

History 965

SEMINAR IN THE HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN WEST

Seminar Leader: Bill Cronon, 5103 Humanities (also 443 Science Hall).

Phone: 265-6023. This has an answering machine on which you can leave messages if I'm not in. No calls to my home telephone number, please. The best way to contact me is via email at wcronon@wisc.edu.

Office Hours: 10:00-12:00noon Tuesdays, 5103 Humanities, first come first served.

Please Note: I am holding office hours this semester in 5103 Humanities, NOT 443 Science Hall as in the past...don't come to the wrong place! I would prefer to see you during regular hours, but will try to meet with you at other times if necessary. Please don't just stop by my office if you need to see me at times other than my regular hours, however; email me first and make an appointment. I tend to work at 443 Science Hall, so if you make an appointment with me at a time other than regular office hours, you'll probably find me there rather than in the (awful) Humanities Building.

A NOTE ON THE COURSE:

The seminar introduces students to major themes of frontier and western history by exploring some of the field's most interesting recent scholarship. It is not a systematic chronological survey, and those students desiring such a survey may wish to sit in on the western history lecture course (History 461-462) at some time. The seminar is reading-intensive--often with well over 300 pages of reading per week--so keeping up with assignments and participating in class discussions is an essential requirement. You should think of the reading you'll do for this course as being akin to the volume and kind of work you'd be likely to do for a prelim field in western history, which means that you should regard this syllabus as an opportunity to develop your ability to move fairly rapidly through a large volume of material, extracting major themes and arguments and controversies without getting bogged down in details. We will not be able to discuss in class everything we read, but it's all important background for your understanding of the field, and I hope you'll read it accordingly.

Although we'll touch on many subjects that have been important to western historians, the seminar has another ongoing agenda that will structure much of our activity. Western history has long been among the most popular fields for teaching history to undergraduates; unlike many other kinds of history, the West evokes very lively interest college classrooms, making it an ideal subject for introducing students to a wide range of historical subjects and methodologies. We will spend a lot of time in class talking about effective strategies for teaching western history, and we will try to make our discussions broadly applicable to all aspects of undergraduate education pertaining to the past. I have designed this syllabus to include a large and diverse array of readings--more than may be typical in many graduate seminars--that are suggestive not just for their research and their analytical approaches, but for their rhetoric, their literary presentations, and their pedagogical possibilities. I have completely redesigned writing assignments so that each addresses some aspect of the undergraduate classroom: syllabus design, exams, written assignments, class discussions, field trips, and so on. I expect seminar members to put in a lot of time reading, thinking about writing and teaching, and talking about key issues in this field; to compensate for the heavy reading load, I've eliminated all research components from the course.

I have ordered the following books from the University Bookstore:

- Alan Brinkley, ed., Chicago Handbook for Teachers, Chicago, LB2331 C52332 1999
- Mark Fiege, Irrigated Eden, Washington, S616 U6 F54 1999
- Neil Foley, The White Scourge, California, F395 A1 F65 1997
- Frederick Hoxie, Parading Through History, Cambridge, E99 C92 H69 1997
- John Ise, Sod and Stubble, Kansas, F687 O7 I84 1996
- Susan Johnson, Roaring Camp, Norton, F865 J675 2000
- Clyde Milner, et al., eds., Oxford History of the American West, F591 O95 1994
- Hal Rothman, Devil's Bargains, Kansas, G155.U6 R66 1998
- Nayan Shah, Contagious Divides, California, WA 11 AC2 S525c 2001
- Elliot West, The Contested Plains, Kansas, F591 W4527 1998

Copies of these books will also be available on reserve in the library, and you should feel free to share purchased books with your classmates. Many of our readings will be xeroxed excerpts from articles, manuscripts, and books, and you will find a copy of these on a shelf in the southwest corner of the State Historical Society Library's reading room. Xeroxed

readings are marked with an (X) in the syllabus below. Feel free to xerox the Historical Society articles for yourself, but do not remove them from the room for longer than it takes to make a copy. (My preference if possible is for you actually to read them in the Historical Society's main reading room, since this will give you a chance to discuss what you're studying with other members of the seminar who will also be working there. If this isn't possible, that's OK too, but the more interaction you can have with other seminar members outside of class, the better.) If you discover that a reading is missing, please let me know immediately so I can provide another copy.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS:

Scattered throughout the weekly outline below you will find a number of written assignments, most of them relatively brief, asking you to use that week's readings to explore a particular pedagogical technique, strategy, or challenge involved in teaching western history to a group of undergraduates. You will be asked to design a first written assignment, a mid-term exam, a lesson plan, a class field trip, and an actual undergraduate lecture on a subject of your choice. More details are included in the weekly outline, and we'll discuss these assignments at length in class as well.

In addition, the seminar will collectively author a "Handbook of Good Teaching Practice." At a meeting on September 22, you'll decide on the chapters that ought to go into such a handbook, assign individual chapters to teams of 2-3 students, and set a weekly timeline for when individual teams will report on their findings. Teams will brainstorm and gather ideas about the particular aspect of undergraduate teaching they're examining, then deliver a report on teaching strategies relevant to a particular week's readings, accompanied by a handout of "tips" that will constitute their "chapter" of the Handbook. At the end of the semester, we should collectively have generated a very helpful collection of ideas for effective undergraduate pedagogy. We'll discuss how to proceed with this project at our first meeting and at the pancake breakfast we'll share together on Saturday, September 18.

I've become increasingly conscious in my graduate teaching of the importance of helping students develop a number of professional skills as they move toward their dissertations and their eventual careers as researchers, writers, public intellectuals, and--not least--classroom teachers. Since this course will have little to say about the research process except as a by-product of our discussion of works by other scholars, I hope we can concentrate on other key academic skills. In addition to the critical reading, writing, and teaching skills I've already mentioned, I'll be emphasizing the importance of learning to talk like a professional historian. Although students vary widely in how comfortable they feel about speaking in class, it's in fact crucial to your future career that you figure out ways to become comfortable talking about your work: this, after all, is what you're likely to be doing in the classroom, at conferences, with colleagues, and in many public venues for the rest of your life. It's also what you'll need to do when you take orals, defend your dissertation, and--not least!--go on the job market. I'm therefore expecting everyone to talk in class. At the same time, however, I'm also expecting everyone to listen in class. Too many academics are far more interested in hearing their own voices than they are in hearing the views of colleagues and students; too many graduate seminars (and academic conferences) are little more than theaters of oneupmanship, with no spirit of genuine collaboration. My hope is that we can collectively resist these unfortunate impulses by working together as an intellectual community to discuss texts and ideas in rigorously critical ways that are also constructive, collegial, even nurturing. In much the same way, we'll spend some time on pedagogy and teacherly questions as well.

Finally, all members of the seminar will serve at least once as "discussion starters," with a pair of students being expected to frame the beginning of each class meeting with five to ten minutes of provocative opening questions and comments about the week's themes and readings. Discussion starters will do so in conjunction with the particular chapter of the "Teaching Handbook" they've chosen to write, so that a group that has decided to offer, for instance, comments on how to lead an effective class discussion might choose to illustrate their general remarks on teaching by referring to that week's readings.

WEEKLY OUTLINE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

September 8: Introductory

Discussion of course structure and requirements, introductions to members of the seminar. No Readings.

September 15: The Problems of Western History (NB: Meeting in Cutlip Room, south end of WHS Library)

Readings:

- Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (1893) (X)
- Earl Pomeroy, "Toward a Reorientation of Western History: Continuity and Environment," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, 41 (1955), 579-600. (X)
- Howard Lamar, "Persistent Frontier: The West in the Twentieth Century," Western Historical Quarterly, 4 (1973), 5-25. (X)
- Patricia Limerick, Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West (New York: W. W. Norton, 1987), 17-32.
- Richard White, "It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own", (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 3-4. (X)
- William Cronon, George Miles, Jay Gitlin, Editors' Introduction, in Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America's Western Past (New York: W. W. Norton, 1992), 3-27. (X)
- Wallace Stegner, "Introduction," Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs (New York: Random House, 1992), xv-xxiii. (X)
- Alan Brinkley, "The Western Historians: Don't Fence Them In," New York Times Book Review September 20, 1992. (X)
- Burton Folsom, Martin Ridge, Gerald Thompson, Gerald Nash, William Goetzmann, "Symposium on the New Western History," Continuity: A Journal of History, Fall 1993. (X)
- Optional: OHAW, Nugent, "Comparing Wests and Frontiers," 803-33.

Written Work: Design a brief first written assignment (to be completed by students in 2-3 pages) for an undergraduate survey course in western history. Draft a sample response to the assignment, and then write a brief evaluation of your own essay.

September 18, 9:00am-12:00noon: Saturday Morning Class Breakfast

Reflections on what teachers do, and what they have given us: members of the seminar will be asked to share a memory of one of their most important teachers and why that person had such an important impact.

September 22: Designing a Handbook for Good Teaching Practice

In addition to continuing some of our conversation about the readings last week, our most important task today will be to construct the table of contents for a guide to good teaching practice that we will collectively author over the course of the semester. Seminar members should come prepared to discuss and decide the appropriate chapters that belong in such a guide, and also assign themselves into the groups that will be responsible for producing individual chapters. You will need also to define a timeline for when each of these chapters will be completed and offered to the class. Although the guide will emphasize western history and use examples drawn from that field, the general principles and suggestions it offers should of course be relevant to almost any undergraduate course which emphasizes the study of the past.

Readings:

- Brinkley, ed., Chicago Handbook for Teachers, entire.

September 29: Frontiers and Migrations

Readings:

- Elliot West, The Contested Plains, entire.
- OHAW, Weber, "Spanish-Mexican Rim," 45-77; Gitlin, "Empires of Trade, Hinterlands of Settlement," 79-114; West, "American Frontier," 115-150; read these quickly to survey major themes of earlier periods that this seminar will not be able to address in detail.

Written Work: Design a lesson plan strategizing how would you discuss West's Contested Plains in an undergraduate discussion section. Discuss the thematic goals you would emphasize, sketch the narrative trajectory you might try to pursue for the conversation, offer sample questions, and discuss any special challenges or problems you think this reading might pose in an undergraduate class.

October 6: Interpreting Life on the Land

- John Ise, Sod and Stubble (University Press of Kansas, 1996), entire.
- OHAW: Conzen, "A Saga of Families," 315-58; Bogue, "An Agricultural Empire," 275-314; White, "Animals and Enterprise," 237-74.
- Special packet re Old World Wisconsin and issues relating to public history.

October 9: ALL-DAY FIELD TRIP TO OLD WORLD WISCONSIN

October 13: NO CLASS TODAY (work on next week's assignments)

October 20: Underground West

Readings:

- Susan Johnson, Roaring Camp, entire.
- Rodman Paul, Mining Frontiers of the Far West (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1963), 1-36, 56-86. (X)
- Richard V. Francaviglia, Hard Places: Reading the Landscape of America's Historic Mining Districts (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1991), 65-167 (skim). (X)

Written Work: Design a field trip you might take with an undergraduate seminar or lecture course to Old World Wisconsin. How would you organize the event, how would you prepare students for it in advance, how might you structure their experience while at the site, and what would you expect from them as an interpretive exercise or project once they had returned?

October 27: Through Native Eyes

Readings:

- Frederick Hoxie, Parading Through History: The Making of the Crow Nation in America, 1805-1935, (New York: Cambridge, 1995), entire.
- Vine Deloria, Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto (New York: Macmillan, 1969), 78-100. (X)
- Peggy V. Beck and Anna L. Walters, "The Wandering Ground," in The Sacred: Ways of Knowledge, Sources of Life (Navajo Community College Press, 1977), 329-43. (X)
- Leslie Marmon Silko, Storyteller (New York: Seaver Books, 1981), 1-42. (X)
- OHAW, Iverson, "Native Peoples and Native Histories," 13-43.

Written Work: Write a midterm exam as if you were giving a lecture course based on the seminar readings thus far; include at least one objective and one essay section. (You needn't actually take the exam yourself, but do add any commentary that will help explain why you've chosen the exam questions you have.)

NB: You should have identified the topic of the undergraduate lecture you'll be writing for your final paper assignment by now.

November 3: Countrysides Transformed, I: Race and Class in the Rural West

Readings:

- Neil Foley, The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture, entire.
- OHAW, Deutsch, Sánchez, Okihiro, "Contemporary Peoples/Contested Places," 639-69.

November 10: Countrysides Transformed, II: Water in a Dry Land

Readings:

- Mark Fiege, Irrigated Eden, entire.
- Walter Prescott Webb, The Great Plains (New York: Ginn, 1931), 3-9. (X)
- William Cronon, "A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative," Journal of American History, 78:4 (March, 1992), 1347-1376. (X)
- William deBuys and Alex Harris, River of Traps: A Village Life, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990), 11-25. (X)
- Optional: OHAW, Cronon, "Landscapes of Abundance and Scarcity," 603-37.

November 17: Contested Cities

Readings:

- Nayan Shah, Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown, entire.
- OHAW, O'Connor, "A Region of Cities," 535-64.

November 24: Transformations of War

In-Class Screening of A FAMILY GATHERING.

Readings:

- OHAW, Schwantes, "Wage Earners and Wealth Makers," 431-67; Abbott, "Federal Presence," 469-99.
- Gerald Nash, The American West Transformed (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 3-74, 201-16. (X)
- Roger Lotchin, Fortress California, 1910-1961: From Warfare to Welfare (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 3-22, 131-69, 346-55. (X)

Written Work: Rough drafts of lectures due by class meeting this week.

December 1: Landscapes of the Mind

Readings:

- Theodore Roosevelt, "Frontier Types," Ranch Life and the Hunting-Trail (1888), 81-100. (X)
- Henry Nash Smith, Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950), 5-12, 53-70, 250-60. (X)
- Robert Warshow, "Movie Chronicle: The Westerner," (1954) in Warshow, The Immediate Experience. (New York: Atheneum, 1962, 1975), 135-54. (X)
- Richard Slotkin, Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America (New York: Atheneum, 1992), 1-26, 29-87, 303-12. (X)
- Jane Tompkins, West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 47-87. (X)
- Robert Athearn, The Mythic West in Twentieth-Century America (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1986), 249-75. (X)
- Chris Wilson, The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Identity, 2-11, 110-45, 311-31. (X)
- Wallace Stegner, Wolf Willow: A History, A Story, and a Memory of the Last Plains Frontier (New York: Viking, 1962), 3-30.
- OHAW, Dippie, "The Visual West," 675-705; Lyon, "The Literary West," 708-41; Peterson, "Speaking for the Past, 743-69; Butler, "Selling the Popular Myth," 771-801.

Written Work: Comments on other students' lectures due by class meeting this week.

December 8: Destinations West

Readings:

- Hal Rothman, Devil's Bargains, entire.
- William Kittredge, Owning It All (St. Paul: Graywolf Press, 1987), 55-71. (X)
- Frank J. Popper, "The Strange Case of the Contemporary American Frontier," Yale Review, 76 (Autumn 1986), 101-21. (X)

December 15: Forget the Alamo (NB: Meeting in Sellery Room on the First Floor of WHS Building)

In-Class Screening of John Sayle's LONE STAR, with discussion to follow.

Written Work: Final drafts of lectures due by class meeting this week.

December 18, 9:00am-12:00noon: End-of-Year Class Breakfast: Closing Reflections on Teaching the West