

American Frontiers
HY217
Fall 2018 Block 1
Palmer 229 9:15-12:00

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Office hours: Tu/Th, 2-3:30 PM and by appt.

Course rationale

When we say, “the frontier,” what does that phrase call to mind? I see covered wagons and pioneers; I picture that screen from the Oregon Trail computer game that asks the traveler to make a difficult decision: caulk the wagon or ford the river? Settlers are the historical actors most people have encountered before, but they aren’t the only people who lived or live in what is now the U.S. West—and their experiences of the frontier are only part of the story. (And of course, both “the frontier” and “the West” move, so locating these concepts in place and time will be important for us.) This block we’ll encounter a diverse range of historical actors: enslaved people, Native communities, mining families, workers, settlers, and even astronauts as we consider the U.S. West as a frontier, homeland, borderland, and empire. What do each of these frameworks open up? And what kinds of arguments do they support? Together we’ll grapple with questions of narrative: which—and whose—stories do we tell when we talk about homelands, borderlands, empires, and frontiers? How do structures of power shape access to sources, experiences, and narratives? We’ll pay special attention to the ways historians and institutions position Colorado and Colorado Springs in these frameworks, and we’ll even track some of what we think of as nineteenth-century rhetoric forward when we consider extraterrestrial frontiers near the end of the block. Together we’ll examine—and ultimately, participate in—the debates historians are still having about the history of the West—and about how to tell that history.

Learning outcomes

Your work for this course should demonstrate that you can:

- (a) explain key concepts and debates in the history and historiography of the American West
- (b) read, distill, and analyze a range of primary and secondary sources
- (c) articulate key questions and course themes, making connections across texts and discussions
- (d) craft arguments about the history of what is now the U.S. West and support these arguments with evidence, in your writing and in conversation

Required texts (please acquire hard copies)

Ned Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (2008)
Tiya Miles, *The Dawn of Detroit: A Chronicle of Slavery and Freedom in the City of the Straits* (2017)
Linda Gordon, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction* (1999)

These texts are available at the Colorado College Store. They are also on reserve at Tutt Library. All other assigned readings will be made available to you on Canvas; **please print* them out (double-sided, if you can) and bring them to class on the day we are scheduled to discuss them.**

*Yes, I’m asking you to print out materials for class; given that I am an environmental historian, this might seem strange, or at least a little hypocritical. But studying history is about digging into evidence and context. And it turns out that it is quite complicated to determine whether reading digital or print materials has a greater impact on your carbon footprint. (Factors include time spent reading, the specific emissions of the electricity you’re using, the materials and energy used to produce our various devices, etc.) I’d like to encourage you to consider powering down (or putting to sleep) your technology and giving analog reading a try.

A note on participation

This course is designed to introduce you to—and immerse you in—the work historians do, and as such, it is organized around discussions of primary and secondary source material. Sometimes I'll lecture, sometimes we'll work in small groups, and sometimes we'll have conversations as a whole class. I expect that you will show up each day prepared to jump into these conversations. We'll talk more about how to read like a historian, and how to prepare for an analytical discussion—these are skills we will be practicing a lot this block—but I want to highlight here that regular, thoughtful (and vocal) participation is necessary to do well in this course.

Assignments

6 short writing assignments (on average, 2 pages each)

Mini-lecture presentation

Final take-home essay (5-6 pages)

Guidelines for submission of written work

You will submit short writing assignments via Canvas 30 minutes before class on the day they are due. The work you turn in for this class should be double-spaced (except when directed otherwise), in **12 pt Times New Roman font, with 1-inch margins**. Put your name, the course number (HY217), and the date at the top of the first page. Everything you hand in is pledged work; please indicate this on your assignments. When citing ideas and/or texts that are not your own, please use a standard citation format (for historians, Chicago or MLA). Also, **remember to proofread!**

Grading*

Participation (including discussion and informal assignments/activities) 25%

Short writing assignments (6) 30%

Mini-lecture presentation 15%

Take-home final exam essay 30%

***Note: you must complete ALL assignments in order to pass this course.**

Grading scale

For a full explanation of Colorado College policies on credit and grades, see the Academic Policies section of the Colorado College Catalog of Courses. I use the same grade schedule to calculate final grades in my courses: A = 4.0; A- = 3.7; B+ = 3.3; B = 3.0; B- = 2.7; C+ = 2.3; C = 2.0; C- = 1.7; D+ = 1.3; D = 1.0; and NC = 0.0.

Please also review the college's statement on what these letters and numbers mean:

A – Excellent work that reflects superior understanding and insight, creativity, or skill.

B – Good work that reflects a high level of understanding and insight, creativity, or skill.

C – Adequate work that indicates readiness to continue study in the field.

D – Marginal work, only minimally adequate, raising serious question about readiness to continue in the field.

S – Work that falls in the range of A to C-.

CR – Work equivalent to a D+ or D.

NC – Failing work, clearly inadequate, and unworthy of credit.

Policy on absences and lateness

Because discussion is central to the study and practice of history, attendance is critically important. As such, unexcused absences will impact your grade in this class: for each unexcused absence, your final grade will be lowered by 1/3 of a letter. If you do miss a class meeting, you are responsible for finding out what you missed and making up the work so that you are prepared for the next class meeting. Please be on time; lateness will also affect your grade. If you need to miss class due to illness, emergency, athletics, religious observance, etc., please talk with me as soon as you can. More than three unexcused absences will result in a failing grade in the course.

Late work

I will accept late work; however, it is in your best interest to submit work on time, as late assignments will be penalized 2/3 of a letter grade for each day they are late, and one full increment for assignments graded check plus, check, check minus. So, a B+ paper turned in up to 24 hours after the deadline would earn a B-; a B+ paper submitted 2 days late would earn a C, etc. **If you know you are going to be late with an assignment, talk to me as soon as you can. I very rarely grant extensions on late work on or after the due date.** Also, please note that the majority of assignments in this course are short, and directly related to the plan for class discussion on the date they are due. Completing the assignment is often a critical part of preparing for that day's activities.

Colorado College policies

I respect and adhere to Colorado College policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays, assistance available to students with disabilities, plagiarism and academic integrity, sexual harassment, and racial or ethnic discrimination. Students are advised to familiarize themselves with these policies and encouraged to discuss any questions or concerns they may have with me.

Inclusion and diversity in the classroom

We are going to talk about hard things this block—the history of American frontiers is, in many ways, a history of violence. To understand this history, as well as how our historical narratives have developed (within structures of power that have privileged certain narratives over others), we're going to need a discussion space that is equal parts rigorous and generous – to the scholars we'll read, and to each member of our discussions.

I am committed to fostering a classroom community that is productive and rigorous for all participants, and to do that, I'm going to need your help. We'll talk together about what this looks like, but here, as we begin, I want to highlight how important it is that we appreciate and respect that a diversity of identities, backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives only enriches the work we will do together. After all, the discipline of history is built on using a range of source material to construct arguments about the past. Which actors and perspectives we look for—and which voices we find in the historical record—help to shape the arguments we make and the stories we tell.

Accommodations for students with disabilities

Full accommodations are the legal right of students with all kinds of disabilities, whether learning differences or physical disabilities. I am happy to provide these accommodations. If you experience a disability and are requesting accommodations for this course, please speak with me privately as soon as possible so we can discuss how best to put accommodations in place. If you have not already done so, please connect with Accessibility Resources (Armstrong 211, 719-227-8285), the office responsible for coordinating accommodations and services for students with disabilities.

Academic honesty

It is expected that you will abide by the Colorado College Honor Code. Please be sure to familiarize yourself with the Honor Code, and in particular, the policy on plagiarism. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or proper citation, please ask! (And of course, we'll review what this means in the context of the work we'll be doing together this block.)

A note on technology

The technological developments of the last few decades have transformed the ways that historians research and write history. Digital photography in the archive, electronic access to scholarly journals and digitized materials, new software to help with organizing sources and ideas—there are so many reasons why I'm thrilled to be a historian in the digital age. I imagine that we will all use digital tools to complete the work we'll do together this block, but I ask that we do our best to focus on each other instead of our screens when engaged in group conversation. One way to make this easier is to bring hard copies of the assigned readings to class – that way, you can mark key passages and make notes in the margins ahead of time!

You are welcome to use whatever method of note-taking works best for you during class, though I expect that any screens you have out/on are being used *ONLY* for active engagement with the course, and not for multi-tasking, as this hinders not only your learning, but also the learning of those around you. We all share responsibility for creating and maintaining an equitable and generous learning environment and community.

When you have reached this part of the syllabus, please do two things:

- (1) Confirm that you can access the Canvas site for this course. If all works, great. If you do not have access, note this in the email you send me when you complete the next step, and I can manually add you to the site.
- (2) Send me an email! (My contact information is on page one of the syllabus.) Introduce yourself, indicate your preferred name and pronouns, and let me know if you need me to manually add you to the Canvas site. Please also review the dates for our class field trips and add them to your calendars/work schedules, and please let me know of any dietary needs I should be aware of as I plan a few group meals.

Finally, welcome! I'm really looking forward to the reading, writing, discussing, and learning we are all going to do together this block!

Course calendar (subject to change)

Please come to class ready to discuss the readings listed for each day. Writing assignments are due to Canvas 30 minutes before the start of class. Readings marked with (C) can be found on Canvas.

Please also note that we have sessions that stretch beyond our 9:15-noon scheduled class time on 9/5, 9/11, and 9/14.

Week 1

Monday, 8/27 Introductions and Narratives

Tuesday, 8/28 "Prehistory" and "History" or the Politics of Beginnings

Read: All of the syllabus; Ned Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West*, Introduction and Chapter 1, pp. 1-54

Write: Complete Reading Notes worksheet

In class: discuss Blackhawk; how to read like a historian; Pueblo Revolt of 1680

Wednesday, 8/29 Theorizing Exploration and Discovery

Read: Ned Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land* Chapters 2-5, pp. 55-175

In class: discussion; working with primary sources; mini-lecture on "exploration"

Thursday, 8/30 Native Representation

Read: Ned Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land*, Chapters 6-7, epilogue, pp. 176-293

Write: **Blackhawk précis (Short Writing Assignment [SWA] #1)**

In class: discussion; analyzing photography of Edward Curtis and Zig Jackson

Friday, 8/31 The Frontier Thesis — and Responses to It

Read: Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (1893) (C)

Write: **Turner précis (SWA #2)**

In class: Turner timeline activity (bring laptops)

Week 2

Monday, 9/3: New Directions in the Historiography of the U.S. West (**START 9 AM**)

Read: Anne Hyde, "The Geography of Empire in 1804," in *Empires, Nations, and Families: A New History of the North American West, 1800-1860* (2011), pp. 1-24 (C); Margaret Jacobs, excerpt from *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2009), pp. 1-24 (C); Karen J. Leong, "Still Walking, Still Brave: Mapping Gender, Race, and Power in U.S. Western History," *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 79, No 4 (November 2010), pp. 618-628 (C)

In class: discuss Hyde, Jacobs, and Leong, building on Friday's conversation about Turner and then walk to FAC.

10:30 AM Artist's talk with Virgil Ortiz, Mellon Artist-in-Residence at the Fine Arts Center at Colorado College. (For more on his work, see <https://www.csfineartscenter.org/exhibits/virgil-ortiz/>)

Tuesday, 9/4: Frontiers and Borderlands in Early America

Read: Tiya Miles, *The Dawn of Detroit*, pp. 1-138

In class: discussion of Miles; preparation for tomorrow's convergence class in Ft. Collins!

Wednesday, 9/5: **NOTE CHANGE—MEET OUTSIDE TUTT LIBRARY AT 11 AM**

Read: Tiya Miles, *The Dawn of Detroit*, pp. 139-265

Write: **Miles précis and discussion preparation (SWA #3)** [due at 10:30 AM]

LEAVE 11 AM FOR 2 PM Convergence class with Professor Ann Little's graduate course in American history at Colorado State University-Fort Collins on *The Dawn of Detroit* by Tiya Miles. We'll have dinner in Fort Collins before we leave; we'll be back to CC by 9 PM.

Thursday, 9/6: **NO CLASS (Yesterday was a LONG day.)**

Friday, 9/7: Scale, Narrative, and the Archive: Microhistories/Macrohistories

Read: Linda Gordon, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction*, Preface; October 2, 1904; September 25, 1904; Chapter 1; October 1, 1904, 6:30 PM; Chapter 2; October 1, 1904, around 7:30 PM. [pp. ix-79]

Write: **Gordon response (SWA #4)**

In class: debrief Wednesday, think about archives and sources, discuss first section of Gordon

*Select article for Week 3 mini-lecture from list provided

Week 3

Monday, 9/10: Race and Gender in the Southwest Borderlands

Read: Linda Gordon, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction*, Chapter 3; Oct 2, 1904, Afternoon; Chapter 4; October 2, 1904, Evening; Chapter 5; October 2, 1904, Night. [pp. 80-208]

In class: discussion

Tuesday, 9/11: Labor, Law, and Family in the Southwest Borderlands

Read: Linda Gordon, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction*, Chapter 6; October 3-4, 1904; Chapter 7; January 1905; Chapter 8; Epilogue. [pp. 210-318]

In class: discussion

POSSIBLE AFTERNOON MINE TOUR AT THE MOLLIE KATHLEEN MINE (STAY TUNED)

Wednesday, 9/12: Migration and Immigration in the Past and the Present

Read: Your mini-lecture article and one of the following (assigned Tuesday): Julian Lim, "Empires and Immigrants" from *Porous Borders: Multiracial Migrations and the Law in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), pp. 21-62; Kelly Lytle Hernández, "The Crimes and Consequences of Illegal Immigration: A Cross-Border Examination of Operation Wetback, 1943 to 1954," *Western Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (Winter, 2006), pp. 421-444 (C);

Write: **Combination précis/response on your mini-lecture article (SWA #5)**

In class: discussion; look at "Torn Apart," a visualization of child separation under current U.S.

immigration policy done by a group of digital humanities scholars: <http://xpmethod.plaintext.in/torn-apart/>

Thursday, 9/13: American Frontiers in the 20th Century – Diverging Narratives and New Histories

No reading for today; work on your mini-lecture!

In class: mini-lectures (see prompt for more information)

Friday, 9/14: Local (Colorado) Stories and Big (Western) Narratives

Read: Anne Hyde, excerpt from *An American Vision: Far Western Landscape and National Culture, 1820-1920*, (New York: NYU Press, 1990), pp.147-183; Elizabeth Jameson, excerpt from *All that Glitters: Class, Conflict, and Community at Cripple Creek* (Urbana: University of Chicago, 1998), pp. 21-48 (C); Marshall Sprague, "Chapter Nineteen: Portrait of a Small College," in *Newport in the Rockies: The Life and Good Times of Colorado Springs* (first published 1961), pp. 260-267 (C)

Class Lunch and afternoon Pioneers Museum visit (tour museum, 1:30 PM discussion with Leah Davis Witherow, Curator of History and Archivist, and then return to CC by 3 PM)

Week 4

Monday, 9/17: Narrative, Mythology, and the Contemporary U.S. West

Read: Tommy Orange, "Prologue" to *There There* (New York: Knopf, 2018) (C) AND a case study TBD. We'll discuss this together and finalize based on our conversations together this block. Possibilities include a deep dive into narrative framing of the Malheur Wildlife Refuge occupation and the Bundy trial; a look at land/sovereignty/narrative surrounding activism at Standing Rock against the Dakota Access Pipeline; and/or an examination of the framing and rhetoric surrounding immigration/family separation/border walls. Or perhaps there will be a new case study we can examine using the lenses and analytical tools we've been cultivating this block.

Write: **Museum analysis (SWA #6)**

Tuesday, 9/18: Nostalgia, Forgetting, and Imagined Frontiers

Read: Lisa Ruth Rand, "The Case for Female Astronauts: Reproducing Americans in the Final Frontier," *The Appendix*, Vol. 2 No. 3, July 2014, pp.22-27 **AND bring in TWO examples of contemporary frontier rhetoric**

In class: discussion; watch *Westworld* S1:E1 and debrief the block!

Take home essay prompt distributed

Wednesday, 9/19: **NO CLASS; WRITE YOUR FINAL ESSAY.**

Write: **Final Exam (Take Home Essay) due via Canvas by noon.**

Assignment Summary (due at start of class unless otherwise noted)

Week 1:

SWA #1 Blackhawk précis due August 30

SWA #2 Turner précis due August 31

Week 2:

SWA #3 Miles précis due September 5

SWA #4 Gordon response due September 7

Week 3:

SWA #5 Combination mini-lecture précis and response due September 12

Mini-lecture give presentation on September 13

Week 4:

SWA #6 Pioneers Museum response due September 17

Final Exam Take Home Essay due September 19 (noon)