Geographies of Power

February 4 Research Workshop: Interpreting Primary Sources

Readings:

Secondary Sources:

NPR Throughline Podcast on “Tenochtitlán: A Retelling of the Conquest” (2021)

Primary Sources:

Hernan Cortés Describes Tenochtitlán to King Charles V (1520)

Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *The True History of The Conquest of New Spain*, excerpt (1568)

A Nahuatl Account of the Conquest of Mexico: The Florentine Codex Book XII, Chapters 5 and 16 (excerpts)

Week 3: Fictions of Discovery and Fantasies of Empire

February 7 The Pueblo Revolt

February 9 Making a New World

February 11 Research Workshop: Engaging Secondary Sources

Readings:

Secondary Source:

Maurice Crandall, *These People Have Always Been a Republic: Indigenous Electorates in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands, 1598-1912* (2019) Chapter 1

Primary Sources:

Antonio de Otermín, “An Account of the Lamentable Tragedy” (1680)

Pedro Naranjo Relates the Pueblo Revolt (1681)

Declaration of Josephe, a Spanish-Speaking Indian, on the Pueblo Revolt (1681)

Week 4: New Worlds

February 14 A New England? Metacom’s War

February 16 A New France? Incursions into Anishinaabewaki

February 18 Research Workshop: Preparing for Quiz 1 and your Primary Source Analysis

Readings:

Secondary Source:

Michael Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations: How the Native New World Shaped Early North America* (2013) Chapter 1

Primary Sources:

Jean de Brébeuf, Instructions for the Fathers of Our Society Who Shall be Sent to the Hurons (1637)

Micmac Elder, Speech to French Settlers (c. 1677)

Metacom Relates Wampanoag Grievances Against the English Settlers (1675)

Increase Mather, A Brief History of the War with the Indians in New England (1676)

Week 5: Atlantic Slavery

February 21 Surviving the Middle Passage and the Plantation Complex

February 23 The Other Slavery

February 25 **Quiz 1**

Readings:

Secondary Source:

Tiya Miles, *The Dawn of Detroit: A Chronicle of Slavery and Freedom in the City of the Straits* (2019) Introduction and Chapter 1

Primary Sources:

Olaudah Equiano, an 11-Year-Old Ibo from Nigeria, Remembers His Kidnapping into Slavery (1789 account of events of the 1750s)

Louisiana's Code Noir (1724)

White South Carolinians Debate Action Against a Maroon Community (1766)

Week 6: From Middle Grounds to Imperial Warfare

February 28 Middle Grounds

Primary Source Analysis Due

March 2 The Seven Years' War and Pontiac's Rebellion

March 4 Research Workshop: Preparing for Quiz 2

Readings:

Secondary Source:

Elizabeth Ellis, "Dismantling the Dream of 'France's Peru': Indian and African Influence on the Development of Early Colonial Louisiana" in Ignacio Gallup-Diaz, ed., *The World of Colonial America: An Atlantic Handbook*

Primary Sources:

Antoine Simon Le Page Du Pratz Describes French Conflict with the Natchez (1729)

Journal of Seven Years War (1756)

Pontiac's Speech to an Ottawa, Potawatomi, and Huron Audience (1763)

Week 7: Frontiers of Trade, War, and Diplomacy

March 7 The Comanche Empire

March 9 Saltwater Frontiers

March 11 **Quiz 2**

Readings:

Secondary Source:

Joshua Reid, *The Sea is My County: The Maritime World of the Makahs* (2015) Chapter 1

Primary Sources:

Father Miguel de Molina Describes the Attack on the San Sabá Mission (1758)

Spanish-Comanche Treaty, New Mexico (1786)

New Worlds on the Great Plains: Saukamappee, an Account of the Arrival of Horses, Guns, and Smallpox (1787)

Captain James Cook, Nootka Sound and the Northwest Coast Native Nations (1776)

Week 8: Spring Break

March 12-19

Week 9: American Revolutions

March 21 Forced Founders

March 23 The Mission Revolts

March 25 Research Workshop: Writing your Comparative Paper

Readings:

Secondary Source

Mirolava Chávez-García, *Negotiating Conquest: Gender and Power in California, 1770s to 1880s* Chapter 1

Primary Sources

Junípero Serra, Letter Describing a Revolt in San Diego (1775)

Little Turtle Comments on the Treaty of Greenville (1795)

Thomas Jefferson Secret Letter to Congress (1803)

Speech by Tecumseh to William Henry Harrison (transcribed 1810)

Week 10: Removals and Resistance

March 28 The Seminole Wars

March 30 Land Grabs in the Age of Jackson

April 1 Research Workshop: Preparing for Quiz 3

Readings:

This Land Podcast Episode 4: The Treaty

Primary Sources:

The Cherokee Nation Protests Removal Policy (1830)

Army Correspondence about the Choctaw Removal (1834)

Black Hawk's Account of Removal West, from *Life of Ma-Ka-Tai-Me-She-Kia-Kiak or Black Hawk, Dictated by Himself* (1833) [excerpt]

Week 11: Early Republics

April 4 **Quiz 3**



April 6 Sleuthing the Alamo

April 8 The Settler State in the Old Northwest

Readings:

Secondary Source:

Maurice Crandall, *These People Have Always Been a Republic: Indigenous Electorates in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands, 1598-1912* (2019) Chapter 3

Primary Sources:

1810 Revolution—Father Miguel Hidalgo, Agrarian Reform and Edict Against Slavery

1828 Mier y Teran Report

Rebellion Crushed in New Mexico (1837)

Americans in British Oregon: Narcissa Whitman Letter (1837)

Week 12: Manifest Design

April 11 War of a Thousand Deserts

Comparative Paper Due

April 13 Citizens and Subjects

April 15 Research Workshop: Using Historical Newspaper Databases

Readings:

Secondary Source:

Rosina Lozano, *An American Language: The History of Spanish in the United States* (2018) Chapter 4

Primary Sources:

Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848)

Juan Cortina, Proclamation to the Mexicans of Texas (1859)

El Corrido de Juan Cortina (1860s)

Cenecú Pueblo Claim (1868)

Week 13: Pacific Worlds

April 18 California in the Global Gold Rush

April 20 Land and Sovereignty in the Hawaiian Kingdom

April 22 Research Workshop: Using Digitized Archives

Readings:

Secondary Source

Mae Ngai, *The Chinese Question: The Gold Rush and Global Politics* Chapters 1-2

Primary Sources:

Sarah Winnemucca, *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims* (1882) [excerpt]

1850 California “Act for the Governance and Protection of Indians”

1850 California “Act to Regulate Mines and Foreign Miners”

Letters of William, Sabrina, and George Swain on the Gold Rush (1849-1851)

Week 14: Civil Wars



April 25 Imperial Visions in Conflict: Kansas, California, Nicaragua

April 27 The Civil Wars

April 29 Research Workshop: Writing Your Op-Ed

Readings:

Secondary Source:

Stacy Smith, *Freedom's Frontier: California and the Struggle Over Unfree Labor, Emancipation, and Reconstruction* (2013) Chapter 6

Primary Sources:

Guerilla War in Kansas from Opposing Perspectives (1856)

Invasions and Filibusters in California and Nicaragua

The Battle of Glorieta Pass (1862)

Dakota War in 1862: Letter from a Prisoner

Accounts of the Sand Creek Massacre

Week 15: Conclusions

May 2 Greater Reconstruction

Op-Ed Due

May 4 Conclusions, Reflections, and Ongoing Questions

May 6 **Quiz 4**

No readings