

**History 6760, Fall 2012**  
**Graduate Readings Seminar in the Trans-Mississippi West**

**Paul Harvey**

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**Course Description and Aims**

This is a graduate-level readings seminar in the history of the American West from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. For many of you, this course will be preparatory to the subsequent research component, History 7760, to be offered in Spring 2013. At the end of this readings seminar, those going on to take the research seminar will be required to have chosen a topic and prepared a short list of primary and secondary sources for their topic.

We will read ten books, accompanying articles, and a handful of documents, with the intention of giving students with a firm grounding in the history and historiography of the American West. All students will be expected to participate in classroom discussion weekly and vocally. **Class attendance is absolutely mandatory except in case of significant illness; class “skips” will result in grade penalty, and after more than two you will need to drop the class or receive a failing grade. If you have a work conflict with this class, work that conflict out now. If you can’t work it out, drop the class now.**

**Class Assignments and Grading Policy**

Class Attendance, Participation, Discussion Leadership, Short Analyses, Document and essay analyses; classroom teaching assignment	40%
Film Assignment	5%
Short (750 word) Review	5%
Longer (1500 word) review	20%
Semester Paper	30%

**REQUIRED BOOKS**

Anne Hyde, *Empires, Nations, Families*. Nebraska. 978-0803224056  
Thomas Andrews, *Killing for Coal*. Harvard. 978-0674046917  
Elliott West, *The Contested Plains*. Kansas. 978-0700610297  
Patricia Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest*. Norton 978-0393304978  
Pekka Hamalainen, *The Comanche Empire*. Yale. 978-0300151176  
Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*. Princeton. 978-0691096117  
Jared Farmer, *On Zion’s Mount*. Harvard. 978-0674047433  
Quintard Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier*. Norton. 978-0393318890  
Susan Johnson, *Roaring Camp*. Norton. 978-0393320992  
Clyde Milner, ed., *Major Problems in the History of the American West*. Wadsworth Publishing. 978-0669415803.

**SCHEDULE**

Aug 21	Introduction
Aug. 28	Milner, chapters 1, 15; Limerick, <i>Legacy of Conquest</i>
Sept. 11	<i>Comanche Empire</i> ; Milner, chapters 2-4
Sept. 18	Milner, chapters 5-7
Sept. 25	<i>Empires, Nations, Families</i> : ANNE HYDE PUBLIC LECTURE, 5:30 p.m., UC 303

Oct. 2	Discussion of <i>Empires, Nations, Families</i>
Oct. 9	<i>Roaring Camp</i>
Oct. 16	<i>Contested Plains</i>
Oct. 23	Milner, chapters 8-11
Oct. 30	<i>On Zion's Mount</i>
Nov. 6	<i>Killing for Coal</i>
Nov. 13	Milner, chapters 12-14
Nov. 20	<i>In Search of the Racial Frontier</i>
Dec. 4	<i>Suburban Warriors</i>
Dec. 11	FINAL PAPERS DUE

### **Discussion Leadership and Writing Assignments**

Class participation and discussion leadership forms a large part of your grade for the semester. I will evaluate you in this category based on the following:

1) Through the semester, each student should come prepared on alternate weeks with 1-2 typed pages of questions, discussion points, commentaries, and/or rants for each reading. The class will be divided in half, so that half of you will have the responsibility for written responses to the readings during those weeks. These short and *informal* pages should serve as a kind of guide and rough draft to facilitate class conversation each week; these essentially are a running record of your own thoughts on the material.

2) Additionally, each student, in tandem with one other student, should be prepared to take the role of discussion leader for one week of the semester. When your week comes to be a discussion leader, I would expect your student team to come prepared with the following:

- a) a short (1 p.) summary of the book's major thesis, arguments, and evidence
- b) a short (1 p.) critique of the book, including questions, concerns, and counter-arguments
- c) a short (1 p.) list of discussion questions which you will use to guide the class as a whole through the discussion of the work.

Note: On the evening of your discussion leadership, your 3 pp. of book summary and critique noted above will replace the 1 p. typed summary you would otherwise bring.

3) I will ask each student to "lead" a sample undergraduate class for 30-45 minutes once during the semester, showing us how you would lead a group of less advanced students through the material we are discussing. This could involve a mini-lecture, some kind of presentation, a special "group exercise" kind of thing, or whatever other pedagogical tools that come to mind. You are free to do this on your "discussion leadership" night, or on any other evening.

4) Each student will also prepare one short (750 word) book review of one of the books during the semester. This should be done in the style used in the *Journal of American History*, and a sample review from the JAH should be attached, showing me the model you are using for your review.

5) Additionally, each student will be asked to write a short film analysis review of any film that you want to discuss that involves the history of the West. Obviously, the list of films here is very long, and I'll let you make your own suggestions to me. This exercise is due anytime during the semester, and I'll ask you to "present" your analysis of the film to the class as a whole on the evening you bring your paper to class. Your paper should be 750 words, again done in the style of film "reviews" in the *Journal of American History*. If you are able, bring a short excerpt (5 minutes or so) of your film to class to show us to accompany your analysis.

5) Finally, each student will be asked to do a primary source analysis assignment twice this semester, and to report on that assignment at least once to the class as a whole.

One of your two primary source analyses should be on two (or more) of the primary sources in Milner, *Major Problems*. The other should involve finding one (or more) of the primary sources used by one of our authors, reading over that source, and then comparing that source to the analysis the author gives to the source. Note: your “source” can be not just written documents, but also audio or visual material.

In each case, the aim here will be to write a short essay, 2-3 pages, just analyzing how the historian has gone about analyzing his/her source, and what are the strengths and weaknesses in the approach taken to analyzing that source. We will try to divide these up as much as possible so that we have at least one person “reporting in” each week on their analysis of how the historian for the week has used his/her primary source.

### Final Papers

The final paper will be an essay-answer to one of several questions posed by me based on this semester’s reading. To the degree possible, the final paper will also be a kind of “prospectus” for a research project to be taken up next semester. More information on the final as the semester progresses.