Special Topics: History of the American West

History 6398  Raúl A. Ramos
Office Location: AH 558

Description:
This special topics course is designed to provide a broad historiographic overview of the literature on the American West while raising critical questions about the field. Rather than limiting the scope of the course to a geographic West, we will consider sets of processes and ideologies that take root over time in the region and beyond. These include conquest and colonization, migration, ethnic and racial formations, nation-state building, gender construction, market capitalism and mineral extraction and varieties of interactions with the environment. The focus on these themes de-center the east in the analysis of the region to include alternate readings of the same place, also defined as the north or the east for some peoples. Ultimately, the American West appears not as an isolated, exceptional locale, but rather as a significant arena of convergence and contestation of national and transnational peoples, cultures, ideas and markets.

Objectives:
1. Familiarize students with the historiography and current literature on the American West.
2. Identify avenues for future research in the field.
3. Prepare students to teach the field in an undergraduate setting.

Readings:
Avila, E.  Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles
Deloria, P.  Indians in Unexpected Places
Faragher, JM  A Great and Noble Scheme: The Tragic Story of the Expulsion of the French Acadians from Their American Homeland
Fiege, M.  Irrigated Eden: The Making of an Agricultural Landscape in the American West
Greenberg, A.  Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire
Igler, D.  Industrial Cowboys: Miller & Lux and the Transformation of the Far West, 1850-1920
Johnson, S  Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush
Pitti, S  The Devil in Silicon Valley
Resendez, A  Changing National Identities
Shaffer, M.  See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940
Shah, N  Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown
White, R  The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815

Hine, R and Faragher, J.M.  The American West: A New Interpretive History
Assignments:
Write one historiographic essay based on each of the four themes. (1500-2000 words)
Write a final paper either on a theoretical question shaping the field or on a research area
of your choosing. (15-20 pages)

Calendar:
8/24 Introduction

**Recommended Readers**
Patricia Limerick, *Legacy of Conquest*
Richard White- “It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own,”
Clyde Milner, et al., *The Oxford History of the American West*

**Contact, Frontiers and Borderlands**

8/31 White- *Middle Ground*
Cronon, et al., “Becoming West: Toward a New Meaning for Western History”
Limerick, “Going West and Ending Up Global”
White, “Creative Misunderstandings and New Understandings”
Deloria, “What is the Middle Ground Anyway?”

**Recommended**
Gutierrez- *When Jesus Came the Corn Mother’s Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846*
Brooks, *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands*

9/7 Faragher- *A Great and Noble Scheme*
Turner – “Significance of the Frontier in American History”

**Recommended**
Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction: Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American West*
Martin, ed., *The American Indian and the Problem of History*
Aron, *American Confluence: The Missouri Frontier from Borderland to Border State*
Aron, *How the West Was Lost: The Transformation of Kentucky From Daniel Boone to Henry Clay*
Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870*

9/14 Resendez- Changing National Identities

**Recommended**
Radding, Wandering Peoples: Colonialism, Ethnic Spaces, and Ecological Frontiers: Northwestern Mexico, 1700-1850
Haas, Conquest and Historical Identities in California, 1769-1936
Pitt, Decline of the Californios: A Social History of the Spanish-Speaking Californias, 1846-1890

Social Development

9/21 Greenberg- Manifest Manhood

Recommended:
Anderson, The Conquest Of Texas: Ethnic Cleansing In The Promised Land, 1820-1875
Robbins, Colony and Empire: The Capitalist Transformation of the American West
West, The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, & the Rush to Colorado
Josephy, Civil War in the American West
Gonzalez, Refusing the Favor: The Spanish-Mexican Women of Santa Fe, 1820-1880

9/28 Johnson- Roaring Camp

Recommended:
Peggy Pascoe, Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874-1939
Mead, How the Vote Was Won: Woman Suffrage in the Western United States, 1868-1914
Scharff, Twenty Thousand Roads: Women, Movement, and the West
Deutsch, No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880-1940

Environmental Development

10/5 Igler- Industrial Cowboys

Recommended:
William Cronon, Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West
Ise, Sod and Stubble
Brosnan, Uniting Mountain & Plain: Cities, Law, and Environmental Change Along the Front Range

10/12 No Class
10/19  Fiege- Irrigated Eden

**Recommended:**
Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West*
White, *The Organic Machine: The Remaking of the Columbia River*
Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks*

**Labor and Race**

10/26  Pitti- Devil in Silicon Valley

**Recommended:**
Neil Foley, *White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture*
Garcia, *A World of Its Own: Race, Labor, and Citrus in the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900-1970*
Painter, *Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas After Reconstruction*

11/2  Shah- Contagious Divides

**Recommended:**
Adam McKeown – *Chinese Migrant Networks and Cultural Change: Peru, Chicago, Hawaii, 1900-1936*
Lee, *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration during the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943*
Molina, *Fit to Be Citizens?: Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879-1939*
Modern Myths

11/9  Deloria- Indians in Unexpected Places

**Recommended:**
Deloria, *Playing Indian*
Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America*
Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present*

11/16  Shaffer- See America First

**Recommended:**
Rothman, *Devil's Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth-Century American West*
Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire: The Explorer and the Scientist in the Winning of the American West*
Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860*

11/30  Avila- Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight

**Recommended:**
Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles*
Flamming, *Bound for Freedom: Black Los Angeles in Jim Crow America*

**Final Essay Due 11/30**