North American Borderlands
History 130
Wesleyan University
Fall 2018

“the Slash” Cutting through Waterton Glacier International Peace Park, Montana and Alberta

Professor Charles Halvorson
ghalvorson@wesleyan.edu
Office: PAC 330

Class Meetings: Mon/Wed 2:50-4:10pm
Room: BOGH 110
Office Hours: Mon 4:30-6pm and by appointment

North American Borderlands explores the physical, social, political, cultural, and economic spaces that borders create and purport to divide. The course covers a long history and a wide variety of material – with subjects ranging from seventeenth-century contests between Algonquian peoples and Dutch traders along the saltwater frontier to the Gilded Age story of a Texas slave who reinvented himself a Mexican millionaire to the sulfur dioxide that blew up from U.S. power plants to fall as acid rain in Canada and sour relations between the two nations in the 1980s. By the end of the course, students will be able to recognize borderlands as distinctive spaces of conflict, exchange, dispossession, and opportunity.

Organized as a first-year seminar, North American Borderlands will introduce students to research and writing at the university level. The first part of the course is divided into four thematic sections, with a short essay at the conclusion of each section. Over the course of the semester, students will also develop their own original research projects, culminating in a primary-source based paper and presentation in the second part of the course.

By the end of the course, students should be able to:
- Describe major subjects and themes in the history of borderlands
- Make their own historical arguments and communicate their ideas in writing and discussion
- Interpret primary sources and connect them to scholarly interpretations of the past
- Evaluate current issues in their historical context and recognize the political uses of the past
Course Readings

All course readings are on Moodle. Please print and bring to class.

Course Requirements and Grading

Attendance and Assignment Policy: Students are expected to attend class and submit their assignments by the date assigned unless they have a medical or family emergency, in which case they should contact their Class Dean, who will notify the professor. Absences are not excused and late assignments are not accepted unless and until the Class Dean has communicated with the professor.

Class Participation (10% of final grade): Course meetings combine lectures with a discussion of the assigned readings. Students are expected to complete the readings by the date for which they are assigned and come to class prepared to engage in discussion. Students who are uncomfortable speaking in front of the group should meet with the professor to brainstorm ways to make contributing easier. Laptops and other electronic devices are not permitted in class.

Short Essays (40% of final grade): Students will write four short essays in response to prompts distributed during the semester. Essays should be between 800-1,000 words in length and are due in class printed and stapled on the day indicated on the course outline.

Research Project (50% of final grade): Over the course of the semester, students will research a topic of their choosing related to North American Borderlands broadly defined and produce a presentation and a 3,000-word paper that reports on their research findings. Students are encouraged to start exploring and refining their topic early. By October 17, each student needs to have met with the professor to discuss their topic. On October 30, students will submit a written proposal for their research project, with a preliminary bibliography (5% of final grade). After Thanksgiving break, each student will give a 15-minute presentation of their project to the class (10% of the final grade). On December 3, students will circulate rough drafts of their research papers in small groups ahead of an in-class workshop on December 5. For that workshop, students will read the drafts of and write short comments for their fellow group members (5% of the final grade). Incorporating advice received from the presentation and workshop, students will revise their research papers (30% of the final grade) for submission on December 14 by 5pm via email.

Guidelines for Written Assignments: All written assignments should be doubled-spaced, using standard fonts and sizes (10-12 point) and margins. Title your papers and provide your name, the date of submission, and the assignment number in a short header. Please use page numbers. Use footnotes to cite quotations and arguments that are not your own according to the Chicago Manual of Style. See http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-1.html for sample citations.

Academic Integrity: Students are expected to adhere to Wesleyan University's Honor Code, described in the Student Handbook, https://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/studenthandbook/StudentHandbook.pdf

Learning Disabilities: Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a documented disability as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and provide documentation of the disability. If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact Dean Patey in Accessibility Services, located in North College, Room 021, or call 860-685-2332 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact Disability Resources as soon as possible.
Course Outline

Mon. Sept. 3: Course Introduction

Wed. Sept. 5: Writing about Borderlands

Rachel St. John, Line in the Sand: A History of the Western U.S.-Mexico Border, chapter six: Like Night and Day: Regulating Morality with the Border

Mon. Sept. 10: At the Frontiers of Empire

Andrew Lipman, The Saltwater Frontier: Indians and the Contest for the American Coast, chapter three: The Landless Borderland, 1600-1633

Wed. Sept. 12: At the Frontiers of Empire

Michel Hogue, Metis and the Medicine Line: Creating a Border and Dividing a People, chapter one: Emergence: Creating a Metis Borderland

Mon. Sept. 17: At the Frontiers of Empire

Kent Lightfoot, Indians, Missionaries, and Merchants: The Legacy of Colonial Encounters on the California Frontiers, chapter five: Russian Merchants in California

Wed. Sept. 19: At the Frontiers of Empire

Pekka Hämäläinen, The Comanche Empire, chapter five: Greater Comancheria

**Paper 1 due**

Mon. Sept. 24: Lines and Opportunities

Stephen Mihm, A Nation of Counterfeiters: Capitalists, Con Men, and the Making of the United States, chapter two: Cogniac Street Capitalism

Wed. Sept. 26: Lines and Opportunities

Karl Jacoby, The Strange Career of William Ellis: The Texas Slave Who Became a Mexican Millionaire, chapter two: Juneteenth

Mon. Oct. 1: Lines and Opportunities

Samuel Truett, Fugitive Landscapes: The Forgotten History of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands, chapter four: The Mexican Cornucopia
Wed. Oct. 3: Lines and Opportunities


**Paper 2 due**

Mon. Oct. 8: Binaries and Boundaries


Wed. Oct. 10: Binaries and Boundaries

Grace Lee, “Enforcing the Borders: Chinese Exclusion along the U.S. Borders with Canada and Mexico, 1882-1924,” *Journal of American History*

Mon. Oct. 15: Binaries and Boundaries


Wed. Oct. 17: Binaries and Boundaries

Gerry Cadava, “Borderlands of Modernity and Abandonment: The Lines Within Ambos Nogales and the Tohono O’odham Nation,” *Journal of American History*

**Paper 3 due**

Mon. Oct. 22: No Class, Fall Break

Wed. Oct. 24: Library session

Bring laptops and research project ideas to class

Mon. Oct. 29: The Nature of Borderlands


**Research project proposals with preliminary bibliographies due**

Wed. Oct. 31: The Nature of Borderlands

Acid rain primary source materials
Mon. Nov. 5: The Nature of Borderlands


Wed. Nov. 7: The Nature of Borderlands


**Paper 4 due**

Mon. Nov. 12: Borderlands Today

Tyche Hendricks, *The Wind Doesn’t Need a Passport: Stories from the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands*, chapter seven: Jacumba: The Border is a Sham

Wed. Nov. 14: Borderlands Today

Todd Miller, *Border Patrol Nation: Dispatches from the Front Lines of Homeland Security*, chapter eleven: Reimagining the Niagara Frontier

Mon. Nov. 19: Borderlands Today

Mary Mendoza, “The Trump Administration is Right About the Problem at the Border. But Its ‘Solutions’ Would Just Make Things Worse,” *Washington Post’s Made by History*, June 22, 2018

99% Invisible, Episode 294, Border Wall
https://99percentinvisible.org/episode/border-wall/


Wed. Nov. 21: No Class, Thanksgiving Break

Mon. Nov. 26: Research project presentations

Wed. Nov. 28: Research project presentations

Mon. Dec. 3: Research project presentations

**Rough drafts due in class**
Wed. Dec. 5: Paper workshop

**Comments on peer drafts due by 2pm via email**

Wed. Dec. 12: Final Papers due by 5pm via email