

GENDER IN THE AMERICAN WEST

Introduction

“For more than a century,” wrote Richard White, “the American West has been the most strongly *imagined* section of the United States.” Through oral and written history, songs, fiction, art, and film, the West has been identified with mythic themes of adventure and transformation. In the mythic West, Europeans became American and Americans tamed a wilderness. Indians came on stage only when whites arrived, and women appeared as scenery rather than actors.

Once thought of as a masculine place, the mythic West has been roundly challenged by revisionist historians. The idea of the West as a place of transformation endures, but scholars now describe it as a meeting ground of cultures, a crucible of inter-tribal relations as well as encounters between First Nations and Spanish, French, and English colonizers, Hispanic and Anglo-American emigrants, Asian and European immigrants.

As such, western history offers vivid case studies in race relations, cultural brokerage, colonialism and conquest, and their relation to gender. So too, economic forces are writ large. The harvest of natural resources tied western locales to national and international economies. Gender norms took shape in concert with the expansion of capitalism in the West.

Finally, cowboys and Indian warriors as well as Indian and white women became potent symbols in American popular culture. Analyzing these images offers insight into the formation of national identity, and the rationales of empire. Exploring how Native peoples redefined such images, in turn, sheds new light on processes of syncretism and resistance.

Required Texts

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

Matthew Basso, Laura McCall, & Dee Garceau, Eds., *Across the Great Divide: Cultures of Manhood in the American West* (Routledge Press, 2001).

Dee Garceau-Hagen, *Portraits of Women in the American West* (Routledge Press, 2005).

Albert Hurtado, *Intimate Frontiers: Sex, Gender, and Culture in Old California* (University of New Mexico Press, 1999).

Joy Kasson, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West: Celebrity, Memory, and Popular History* (Hill & Wang, 2000).

Jon Krakauer, *Under the Banner of Heaven: A Story of Violent Faith* (Anchor Books, 2004).

Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur Trade Society, 1670-1870* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1980).

Coursepack: Required documents and journal articles, available online at Rhodes “Academic Departments,” History, Garceau, Public Folder, History 445 Folder.

Course Requirements

- 1) Consistent attendance and participation. Two or more absences will lower your average by a full letter grade, because it would be the equivalent of missing 2 weeks worth of classes. Consider it a standing assignment that you come to class prepared; that is, having done the reading listed for that day. Good discussion depends upon your preparation.
- 2) Completion of assigned work, on time. Late papers will be averaged a grade lower than their content.
- 3) Please use Chicago-style footnotes (or endnotes) in all of your written work for this course.
- 4) All work, unless otherwise indicated, is assumed to be pledged under the Honor Code. Plagiarism is grounds for an 'F' in the course. Plagiarism is the unattributed use of another person's research, writing, or publication.

Formal Assignments

- 1) Lead an in-depth class discussion on one of the following books, plus articles listed that day:

Jan 16: Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur Trade Society, 1670-1870*.

Jan 23: Hurtado, *Intimate Frontiers*, Introduction and chapters 1 and 2.

Jan 30: Hurtado, *Intimate Frontiers*, chapters 4, 5, and 6.

Feb 13: Krakauer, *Under the Banner of Heaven: A Story of Violent Faith*.

March 19: Kasson, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West: Celebrity, Memory, and Popular History*.

- 2) A **preliminary bibliography** for your research project. This should identify primary sources and a few secondary sources. Due January 30.
- 3) An **expanded prospectus** of your research project. This should include material from the preliminary bibliography, plus a brief statement of the issues you plan to address, and an expanded list of the available primary sources. Due February 13.
- 4) An **essay based on primary sources** related to your research topic. This is an 8-9 page paper in which you develop an original interpretation, using archival sources only. Due March 14.
- 5) An **final research paper** based on your previous interpretation of primary sources, now situated within the context of relevant scholarship on your topic. This is a 12-15 page investigation of your topic, well organized and clearly argued. All papers should be in finished form. That means edited, footnoted, and proofread. Due April 23.
- 6) A 10-minute **class presentation on your research**, to be scheduled April 9, 16, or 23.

Course Grade

Class Participation: 25% This includes daily discussion as well as leading discussion on a book.

Primary Source Essay: 25% Includes preliminary bibliography and expanded prospectus.

Research Presentation: 25%

Final Research Paper: 25%

COURSE OUTLINE

Jan 9 Introduction to the Course

Gender, Myth-Making, and Western Identities

Reading: Patricia N. Limerick, "Layer Upon Layer of Memory: The New Western History" [*Coursepack*]:1-4.

Clyde Milner, "The Shared Memory of Montana Pioneers" [*Coursepack*]: 2-13.

Susan Armitage & Elizabeth Jameson, "Editor's Introduction," *Writing the Range*, 3-16.

Laura McCall, "Introduction," *Across the Great Divide*, 1-23.

UNIT I: MEN, WOMEN, TRADE AND COLONIZATION

Jan 16 The North American Fur Trade

Reading: Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur Trade Society*.

George Ruxton on "The Trappers' View of Women" [*Coursepack*]:168-69.

Osburne Russell, "The Final Rendezvous" (1843) [*Coursepack*]: 396-98.

Jan 23 Indians, Spanish, and Mexicans in the Old Southwest

Reading: Albert Hurtado, *Intimate Frontiers: Sex, Gender, and Culture in Old California*, "Introduction," and Chapters 1 and 2.

Ramon Guitierrez, "Tell Me With Whom You Walk and I Will Tell You Who You Are: Honor and Virtue in Eighteenth-Century Colonial New Mexico," *Across the Great Divide*, pp.25-44.

Yolanda Chavez Leyva, "A Poor Widow Burdened with Children: Widows and Land in Colonial New Mexico," *Writing the Range*, 85-96.

Jan 30 Americans in the Southwest: Prospectors and Ranchers

Reading: Hurtado, *Intimate Frontiers*, chapters 4, 5 and 6.

Susan Johnson, "Bulls, Bears and Dancing Boys: Race, Gender, and Leisure in the California Gold Rush," *Across the Great Divide*, 45-72.

Darlis Miller, "The Women of Lincoln County," *Writing the Range*, 147-71.

UNIT II: EUROAMERICAN MIGRATIONS

Feb 6 The Mormon Migration

Reading: Jesse Embry, "Motivations for Practicing Polygamy" [*Coursepack*]: 41-52.

Jesse Embry, "Entering Plural Marriage" [*Coursepack*]: 53-71.

Dee Garceau-Hagen, "Mormon Women at Winter Quarters" [*Coursepack*]: 1-

Lawrence Foster, "Polygamy and Mormon Women" [*Coursepack*]: 298-310.

Henry Bigler, "Journal" (1849) [*Coursepack*]: 172-80.

Feb 13 Polygamy, Patriarchy, and Violence

Reading: Jon Krakauer, *Under the Banner of Heaven: A Story of Violent Faith*.

Feb 20 Gender at the Crossroads: Overland Travel, Freighting and Mining

Reading: Johnny Faragher and Christine Stansell, "Women and Their Families on the Overland Trail to California and Oregon, 1842-1867" [*Coursepack*]: 246-67.

Glenda Riley, "The Specter of a Savage: Rumors and Alarmism on the Overland Trail" [*Coursepack*]: 427-444.

Paula Petrik, "Capitalists With Rooms: Prostitution in Helena, Montana, 1865-1900" [*Coursepack*]: 25-58.

Gunther Peck, "Manly Gambles: The Politics of Risk on the Comstock Lode," *Across the Great Divide*, 73-98.

UNIT III: CROSSING BOUNDARIES

Feb 27 Cross-Gender Identities: *The Ballad of Little Jo*. [film] **Meet in Barret 034.**

Reading: Evelyn Schlatter, "Drag's a Life: Women, Gender, and Cross-Dressing in the Nineteenth-Century West," *Writing the Range*, 334-48.

Will Roscoe, "'That is My Road': The Life and Times of a Crow Berdache" [*Coursepack*]: 47-55.

March 1-9: Spring Break

March 12 Defining Moments: Race, Gender, and Challenge to Social Boundaries

Reading: Durwood Ball, "Cool to the End: Public Hangings and Western Manhood," *Across the Great Divide*, 97-108.

Lynn Hudson, "Mining a Mythic Past: The History of Mary Ellen Pleasant," *Portraits of Women in the American West*, 21-35.

Rosemarie Stremlau, "Rape Narratives on the Northern Paiute Frontier: Sarah Winnemucca, Sexual Sovereignty, and Economic Autonomy, 1844-1891," *Portraits of Women in the American West*, 37-64.

Dee Garceau-Hagen, "Finding Mary Fields: Race, Gender, and the Construction of Memory," *Portraits of Women in the American West*, 121-55.

UNIT IV: COWBOYS AND INDIANS RECONSIDERED

March 19 Anglo and Indian Manhood in the Wild West Show

Reading: Joy Kasson, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West: Celebrity, Memory and Popular History*.

March 20-23: Easter Break

March 26: Perspectives on Native American Women in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century West

Reading: Lillian Ackerman, "Complementary But Equal: Plateau Women's Status" [*Coursepack*]: 75-100.

Margaret Jacobs, "Resistance to Rescue: The Indians of Bahapki and Mrs. Annie Bidwell," *Writing the Range*, 230-51.

Linda Peavy and Ursula Smith, "Unlikely Champion: Emma Rose Sansaver, 1884-1925," *Portraits of Women in the American West*, 179-206.

Lisa Emmerich, "Save the Babies!: American Indian Women, Assimilation Policy, and Scientific Motherhood, 1912-1918," *Writing the Range*, 393-409.

April 2 A Closer Look at Cowboys and Ranchers

Reading: Peter Iverson, "When Indians Became Cowboys" [*Coursepack*]: 16-31.

Kenneth Porter, "The Labor of Negro Cowboys" [*Coursepack*]: 343-57.

Dee Garceau, "Nomads, Bunkies, Cross-Dressers, and Family Men: Cowboy Identity and the Gendering of Ranch Work," *Across the Great Divide*, 149-6

Karen Merrill, "Domesticated Bliss: Ranchers and Their Animals," *Across the Great Divide*, 169-84.

April 9 Women Ranchers and Homesteaders

Reading: Dee Garceau, "Single Women Homesteaders and the Meanings of Independence: Places on the Map, Places in the Mind" [*Coursepack*]: 1-26.

Katherine Benton-Cohen, "Common Purposes, Worlds Apart: Mexican-American, Mormon, and Midwestern Women Homesteaders in Cochise County, Arizona" [*Coursepack*]: 429-52.

Student Research Presentations.

UNIT VI: REPORTS ON RESEARCH

April 16 Student Research Presentations

April 23 Student Research Presentations

Final Research Paper due. Please bring a hard copy to my office by 5pm.

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