HIST 6400-901: THE WEST AND AMERICA
David M. Wrobel
Semester: S12; Time: Tuesday, 6:00-9:40pm; Credits, 4
Course Location: History Conference Room, DHT 4th Floor
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Description
This course examines the mid-late 19th- and 20th-century West in national comparative context, and also, to some degree in global comparative context. In asking whether, when, how, and to what degree the history of the western United States has been exceptional, we need to consider its regional history within a larger set of national contexts, and need to reflect, too, on other white settler society experiences worldwide. The course is structured both chronologically and thematically, facilitating comparative analysis of the West and the nation at both particular moments in time (e.g. the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, the 1920s and 1930s, and the post World War II decades), and through larger thematic lenses: Expansion and Empire; Reconstruction, Race, and Regionalism; Borders, Migration, Immigration, and Reservations; Representation and Regionalism; and Religion, Race, Politics, and Mass Incarceration.

David Reynolds’ excellent single-volume history of the United States, America, Empire of Liberty, will serve as background reading for the national contexts throughout the semester. Some global context is provided by James Belich’s Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939. The late Earl Pomeroy’s posthumously published The American Far West in the 20th Century will help us chart the details of the western regional context as we move through the semester. The other 12 assigned books are apportioned into the five thematic categories and are among the most significant works in the fields of American western and national history published in recent years (indeed, virtually all of them have appeared in the last five years).

Objectives/Learning Outcomes
There are three primary objectives:
a) To enhance understanding of the history of the American West by considering it in relation to national and global contexts.
b) To facilitate preparation for comprehensive examinations in both the North American West and U.S. history.
c) To improve written and oral communication skills and critical thinking skills through writing, rewriting, and presenting review essays.

Themes and Readings
Regional, National and Global Scales


**Expansion and Empire**


**Reconstruction, Race, and Regionalism**


**Borders, Migration, Immigration & Reservations**


**Representation & Regionalism**


**Religion, Race, Politics & Mass Incarceration**


*Please have the assigned reading completed before class. In addition to our primary discussion of each book, on the date listed, we will have a follow-up discussion of each work the next week, thus providing the opportunity to reflect on our first discussion.

**Requirements**

Three review essays (8-10 pages each, each on 2-3 books) + informal presentations on assigned course readings and on at least one additional (non-required) book. Each essay should be 8 to 10 typed, double-spaced pages in 12-point font (i.e., 2400-3000 words), and carefully proofread prior to submission. Follow the format of essays in *Reviews in American History*. The first two papers may be revised and resubmitted based on peer and instructor feedback. Informal presentations on assigned course readings and on a review essay are also required. Each essay counts for 25% of your grade. Your first two papers may be revised and resubmitted based on peer and instructor feedback. Class discussion counts for the remaining 25% of your grade.

**Attendance**

We meet once (for 200 minutes) a week for fifteen weeks. Attendance at all sessions is expected. Missing more than twice the number of weekly meetings (i.e., two) could result in your being administratively dropped. Punctuality is appreciated. Let me know if you have to be absent on a given day for a valid reason, or even for part of a class. I will make accommodations where appropriate (e.g., medical reasons, professional opportunities). Unexcused absences will be factored into your discussion grade.

**Schedule**

Wk 1: Aug. 21: Course Introduction + E&E, I: Nugent, *Habits of Empire*
Wk 2, Aug. 28: E&E, II: White, *Railroaded*
Wk 3, Sept. 4: SCALES, I: Reynolds, 73-219; Belich, 1-392
Wk 4, Sept. 11: RR&R, I: West, *The Last Indian War*
Wk 5, Sept. 18: RR&R, II: Cox Richardson, *West from Appomattox (Paper 1)*
Wk 6, Sept. 25: SCALES, II: Pomeroy, 1-115; Reynolds, 221-304; Belich, 392-560
Wk 7, Oct. 2: BMI&R I: Bauer, Jr., *We Were All Like Migrant Workers Here*
Wk 8 Oct. 9: BMI&R II, St. John, *Line in the Sand*
Wk 9, Oct. 16: BMI & R, III: Lee and Yung, *Angel Island*
Wk 11, Oct. 30: SCALES, III: Pomeroy, 116-403; Reynolds, 305-478
Wk 12, Nov. 6: R&R: Gordon, *Dorothea Lange*
Wk 13, Nov. 13: RRP&MC, I: Dochuk, From Bible Belt to Sun Belt
_____ Nov. 20: NO CLASS—Thanksgiving Holiday
Wk 14, Nov. 27: RRP&MC, II: Brilliant, *The Color of America Has Changed*
OU Policies & Information

Announcements: Announcements updating any aspect of this course will be given both in class and via the main page of the D2L website for this class. Please check the course D2L site regularly.

Disabilities: Any student in this course who has a disability that may prevent him or her from fully demonstrating his or her abilities should contact both the Disability Resource Center and me as soon as possible, so we can discuss accommodations necessary to ensure full participation and facilitate your educational opportunities. Contact Director Suzette Dyer at the OU Disability Resource Center, Goddard Health Center, Room 166, 325-3852 voice, or 325-4173 TDD (http://www.ou.edu/drc/home.html), to request an accommodation.

Religious Accommodations & Extra-Curricular Activities: It is the policy of the University to excuse absences of students that result from religious observances and to provide without penalty for the rescheduling of examinations and additional required class work that may fall on religious holidays. Also, students involved in OU extra-curricular activities should let me know at the beginning of the semester of any known scheduling conflicts.

Required Readings: Required books can be purchased at the campus bookstore or from a range of other online booksellers. I have made efforts to ensure that course readings (while many) are affordable. If any of you have difficulty financing the cost of course books, please let me know and I will try to find spare copies to loan.

Discussion / Participation: A significant part of your grade is composed of in-class participation. This component of the grade is aimed at demonstrating your advance preparation of the assigned materials, as well as your ability to absorb and reflect on the course themes and make connections among and between course readings. I will work hard to ensure that the class atmosphere is comfortable and conducive to productive discussion, and expect all class participants to do the same.

Avoiding Plagiarism: To take the words or ideas of someone else and pass them off as your own is plagiarism. All referenced sources must be cited in your essays. All assignments must be your own work. Early in the semester I will discuss plagiarism and strategies for avoiding even the most subconscious tendencies toward it. A grade of zero will be given to any student who commits plagiarism in an assignment for this course. In addition, in the event of plagiarism, I will make a report to the Graduate Coordinator who will report the matter to the Department Chair and, in all likelihood, to the Dean of the Graduate College. For more information see OU’s integrity policy and the policies of the Graduate College.
Additional Sources for Consideration

Regions & Regionalism

Books:


Keith L. Bryant, *Culture in the American Southwest: The Earth, the Sky, the People* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2001).


**Articles and Essays:**


John Wesley Powell, “Physiographic Regions of the United States” (1895)


**Expansion & Empire**

**Books:**


**Articles and Essays:**


**Race & Reconstruction**

**Books:**


**Book Chapters:**


**Borders, Migration, Immigration & Reservations**

**Books:**


Flannery Burke, *From Greenwich Village to Taos: Primitivism and Place at Mabel Dodge Luhan’s* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008).


**Representation and Regionalism**

**Books:**


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**Religion, Race, Politics, and Mass Incarceration**

**Books:**


Appendix 1: Guidelines for Writing Book Reviews & Review Essays

Introduction
A book review needs to do two things: first, you need to provide sufficient coverage of the content of the book (or books, for a review essay) in question for potential readers to decide whether or not they should read the book. Second, you need to critically assess the book’s thesis/es and the evidence used to support it/them. As you go through the steps outlined below, please consider these two crucial goals of your review—content overview and critical assessment.

Steps
1. Your review or review essay must include a title that reflects the theme of your review of the book, or the main theme of the book under review. You do not need to provide a separate title page; just place the title at the top of the first page. Following the title, you must provide a full citation to the book, e.g..

“Where Seldom Was Heard a Discouraging Word: Television and National Self Congratulation in America’s ‘Happy Days.’”

2. Your coverage of each book in a review essay should be approximately three-five typed, double spaced pages (about 900-1200 words), depending upon the number and length of the works you are reviewing.

3. You will have only 5-8 paragraphs in which to describe and assess the content of each book. In your first paragraph you should provide the reader with a clear sense of the broad scope of the book. For example, your essay might begin: “Karal Ann Marling examines the role of television and other forms of visual representation in shaping American culture in the 1950s.” In this same opening paragraph you should next provide a brief overview of the book’s structure or specific chapters. You do not need to mention every single chapter, but you should give readers a good clear sense of how the book has been put together. For example, you might write: “This highly readable and quite provocative book includes chapters on “Disneyland,” Autoeroticism: America’s Love Affair with the Car in the Television Age,” “Betty Crocker,” and “Elvis.” Next, you might conclude this opening paragraph with a key quotation from the book that sums up the author’s thesis. For example: Marling notes that: “Life in the 1950s imitated art—as seen on TV.”

4. In the next paragraph or two you should provide fuller, more detailed coverage of the content of the book/s. You might decide to focus on just two or three of each book’s chapters, or might provide coverage of most or all of the book’s major topics. However you choose to construct these paragraphs summarizing the content of the book, be sure that a reader would be able to decide from your summary whether or not to read this book. If you are reviewing a collection of essays by a single author, or anthology with multiple contributors, you cannot provide extensive coverage of all of the essays, so
make a mention of all, but focus your attention on four to six of them.

5. In the next few paragraphs you should assess the argument/s of the book/s and comment on the evidence provided in support of it/Them. Are you convinced by what the author has to say? Has the author effectively supported his/her arguments with appropriate evidence and/or logical reasoning? What topics, issues, or themes has the author left out that might lead us to different conclusions or interpretations?

6. In your final paragraphs you should provide a strong summary of the book’s/s’ merits and shortcomings. Who would want to read this book? Is it an important book? Do you recommend it highly, only lukewarmly, or not at all? Could the book have been any stronger and more effective; and if so, how?

7. In the course of your review be sure to provide a few poignant quotations that help illustrate the author’s/s’ perspective or key arguments. Do not quote excessively and avoid long block quotations.

8. Most important of all, remember that this is your essay, with your title, and as such it needs to be much more than a mere summary and analysis of the work/s; it should also provide an overarching thematic framework for thinking about the work/s.

9. The best models for writing review essays are found in Reviews in American History. You should use the essays in this journal as models for your own work.

10. Finding Scholarly Reviews
Either in the opening or closing paragraph, you might provide brief discussion of book reviews of the work under consideration written by professional scholars. This is not required, and it is certainly not advisable to read scholarly reviews prior to reading and reflecting on the work/s yourself. These reviews can, after your own careful consideration of a work, facilitate your efforts to discuss it, but be sure to be fully conversant with the book/s in question before consulting reviews of it/Them; the reviews should not guide, and certainly should not abbreviate, your own reading of the book/s.

Book reviews in a wide-range of journals are easily found through e-searches, e.g. in J-Store. In addition, you can search for reviews in the Book Review Digest, which is also available in electronic form. Citations to the major reviews of scholarly books can also be found in a reference work titled Book Review Index. These yellow and blue colored volumes for the years 1985-1997 are in the Bizzell Library reference section: Z 1011 .B63 1999. Go to the volume for the year the book was published and for the following year. Then look up the book title and/or author. You will find a listing of the journals where reviews of the work have appeared. These citations will include the title of the journal, the volume number, and the page number/s of the review.

Please note that non-scholarly reviews from sources such as Amazon.com are not acceptable. Also, please be sure to use quotation marks for any material drawn from reviews. Please attach to your paper a printout/s of any reviews you have consulted.
Appendix 2: Guide to Effective Paper Writing:

I: Theme Development (Pre-writing): Papers need to be driven by a key theme or argument. Effective theme construction becomes possible only after reasoned reflection on the topic. As part of this reflective process consider the following guidelines:

1) Consider what you want to say before you begin; do not “make it up” as you go along.

2) Consider developing a paragraph-by-paragraph outline for the paper.

3) Think of an appropriate title. Thinking about titles can assist in theme construction and development.

4) Do not worry if there are loose ends in your thought processes before you begin writing; writing is part of the creative process, too, not just a mechanical exercise.

II: Draft Writing: Having reflected on the theme of your paper and the appropriate content to be covered, and having constructed a fairly detailed outline, you should begin writing a first draft. Consider the following guidelines as you write this draft:

1) Make sure your opening paragraph clearly outlines both the scope of your paper (the general content/issues to be covered) and its theme or argument.

2) If your essay draws on the work of other scholars, then make sure you demonstrate to the reader that you understand the themes/arguments presented in those works.

3) The bulk of your paper should present the relevant information/evidence necessary to flesh out the theme, or lend weight to the argument that you are making.

4) This presentation of evidence may include quotations from sources. Effective quotation is a delicate matter that requires great care. To quote a few lines from a source simply because they sound good, without fully comprehending their meaning or context, is very unwise. Instead, you should quote material that provides a sure indication of the point of view, or of some key point, or integral element of the author’s argument. Avoid long block quotations whenever possible. Short quotations, interspersed into your own narrative are effective and do not break up your narrative flow.

5) As you write the final paragraphs of your paper, make sure you have developed a strong conclusion. A concluding paragraph is most successful when it succinctly summarizes the information presented in the paper without sounding repetitious, and then closes with a strong, even memorable, sentence or two.

III: Rewriting: Having reflected on the paper's theme and content and written a draft, you may be halfway through the assigned task. Consider the following guidelines as you turn your draft into an effective paper:
1) Set aside your first draft for a day and then come back to it. Distancing yourself from the paper (for a day or two, even an hour or two) will help you to assess its merits.

2) Read through the draft and check each of the guidelines under section II (above): Is your opening paragraph clear and effective? Have you demonstrated an understanding of the sources you draw on? Have you presented sufficient evidence/information to support your argument/develop your theme? Does the quoted material serve its proper purpose, i.e., does it illustrate key points/arguments/points of view? Does the paper's conclusion seem convincing to you the as you read it the next day?

3) If you find any shortcomings in the draft (and you almost certainly will) then correct them. This redrafting process may include a thorough rewriting of the whole paper, or rewriting of a few sections, or the re-ordering of certain paragraphs. You may even find that you need to reconsider your title. Remember: you are correcting a draft, so be hard on yourself, find every shortcoming you can.

4) Also check the draft carefully for grammatical shortcomings. Use the spelling and grammar function on the computer, but remember that computerized spelling and grammar checks are far from perfect; you should also proofread a printout of your paper. Are your tenses consistent? Is your sentence construction effective, i.e. do your sentences read smoothly and make perfect sense? Have you carefully divided material into paragraphs? Do you have strong transitional sentences to lead the reader from one paragraph to the next?

5) Now you should have in front of you a complete second draft of your paper. Whether you submit the second draft of your paper, or continue to go through the process outlined above, is your decision. Generally, the more drafts a paper goes through, the more effective the work becomes.