HIS 727: 01: Research Seminar: U.S. West
David M. Wrobel, Fall 2007

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Credit Hours: 4        Office: Wright, A320
Class Time: T, 4:00-7:30pm        Hrs: MW, 1-3pm
Location: History Conf. Rm.      Phone: 895-0810

Course Description:
This course sequentially follows HIS 726: Colloquium on Regionalism and the American West, though said course is not a formal prerequisite. The purpose of the research seminar is to assist you in the processes of conceptualizing, researching, writing, and re-writing a well-defined and original study of article length (approximately 25 pages plus notes) on some aspect of American western history. While I would prefer that you worked on a topic within the chronological period of the mid-nineteenth to late twentieth century, and one that falls within the broad sub-field of cultural/intellectual history, you are not required to stay within those parameters. The completion of the research paper is the primary requirement for the course. For the next four months, as you work on the project, you will be a part of a community of scholars all engaged in the same process. The primary advantages of being a part of this group are the constructive criticism, insights, and mutual support you will provide each other. The end result of your endeavors should be a well-written, effectively structured work of original research of sufficient quality to submit to a scholarly journal for consideration for publication.

The process will be collaborative from the outset. There is only one required book for the course, William Deverell, ed., A Companion to the American West. You will also deliver a brief report on a single journal in the field and the articles that have appeared in that journal during the last decade. In the fourth week of the semester you will deliver preliminary project outlines and bibliographies to the group and receive feedback. In the second half of the semester you will deliver your first full research reports (in Weeks 7 and 8). In Weeks 10 and 11 you will deliver your second research reports. Drafts will be discussed in Week 13 and 14. Final presentations to the group will be delivered in Week 15. You will be expected to share insights on primary sources and secondary works, research and writing techniques and thematic structure. And, you will be responsible for offering constructive criticism of the work of the other members of the group. Final papers are due on the Tuesday of Finals Week, December 11.

Grading:
Your seminar paper counts for 80% of your grade for the course; the remaining 20% will be determined by the quality of your contributions to this collective scholarly endeavor, i.e., presentations on your own work and feedback on your colleagues’ work.

Class Participation:
A comfortable and informal environment will facilitate the involvement of all class members in discussions of the readings. While spontaneous thoughts and insights are always welcome, such contributions are not welcome as a substitute for careful reading of and reflection upon the assigned readings. Please be sure to complete all reading assignments, and to reflect carefully on them.
**Attendance:**
Attendance is expected and required. Non-attendance will directly affect your grade for class participation and will most likely affect your performance on the seminar paper, since you will not benefit from the feedback provided by your peers. We are meeting as a group just eleven times during the course of the semester. Each meeting will run from 4:00-7:30pm. In addition, you will meet individually with me at pre-scheduled times.

**Presentations:**
You are responsible for providing feedback on the presentations of your peers and delivering progress reports and a final presentation (which should be an abridged version of the paper). You will provide formal and informal commentary on the work of the other seminar participants. All presentations other should be well organized and should adhere to strict time constraints. The final presentation should run no more than fifteen minutes.

**Plagiarism & Other Unethical Behavior:**
As stated in *Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language* (Cleveland, 1964), plagiarism is “to take and pass off as one's own the ideas, writings, etc. of another.” Appropriate citation style is required. Please refer to the *Chicago Manual of Style*. Plagiarism is easy to spot and, more importantly, it is ethically unsound. Plagiarism on the paper will result in an “F” for that assignment, an "F" for the class and further disciplinary action. The category of “unethical conduct” includes submitting a paper you have already submitted for another class.

**Required Course Reading:**

**Recommended Course Readings:**


**Journals:**
Disabilities
If you have a documented disability that may require assistance, you will need to contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) for coordination of your academic accommodations. The Disability Resource Center is located in the Student Services Complex (SSC), Room 137. The DRC phone number is 895-0866 or TTY 895-0652.

Religious Holidays
Students who miss a class assignment because of observance of a religious holiday shall have the opportunity to make up missed work. In order to be assured of this opportunity it is the student’s responsibility to inform me of anticipated absences by the last day of late registration, August 31, 2007.

Tentative Class Schedule and Reading Assignments
Wk 1: T, Aug. 29: Introduction: Reflections on Research
Wk 2: T, Sept. 4: Western Sub-Fields: Discussion of Deverell, *A Companion*...
Wk 3: T, Sept 11: Presentations on Scholarly Journals in American Western History
Wk 4: T, Sept. 18: Project Outlines and Preliminary Bibliographies
Wk 5: T, Sept. 25: No Class: Individual Meetings
Wk 6: T, Oct. 2: No Class: Individual Meetings
Wk 7: T, Oct. 9: Research Reports, I
Wk 8: T, Oct. 16: Research Reports, I
Wk 9: T, Oct. 23: No Class: Individual Meetings
Wk 10:T, Oct. 30: Research Reports, II
Wk 11: T, Nov. 6: Research Reports, II
Wk 12: T, Nov. 13: No Class: Individual Meetings
Wk 13: T, Nov. 20: Draft Reports/ Discussions
Wk 14: T, Nov. 27: Draft Reports/Discussions
Wk 15: T, Dec. 4: Final Presentations
Finals: T, Dec. 11: Seminar Paper Due
Appendix 1: Potential Topics:

Regional representation in nineteenth- and twentieth-century travel writing.

The mapping of western regions in the nineteenth and/or twentieth centuries.

Communes and back-to-the-land movements in the twentieth-century West.

Militia movements in the twentieth-century West.

Eco-terrorism in the contemporary West.

The New Deal Arts Projects in western states.

The Women’s KKK in western states.

Western responses to late-nineteenth-/early-twentieth-century American imperialism.

The West and World War One.

Higher Education in the West.

Wind power and/or solar power in the twentieth-century West.

Western promotional writing and race and/or gender, 1870-1930.

The decline of railroads in the twentieth-century West (from Gerald D. Nash, “Research Opportunities in the Economic History of the Twentieth-Century West,” in Nash and Etulain, eds., Researching Western History).


“What happened in Nevada between 1918, when voters closed the saloons, and 1931, when voters opened the casinos?” (from Robert W. Cherny, “Research Opportunities in Twentieth-Century Western History: Politics, in Nash and Etulain, eds., Researching Western History).


Appendix 2: Suggested Resources:

Secondary Works


Primary Sources

Newspapers, e.g., New York Times, + western papers (Priscilla Finley, Lied Libraries)

Bureau of Reclamation and National Park sources (Government Documents, Lied)

Congressional Record (Government Documents, Lied)

Census Bureau Records (Government Documents, Lied)

Union Pacific materials (Special Collections, Lied—Manuscripts, Sue Kim Chung)

Gaming-related sources (Special Collections, Lied—Gaming, David Shwartz)

Nevada Test Site Oral History Project (Dr. Mary Palevsky)

Institutions
Atomic Testing Museum (Desert Research Institute)

Department of Energy in North Las Vegas

Southern Nevada Historical Museum (in Lorenzi Park, Dave Millman)

Southern Nevada Water Authority