

# HIST 616 (fall 2014) AMERICAN WEST

History 616  
Fall 2014  
Robinson B 205  
M 7:20–10:00  
Prof. Paula Petrik  
<http://www.archiva.net>

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W 2:00–3:00, and by appointment  
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## schedule

- Monday,  
August 25 — Housekeeping & Introductions
- Friday,  
August 29 — **BLOG URL DUE**
- Monday,  
September 1 — **NO CLASS (LABOR DAY)**
- Tuesday,  
September 2 — **LAST DAY TO ADD CLASSES  
LAST DAY TO DROP WITH NO TUITION PENALTY**
- Monday,  
September 8 — Reading:  
Patricia Nelson Limerick, *Legacy of Conquest*
- Monday,  
September 15 — Reading:  
Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/22994/22994-h/22994-h.htm>>  
Virginia Scharf et al, “Claims and Prospects, *Western Historical Quarterly*,” Vol. 31, No. 1. (Spring, 2000) (JSTOR)  
William Deverell, “Fighting Words: The Significance of the American West in the History of the United States,” *Western Historical Quarterly* XXV (Summer 1994) (JSTOR)  
David Emmons, “Constructed Province: History and the Making of the Last American West,” and “A Round table of Responses,” *Western Historical Quarterly* XXV (Winter 1994) (JSTOR)

- Monday,  
September 22 — Reading:  
Bernard DeVoto, *Journals of Lewis and Clark*  
Brian DeLay, *War of a Thousand Deserts*
- Monday,  
September 29 — Reading:  
Steven Lubet, *Murder in Tombstone*  
Susan Johnson, *Roaring Camp*
- Monday,  
October 6 — Reading:  
Elliot West, *The Way to the West*
- Monday,  
October 13 — **NO CLASS (COLUMBUS DAY)**
- Tuesday,  
October 14 — **NO CLASS**  
Reading:  
*In re: Roy Baker* (DropBox)
- Monday,  
October 20 — Reading:  
William Robbins, *Colony and Empire*  
William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*
- Monday,  
October 27 — **ROY BAKER PAPER DUE**  
Reading:  
D. Michael Bottoms, *The Aristocracy of Color*  
Sherry Smith, "A Memory Sweet to Soldiers: The Significance of Gender in the  
American West," *Western Historical Quarterly* (November 1993) (JSTOR)  
Katherine Benton-Cohen, "Common Purposes, Worlds Apart: Mexican-  
American, Mormon, and Midwestern Women Homesteaders in Cochise  
County, Arizona," *Western Historical Quarterly*, (Winter, 2005) (JSTOR)
- Monday,  
November 3 — Reading:  
*Montana Memory*  
<http://www.montanamemory.org>
- Monday,  
November 10 — Reading:  
Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of America*

- Monday,  
November 17 — Reading:  
Pekka Hämmäläinen, *The Comanche Empire*  
David R. Lewis, “Still Native: The Significance of Native Americans in the  
History of the 20th Century American West,” *Western Historical Quarterly*  
(May 1993) (JSTOR)  
David G. Gutierrez, “Significant to Whom?: Mexican Americans and the  
History of the American West,” *Western Historical Quarterly* (November  
1993) (JSTOR)
- Monday,  
November 24 — Reading:  
Ari Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre*  
John Findlay, “Far Western Cityscapes and American Culture Since 1940,”  
*Western Historical Quarterly* XXII (February 1991) (JSTOR)
- Monday,  
December 1 — Reading:  
Rothman, *Devil’s Bargains*  
Richard White, “The Current Weirdness in the West,” *Western Historical  
Quarterly*, XXVIII (Spring 1997) (JSTOR)  
“Wresting the West from ‘The West’: A Roundtable,” *Western Historical  
Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 3. (Autumn, 1997) (JSTOR)  
McLure, Helen, “The Wild, Wild Web: The Mythic American West and the  
Electronic Frontier,” *Western Historical Quarterly* XXXI (Winter 2000)  
(JSTOR)
- Monday,  
December 8 — **SHORT RESEARCH PAPER DUE**  
**SELF-EVALUATION DUE**



## COURSE

Americans have always been fascinated with the idea of place, especially the West, and with its collateral idea, the frontier (if such a thing ever existed). This course is designed as an exploration of these ideas and as an introduction to the major themes and arguments in the history of the trans-Mississippi West, the region most closely identified with “frontier.” As class participants might expect, the class is an intensive reading in which the emphasis is on interpretation rather than the recall of facts. (A scholar once remarked, “A readings course is the process of stuffing oneself on books until one is done up like a Thanksgiving turkey.”) The turkey business aside, this is an “old timey” graduate seminar, in which the emphasis is on discussion and the exchange of ideas. But wait, there’s more. In this iteration of the course, we also be working with some primary documents so that participants, first, obtain some notion of what kind of sources are available and, second, acquire an idea of what it is to do western history.

## BOOKS

The following books are required for the course. They are available in the Campus Bookstore. There is also a reading only accessible via the Web as well as handout that 1) will be handed out in class as a photocopy or 2) be placed in a DropBox.

Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest*

Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History*

Bernard DeVoto, ed., *The Journals of Lewis and Clark*

Elliott West, *The Way to the West: Essays on the Central Plains*

Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp*

William Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis*

Steven Lubet, *Murder in Tombstone: The Forgotten Trial of Wyatt Earp*

D. Michael Bottoms, *The Aristocracy of Color*

Brian DeLay, *War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the U.S.-Mexican War*

Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire*

Ari Kelman, *A Misplaced Massacre: Struggling Over the Memory of Sand Creek*

Hal K. Rothman, *Devil’s Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth-Century American West*

William G. Robbins, *Colony and Empire*

Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America*

## BLOGS

One of the requirements for the course is maintenance of a blog. The best bet is Blogger, a free service from Google. And we know free is good. Simply register and begin setting up your blog. There are a number of designs suitable for history but please avoid anything on a black or dark background with light or white type. Known as “reversing out” among graphic designers, this format is very difficult to read. Be sure to enable comments and the RSS feed so that you can access your classmates’ blogs using a newsreader. This will save you an enormous amount of time. Or, you can simply use the “Students” list on the website.

## POLICIES

### *Attendance*

Participants in a graduate seminar are expected to attend class unless some dire emergency arises—something on the order of a cosmic intervention. Because the class makes “relatively few writing demands”

and depends largely on class discussion, it is even more important that students come to class prepared to enter into lively debate. In fact, failure to attend class on many occasions will have grave consequences. A word to the wise, in short, should be sufficient.

### *Email*

Please check your GMU mailbox periodically or arrange for your GMU mailbox material to be forwarded to your preferred email address. In addition, be sure that your mailbox has not exceeded its capacity so that your mail bounces back to me. If I send out announcements, I use the GMU mailing class mailing lists per university regulations. If you need to email me, please put HIST 616 in the subject line and sign your full name. This will help my spam detector route you to the proper folder, guarantee that I read your email, and ensure that I know who you are.

### *A Note on Computer Use*

Computers are a great boon to the graduate student. But, as with any technology, you must take steps to minimize the problems that computers inevitably cause. Do not expect to get through the semester without having at least one computer crisis. Prepare for this well in advance. Back up your work constantly and have alternative plans for obtaining computer use, if your primary options fail you. I will never accept computer problems as excuses for missed assignments. You must also keep backup copies of submitted assignments—either in electronic form or hard copy.

Similarly, computers and email permit around-the-clock communication. If you have questions or need to apprise me of an emergency situation, contact me via email.

[ppetrik@gmu.edu](mailto:ppetrik@gmu.edu)

Should you need to discuss an issue with the instructor, contact me via email or by phone to make an appointment. Do not, however, expect an immediate response. Many of your questions can be answered by consulting the web site at:

<http://www.archiva.net>

Your best chance of reaching me immediately by email is during my office hours or late at night.

### *Grades*

Grades, including +s and -s, will be assigned in the following manner. REMEMBER THEY REPRESENT AN EVALUATION, NOT A REWARD. To rephrase Smith-Barney (now Salomon Smith Barney), the investment folk, we do grades the old-fashioned way—earn them.

A—Outstanding work, complete mastery of the material presented, combined with some originality.

B—A solid command of the material with some gaps or mistakes in a basically sound essay or discussion.

C—Some knowledge of the material; mistakes and confusion are acceptable if mixed with some understanding. Not a reward for attendance or effort.

D—An incomplete and minimal knowledge of the material, major confusions and errors.

F—A failure to present the material in a reasonably accurate and comprehensible manner.

I—There are no “incompletes” given in this course except in cases of bona fide and documented instances in accordance with the regulations of the university.

P—For a “pass” a “C” average is required.

If you receive a grade or criticism that seems unfair or if you desire further explanation, please feel free to discuss the matter with me by making an appointment. My policy is not to discuss grades via email.

## **REQUIREMENTS**

The requirements for the course are as follows: (1) Seminar Participation (15%); (2) Seminar leadership (15%); (3) Blog (30%); and (4) Essays (40%); (5) a self-evaluation (one-page, typed, single-spaced) assessing your performance in the course (not graded but required).

### *Blog*

Each week you are expected to make a three-paragraph (or roughly 500 words) post in your blog about a topic in western history and one short response to another's post. These must be posted on your blog the *Saturday before class*. The posts may take many different forms. A post might be a standard book review in that it makes some critical comment about a reading. Or a post may be a more "free-form" response in which you discuss a western history topic. Or a post might go further afield and entertain an idea that you have spun out of the reading. The blog posts will, to be frank, drive you nuts, but they will hone your writing skills and prove invaluable when the time comes for seminar discussion and your comprehensives or orals.

Online writing and reading differs from print for a variety of reasons. Clarity is the name of the game. Each post must conform to the following format:

1. Post number
2. Post title
3. Space between paragraphs
4. Titles of books should be italicized, titles of articles or documents should put in quotation marks, and so on.
5. Use text links to comments should use the author's name. Do not simply use a URL.
6. Use text links to sources on the web. Do not simply use a URL.

### *Seminar Participation*

Seminar participation means lively and engaged discussion of the readings. You cannot hope to derive the most from the course if you sit on the sidelines and listen to the play-by-play.

### *Seminar Discussion Leadership*

Each class member (or team of two) will be responsible for leading at least one class discussion. The leader or leaders are responsible for initiating and maintaining the discussion. I will be on hand to facilitate the process, but the leader(s) will be responsible for setting the agenda for the class. You may be as creative as you wish, but you may not be boring. For the two primary source discussions, I'll take on the role of seminar leader.

### *Essays*

It's extremely important to get an early start on your papers. Let me say that again: start early. The two essays involve primary documents, so you must first sort them out, decide on a narrative, select a thesis, rally the necessary secondary literature, and then put your argument together in graceful prose accompanied by scholarly apparatus. To be sure, we will discuss the documents ahead of time, so you will have the benefits of a full class discussion and the blogs. Each of the essays should be about 8–10 pages (maybe more, maybe less).

## **SELF-EVALUATION GUIDELINES**

Oftentimes, a letter grade does not reflect the effort that students put into a course, the amount a student has learned, or the skills that a student has acquired. A self-evaluation is one way of remedying this deficiency by illustrating and documenting your participation in the course from your perspective. This is the time to argue for yourself and put your best foot forward. In fact, it is in your interest to do the best job that you can on this assignment. The self-evaluation should be a one-page, typed single-spaced paper in which you address the following topics:

- I. Evaluation of your participation in the class
  - A. attendance
  - B. assessment of time and devoted to the materials
    - 1. assigned reading
    - 2. blog
    - 3. essays
  - C. class participation
    - 1. seminar discussion
    - 2. seminar leadership
  - D. ways in which you think you improved or not
  - E. problems you encountered in your effort to complete the class assignments to your satisfaction.
  - F. what you would have done differently
  - G. some of the skills or knowledge that you acquired
- II. A general assessment of how you will apply what you have gained (or not) from the class in the future