

History 203.1
T, Th, 9:40-11:10am
Clough 300

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Clough 301
843-3290

WOMEN 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.

Dubbed “Hisland,” the mythic West has been roundly challenged by revisionist historians. The idea of the West as a place of transformation endures, but concepts of frontier have shifted. Scholars now think of the western frontier as a meeting ground of cultures, a crucible of inter-tribal diplomacy as well as encounters between First Nations and Spanish, French, and English colonizers, Hispanic and Anglo-American emigrants, Asian and European immigrants.

Such diversity implies an ecology of gender: How have gender systems evolved through the regional adaptations of specific cultures? How are women’s roles changed by the interactions between different cultures? Western history offers vivid case studies in race relations, cultural brokerage, colonialism, and conquest, and their relation to gender.

If race, ethnicity, and class are variables in the women’s West, so too, environmental forces are writ large. Much of the trans-Mississippi West lay within an arid zone; some areas boasted mineral deposits, fertile soil, or open grasslands. The harvest of natural resources tied western locales to national and international economies. Women’s roles in these settlements often revealed the political dimensions of resource extraction in the West.

Finally, both women and Indians became potent symbols in the dominant culture of certain regions and time periods. Analyzing these images offers insight into the dynamics of stereotyping, and the power relations between dominant and subordinate cultures. Exploring how women and Native Americans redefined such images, in turn, sheds new light on processes of social change.

Course Description

We begin by analyzing traditional histories of the American West: What is meant by “frontier”? What is considered historically significant? What do these conceptual frameworks tell us, or not tell us, about women’s lives?

Next we explore the new scholarship: How is the West redefined to include women? How do the meanings of “frontier” change, when viewed through women’s eyes? How did gender systems evolve in the American West, across cultures and across time? What larger

patterns can we discern, and what variations do we find? How might these insights broaden our understanding of Native American, EuroAmerican and African-American women's lives?

Research workshops are situated throughout the course, to provide experience interpreting archival materials on western women. In small groups, students will work with the following primary sources: oral history, written memoirs, census manuscripts, government documents, land plats, and court records. Out of this experimentation, each student will develop an original research project.

Course Requirements

1. Consistent attendance and participation. If more than three classes are missed, your grade drops.
2. Completion of assigned readings in time for scheduled class discussions.
3. Journal of responses to assigned readings.
4. Completion of 2 formal essays and one short research project. **NOTE:** You may renegotiate the deadline for one of these three papers. All others must be on time. Late papers will drop a grade.

Readings

Readings will be discussed in class on the day they are listed. Anything listed on the syllabus under "Reading" is required. All required readings are in the following texts:

Susan Armitage & Elizabeth Jameson, Eds., Writing the Range: Race, Class, and Culture in

Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson, Eds., The Women's West (Norman: Univ. of

Oklaho

Richard Marius, A Short Guide to Writing About History (New York: Harper Collins, 1995).

Course Packet: This is a collection of primary sources and recent scholarship, published by

Journal

Use your journal as a reference for discussion. Jot down the thesis and key arguments of each article you read. Add observations or questions about the primary sources. Record your findings from in-class workshops, and reflect on them in light of topics covered that day.

Journaling will generate insights which you can bring to class discussion. You may want to draw from your journal when formulating your research project. Periodically, I will collect your journals and grade them with a /, /+, or /-. Journals count as part of class participation, which is 25% of your course grade.

In-Class Workshops

In addition to our work with primary sources, we will experiment with different approaches to writing, including Description, Narrative, Exposition, and Argument. These workshops count toward your class participation grade.

Formal Essays

There will be two 7-8 page papers on a conceptual unit in the course. These will be formal, analytical essays, typed, footnoted, and proofread. Outside research will not be necessary; topics will address the course material we have covered in class.

Research Project

There will be one 10-12 page paper based on original research. This paper must include discussion of at least three scholarly sources with differing interpretations of your topic, as well as your own interpretation of a small body of primary sources. All sources must be footnoted in the style outlined in Marius, *A Short Guide*.

Student Presentations

For those who would like to present their research, time is set aside for student presentations Dec. 8.

COURSE OUTLINE

Th Aug 27 Introduction to the Course

T Sept 1 Lecture
Choosing Sources and Asking Questions: Conceptual Approaches to

Discussion
Shaping the Story

Reading: Susan Armitage, "Through Women's Eyes: A New View of the West," The Women's West, pp.9-18.

Ramona Ford, "Native American Women: Changing pp.42-68.

Elizabeth Jameson & Susan Armitage, "Beyond Hisland," Writing the Range, pp.3-16.

Th Sept 3 Discussion
Methodologies and Point of View in Traditional Frontier History

Reading: Richard Bartlett, "Men, Women, and Families,"

Rosemary & Joseph Agonito, "Resurrecting History's

T Sept 8 Discussion
Dynamics of Cross-Cultural Stereotyping

Reading: Patricia Albers and William James, "Illusion and

Sarah Carter, "Constructing the 'Indian Woman' in the

Th Sept10 Discussion
Testing Anglo Stereotypes: The Western Prostitute

Reading: Kay Reynolds Blair, "Ladies of the Lamplight,"

Paula Petrik, "Queens of the Silver Dollar: The Social

Mary Murphy, "The Private Lives of Public Women:

T Sept 15 Workshop
Census Manuscripts: The Red Light District, Butte, MT; 1900-1910

Th Sept17 Workshop
Modes of Historical Writing: Description and Narrative

Reading: Marius, "Description," A Short Guide, pp.51-57.

Marius, "Narrative," A Short Guide, pp.57-62.

T Sept 22 Lecture
Women's 'Sphere' in Nineteenth-Century Anglo Culture, 1820-1860.

Workshop
Modes of Historical Writing: Exposition

Reading: Marius, "Exposition," A Short Guide, pp.62-66.

John Abbott, "The Mother at Home," (1833).pp.1-2.

Caroline Gilman, "The Deferential Wife," (1838); pp.3-5.

Catharine Beecher, "System and Order," (1841), pp.6-9.

Th Sept 24 Discussion
Separate Spheres and the Turner Thesis: The Case of the
Overland Trail, 1842-1867.

Reading: John Faragher & Christine Stansell, "Women and

Lillian Schlissel, "Women's Diaries of the Westward

Diary of Lydia Allen Rudd, pp.188-97.

Diary of Jerusha Merrill et al., pp.7-27.

T Sept 29 Discussion

Perspectives on Women's Roles in Blackfeet Tradition

Reading: Beverly Hungry Wolf, The Ways of My Grandmothers,

Alice Beck Kehoe, "Transcribing Insima, a Blackfoot 'Old

Workshop

Modes of Historical Writing: Argument

Reading: Marius, "Argument," A Short Guide, pp.66-71.

**** FIRST ESSAY ASSIGNMENT HANDED OUT****

Th Oct 1 Workshop
Oral History

Reading: Angela Wilson, "Power of the Spoken Word: Native Oral Traditions in American Indian History," pp.101-15.

Genaro Padilla, "Yo Sola Aprendi': Mexican Women's Personal Narratives from 19th-Century California," Writing the Range, pp.188-201.

Joan Jensen & Sherna Gluck, "Women's Oral

Sources: Montana Women's Oral Histories

T Oct 6 Workshop Reports
Interpreting Oral History: Group Reports on Oral Histories

****FIRST ESSAY DUE****

Th Oct 8 Lecture
The Exodusters: African-American Homesteaders After Reconstruction, 1877-1914.

Discussion
Race and Gender in the West

Reading: Theresa Banfield, et al., "Black Women and Their

Letters of Pauline Lyons Williamson, pp.114-121.

Lynda Dickson, "Lifting as We Climb': African-

- T Oct 13 Discussion
Class as a Variable in Work and Identity
- Reading: Susan Armitage, "Household Work and Childrearing on Excerpts, "Cattle King on the Green River," a memoir by Emily French, "Diary of a Hardworked Woman," pp.51-60.
- Th Oct 15 Workshop
Census Manuscripts: Family, Occupation, and Neighborhood
- Reading: Darlis Miller, "The Women of Lincoln County, 1860- Sources: 1900, 1910 Census Manuscripts, Silverbow County, MT.
- T Oct 20 FALL BREAK
- Th Oct 22 Lecture
The 'New Woman': Gender Role Change in Anglo-American Culture, 1890-1920.
- T Oct 27 Discussion
Wage-Earning and Women's Place
- Reading: Beatrice Murphy, "Diary of a Night Nurse," (1909)
Dorothy Johnson, "Confessions of a Telephone
- Workshop
Style and Documentation
- Reading: Marius, "Suggestions About Style," A Short Guide, pp.143-67.
- Marius, "Documenting Your Sources," A Short Guide, pp.131-42.
- **2ND ESSAY ASSIGNMENT HANDED OUT****

Th Oct 29 Workshop

Power Relations Within the Family: Exploring Primary Sources

Reading: Coll-Peter Thrush and Robert Keller, Jr., "I See

What I Have

Melody Graulich, "Violence Against Women: Power

Sources: Cases from the Montana Reporter, 1888-1922.

T Nov 3

Lecture

Single Women Homesteaders and the Meanings of Independence, 1880-1929.

Reading: Katherine Harris, "Homesteading in Northeastern Colorado: Sex Roles and Women's Experience," The Women's West, pp.165-78.

****SECOND ESSAY ASSIGNMENT DUE****

Th Nov 5

Workshop

Land Plats & Property Ownership

Sources: Mineral Claims of Florence McAdow, General

T Nov 10

Discussion

Ethnicity, Sexual Mores, and Constructions of Gender

Reading: Peggy Pascoe, "Race, Gender, and Intercultural

Relations: TH

Susan Johnson, "Sharing Bed and Board:

Cohab

****GUIDELINES FOR RESEARCH PAPER HANDED OUT****

Optional Reading: Marius, A Short Guide, pp.72-103.

Th Nov 12 Lecture

Courtship, Ethnicity, and Community in Sweetwater County,

Wyom

97.
Reading: Dee Garceau, "I Got a Girl Here, Would You Like

T Nov 17 Discussion
Cross-Gender Identities

Reading: Evelyn Blackwood, "Sexuality and Gender in
Certain Native American Tribes: The Case of

Will Roscoe, "'That is My Road': The Life and Times

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

Th Nov 19 Workshop
Student Progress Reports on Research Papers

****BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR RESEARCH PAPER DUE****

T Nov 24 Discussion
Progressivism and Reservation Life: Native American
Women and the Field Matron Program, 1891-1931.

Reading: Lisa Emmerich, "Save the Babies!": American

Workshop
Census Manuscripts: Flathead Reservation, MT (1910).

Nov 25-29 **THANKSGIVING BREAK**

T Dec 1 Discussion
Self and Society: Okanogan Autobiography & Penobscot Biography

Reading: Christine Quintasket, Mourning Dove; A Salishan

Bunny McBride, "The Spider and the Wasp:"

Wendy Wall, "Gender and the Citizen Indian," Writing

Th Dec 3 Making Sense of It All: Synthesis and Reflection

T Dec 8 Student Presentations

Mon. Dec 14 ****RESEARCH PAPER DUE****

Please bring to my office, Clough 301, by 5pm.
