HIST 5380: Seminar in History: American West
Fall 2012 (BH 111; T 7-9:30PM)
Graduate Seminar (CRN: 73219)

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This is a graduate-level readings seminar in the History of the American West. The course will survey the broad historiography of the field since 1600, and will introduce us to major historical and theoretical arguments. By applying the methodological concepts of race, gender, class, sexuality, citizenship, and nationality we will consider how individual and group experience shaped the American West. We also will consider how scholars have interpreted these experiences to build the historical record and to write the scholarship that defines the field. As a result, this course is reading and writing intensive.

PREREQUISITES:
I recommend that you speak with your graduate advisor to confirm that this course fulfills your degree requirements. This course is intended for History M.A. students. Knowledge of U.S history is helpful, but there are no formal prerequisites. Please note that this is a discussion-based course. Attendance and professional collegiality are mandatory. I also expect you to work hard, read thoroughly, complete assignments in a timely manner, and discuss your interpretations of the readings at each class session.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Through reading, class discussions and writing assignments, students will:
1. Master the historiography of the American West, including its major concepts, themes, methods and theoretical approaches.
2. Analyze how historians use historiography to build new scholarship.
3. Identify how historians use primary resources to write history and to build historical arguments.
4. Synthesize and interpret historical arguments and explain these arguments cogently.
5. Hone communication skills necessary to write and defend a master’s thesis or doctoral dissertation.

REQUIRED READING:

Books in Reading Order (available for purchase at the university bookstore)

**ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADE STRUCTURE**

Your course grade will be based on the combination of these assignments, which are designed to meet the learning outcomes described on the first page of this syllabus.

- **Class Participation, Seminar Discussion and Progress Visit** ..................500 points (20%)
- **10 Short Essays (mostly book reviews)** ......................................1,000 points (40%)
- **Historiography Assignment (2 drafts)** ......................................1,000 points (40%)  
  2,500 points (100%)

Due dates for these assignments are located in the “class schedule” at the end of this syllabus.

In order to pass the course, you **MUST** successfully complete all of the written assignments for this course. I will assess all your composition assignments based on standard writing skills— your ability to craft topic sentences, to identify arguments (theses) and explain them (evidence), and to use correct grammar and punctuation.

I will use the following grading scale to determine the final course grade:

- **A** = 100-90% (+1800 points)  
  **C** = 79-70% (1400-1599 points)  
- **B** = 89-80% (1600-1799 points)  
  **D** = 69-60% (1200-1499 points)  
  **F** = 59-0% (0-1399 points)

**Class Participation, Seminar Discussion, and Progress Visit (500 points):**

I expect you to attend class and contribute to the discussion (200 points). These discussion sessions will prepare you for future dialogues in your profession. In order for the seminar to be useful, you will need to complete the assigned readings, bring questions to class, and participate. Attendance is mandatory and class absences will decrease your participation grade by 100 points per absence. **Note: The culture of graduate school includes an expectation that you WILL be in class regardless of your personal circumstances.**

I expect you to lead one class discussion (200 points). Leadership assignments will be made on the first or second day of class. As the discussion leader, you will need to prepare an introduction of the assigned readings for the seminar meeting. You may use audio-visual equipment or literature or any other technique to jumpstart the dialogue. You should plan on presenting the scholarly arguments and giving your general impressions. Please prepare a handout or PowerPoint slide with a set of discussion questions for the class.
I expect you to attend a pre-arranged, mandatory meeting (100 points) with me to review your class performance and writing assignments. We will meet during a regularly scheduled class reserved for progress visits.

Short Essays (10 papers total and 1,000 points toward the final grade)
The goal of these assignments is to learn how to assess historical evidence and how to write about it succinctly. The first essay is a professional biography; the remaining nine essays will be book reviews. I provide assignment instructions in the “Class Schedule” at the end of this syllabus (see Tuesday, 8/28 and 9/4).

Historiography Assignment (1 paper with 2 submissions and 1,000 points toward the final grade)
The goal of this assignment is to learn how to synthesize the historical literature, to discuss its relevance, and to demonstrate your mastery of the field of American Western history. You will submit the assignment twice—one in draft form and again at the end of the term. Deadlines for both submissions are included in the “class schedule” at the end of this syllabus. You will choose one of the following two options to complete this assignment. **Option 1** is to write a series of essays (25 pages total) on major themes in the field. I will provide you with essay questions and you will develop lengthy responses based on the course readings. This option mirrors the process of taking exams for the M.A. exam track. **Option 2** is to write a sample thesis proposal. In this essay (25 pages total), you will propose a research project based on primary and secondary sources. Identifying primary sources may require archival work, but the secondary sources will be drawn from the course readings and your prior coursework. **I will provide in-depth instructions for this assignment separately.**

**COURSE POLICIES:**

Please follow basic University policies as outlined in the TAMUCC Student Handbook and Code of Conduct. This means no disrespect, no cheating and no plagiarism. Please familiarize yourself with the handbook at the Student Affairs website: [http://www.tamucc.edu/~students/handbook.html](http://www.tamucc.edu/~students/handbook.html).

**Respect:** Courtesy toward your professor and classmates is expected at all times. If I feel that your behavior violates the Student Handbook and Code of Conduct, I will ask you to leave class. I also reserve the right to refer you to Student Affairs and to file a complaint documenting your behavior and academic performance.

**Academic Honesty:** The University does not tolerate plagiarism or cheating in any form. **If I can verify that you plagiarized or cheated on any assignment, you may earn an F for the course and I may file a complaint with Student Affairs. For graduate students, an “F” in any course may result in your dismissal from your graduate program.**

The term **cheating** includes, but is not limited to: (1) use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations; (2) dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments; or (3) the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a member of the University faculty or staff.
The term **plagiarism** includes, but is not limited to, the use by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling or distribution of term papers or other academic materials. You may locate these definitions in the Student Handbook.

**Scholarly Citation:** Please use the “History Area Style Guide” to write your papers. This style guide is based on Kate L. Turabian’s *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*, revised by Wayne C. Booth, et. al. (7th edition). I will provide you with a copy of the style guide on our first day of class. You also may access the style guide on the History webpage, under the “Resources” tab, at [http://cla.tamu.edu/history/History_Area_Guide Fall2009.pdf](http://cla.tamu.edu/history/History_Area_Guide_Fall2009.pdf).

**Classroom Etiquette:** Please stay focused on the class lecture/discussion, and practice courtesy. Only one person at a time should be speaking during class discussions. Side conversations are distracting for surrounding students and for your professor and instructors. Disruptive behavior will have a negative impact on your participation grade and may result in disciplinary action.

**Electronic Devices — iPods, Laptops, Phones:** **Turn off your electronics and put them away.** If you are taking notes, I will make exceptions for laptops. However, I reserve the right to dismiss you from class if your electronics distract you, me or anyone else in the class. Violation of this policy may have a negative impact on your participation grade and may result in disciplinary action.

**E-mail:** For quick questions or minor issues, you may contact me via e-mail. For complicated concerns or questions, please see me in person, either after class or during office hours.

**Extra Credit:** I generally deny requests for extra credit.

**Freedom of Speech:** The 1st Amendment of the U.S. Constitution promises each of us the Freedom of Speech. The success of universities is based on this promise as the process of learning requires that we ask questions and discuss ideas. During class, please feel free to raise your hand at any time to make a comment or to ask a question. If the class discussion does not make sense, please ask me to clarify ideas or to explain a topic again.

**Grade Appeal Process:** As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that she or he has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, fair evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the appeal, see University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at [http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html](http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html). For assistance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Division of Student Affairs.
Incompletes: If you have completed 75% of the assignments and extreme personal circumstances prevent you from completing the course, I will consider a request for an incomplete. I may consult with your graduate advisor or other college officials before making a decision. Documentation of your situation may be required. Please consult the Student Handbook for the policy.

Late Work/Make-Up Exams: Late assignments will be docked 10 points per day up to seven days including weekends. After seven days, late assignments will be assessed as “zero” grades unless you contact me about your extenuating circumstances. I will review extenuating circumstances on case-by-case basis.

Office Hours: I have set aside over five hours per week to meet with students to discuss the course and to answer any questions or concerns you might have about the course content and assignments. I listed my office hours at the top of the syllabus. No appointments are required. I meet with students on a first-come, first-serve basis. If you cannot meet during these times, please see me before or after class to make an appointment.

Attendance & Tardiness: Come to class on time! Please make every attempt to attend all class sessions, to arrive early and to stay until the class ends. If you are unavoidably late, please enter quietly and with respect toward your colleagues.

Syllabus and Schedule Changes: I reserve the right to change the schedule of reading assignments at any time during the semester. If I do, I will notify you in advance.

Withdrawals: The University has specific policies in place for dropping a course. Please consult the Office of Admissions and Records in the Student Services Center (Round Building) for the due dates and procedures for withdrawing from this course or the university.

UNIVERSITY SERVICES:

Academic Advising: The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan, which will be confirmed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. The CLA Academic Advising Center is located in Driftwood 203E, and can be reached at 825-3466. Note: Graduate students must meet with the Graduate Advisor and the history Graduate Director.

Students with Disabilities: Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. If you suspect that you may have a disability (physical impairment, learning disability, psychiatric disability, etc.), please contact Disability Services located in Driftwood 101, at 825-5816. If you need disability accommodations for this course, please see me too. The web link is http://disabilityservices.tamucc.edu/.
CLASS SCHEDULE OF READINGS, ASSIGNMENTS, AND DUE DATES

I have provided you with an outline of the daily class schedule. You will be responsible for completing the readings each week and expected to discuss them as part of your class participation grade. This schedule is subject to change at my discretion; however, you will be notified of those changes as they occur.

**Tuesday, 8/28**
Reading: None.
Homework Due: Submit a two-page, single-spaced, autobiographical essay. Introduce yourself as a historian; explain your scholarly interests, professional goals, and relevant coursework. Please also tell me why you enrolled in this course, what you know about American western history, and what you expect to learn this semester. You will receive credit for this assignment as part of your class participation.

Discussant: ________________________________

**Tuesday 9/4**
Reading: *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West*.

Homework Due: Book review of the *Legacy of Conquest*.

**Book Review Instructions**: The goal of this book review is to synthesize the thesis of the book. You will use the review to learn the scholar’s argument and to write about it in your own words as clearly and coherently as possible. You also will use the review for class discussions. In your professional career, book reviews serve as reference tools. Your book review should include 4 main points: 1) a formal bibliographic citation (used as the title), 2) a discussion of the scholar’s thesis and arguments, 3) a discussion of the scholar’s evidentiary/primary sources and their application, and 4) your critique of the work. The essay must be 2-pages long, single-spaced (or 4-pages long, double-spaced). I will provide book review samples.

Discussant: ____________________________________________

**Tuesday 9/11**
Reading: *Violence over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West*

Homework Due: Book review of *Violence over the Land*.

Discussant: ____________________________________________

**Tuesday 9/18**
Reading: *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush*.

Homework Due: Book review of *Roaring Camp*.

Discussant: ____________________________________________
Tuesday 9/25
Reading: Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America (FIRST HALF OF BOOK ONLY)

Homework Due: Book review of Railroaded.

Discussant: ________________________________

Tuesday 10/2
Reading: Railroaded (CONTINUED).

Homework Due: None.

Discussant: ________________________________

Tuesday 10/9
Reading: Migra!: A History of the U.S. Border Patrol.

Homework Due: Book review of Migra!

Discussant: ________________________________

Tuesday 10/16
Reading: Angel Island: Immigrant Gateway to America.

Homework Due: Book review of Angel Island.

Discussant: ________________________________

Tuesday 10/23
Reading: American Exodus: The Dust Bowl Migration and Okie Culture in California.

Homework Due: Book review of American Exodus.

Discussant: ________________________________

Tuesday 10/30
Reading: Dorothea Lange: A Life Beyond Limits.

Homework Due: Book review of Dorothea Lange.

Discussant: ________________________________

Tuesday 11/6
Reading: Atomic Frontier Days: Hanford and the American West.
Homework Due: Book review of *Atomic Frontier Days*.

Discussant: ___________________________________________________________ 

**Tuesday 11/13**
Progress Visits: Please select one of the following times to meet with me to discuss your class performance and your plans to write your Historiography Assignment. We will meet at FC 264 (my office) and I will reserve my office hours that day for our class.

2:30 PM______________________________________________________________
3:00 PM______________________________________________________________
3:30 PM______________________________________________________________
4:00 PM______________________________________________________________
4:30 PM______________________________________________________________
5:00 PM______________________________________________________________
5:30 PM______________________________________________________________
6:00 PM______________________________________________________________
6:30 PM______________________________________________________________
7:00 PM______________________________________________________________
7:30 PM______________________________________________________________
8:00 PM______________________________________________________________
8:30 PM______________________________________________________________

**Tuesday 11/20** (Tuesday before Thanksgiving)
Homework Due: Submit a “rough draft” review essay. Hard copies please. No class meeting.

**Tuesday 11/27**
No homework or readings due. Class meeting is optional.
We will hold an open discussion on the historiography assignments.

Discussant: Everyone ________________________________________________

**Tuesday 12/1** (last day of class)
Homework Due: Submit your Historiography Assignment. Hard copies please. We will hold class to recap the semester and to celebrate our achievements!

Discussant: Everyone ________________________________________________

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