

Yaagna (2020). P. Ethington

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Spring 2025

HIST 655: Seminar in Western American History

Weds from 3:30 to 6:20pm

MEETS IN DML, Herklotz Room, inside the Music Library, first floor, near LiteraTea

This is a research seminar for PhD students who plan to be writing a research-based article or chapter about any historical topic that has a “western” or “American” dimension, at any scale of time or space. My concepts of both terms, “western” and “American” are very expansive, so your thematic fit with and interest in this seminar is most likely to turn on the broader theoretical, methodological, interpretive and representational approach that structures this seminar.

Three interlocking clusters of related terms will prompt our discussions throughout the seminar:

- Place, Motion, Region, Roads, Boundaries, Migration, Frontier
- Cultures, Imaginaries, Worldviews, Perspectives, Pictures, Language, Discourse
- Relations, Roles, Identities, Networks, Power, Exploitation, Resistance, Revolution

A realistic subtitle for this course would be “Studies in Place and Representation.” The syllabus below is very close to what I plan to offer. Once I know who will be participating, however, I may want to change some of the weeks’ themes and content to suit the interests and needs of the participants.

Thanks to the ICW and EMSI, ASE, Huntington, USC and many other archives, we have a lot of good reasons to study the Trans-Mississippi West, the Southwest (What is called in Mexico the Northwest), the West Coast, California(s), and the Pacific Rim. All of these regions have been traditionally associated with “the history of the American West,” but geographic definitions of the American West can also include the frontiers of the United States since its War for independence, which was fought largely to allow westward conquest. Thus we can take in the Pacific Islands from Hawai’i to The Philippine Archipelago to the Western Pacific. As U.S. wars

and client states have maintained a US projection of influence westward through China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Philippines, and given that the USA has in turn received massive waves of migration from all of these places, we can arrive at a global definition of “the American West” rather easily. Consider the loci of global regional cultures in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, Vancouver.

Every faculty member brings something distinctive to their version of any research seminar. My lifelong interest has been in the theoretical and practical problems of knowing, understanding and interpreting the past. I have taken particular stands in the “spatial turn,” insisting that the past is a set of places, that the past took place in space, not in time. To know history, therefore, is to map it. This set of epistemological questions has a direct bearing on any definition of “Western” or “American” history.

The distinctive feature of this research seminar is that it provides an opportunity to consider all-important theoretical and methodological issues that your research will address, in one way or another, or to varying degrees. Not all of the themes will intersect with everyone’s project in the same way, or in the same combination, but I am confident that every week’s themes will intersect with your research project in an important way.

Every week we will meet to discuss our research and the relevance of some major theoretical concepts. Each 2 hour and 50 minute session will be divided in about two equal parts, with a short break in between

Part A (3:30-4:45) Archival, Cartographic, Photographic Workshops

In Part A of every week’s Monday meetings, we will conduct workshops in the USC Special Collections. These will be hands-on discussions of sources, ranging from manuscripts and ephemera to historical cartography, and archival photography.

That department closes at 5:00 pm, so we will transition and break at about 4:45 for the discussion of readings for that week.

Part B (5:00-6:20) Seminar Discussion of Readings

The primary goal of this 600-level research seminar is to produce an article- or chapter-sized narrative or interpretive or analytical study based on empirical research. The assumption will be that you will be spending hours each week with your primary course and at the keyboard writing sections of your study.

The assigned readings, therefore, are deliberately limited, with the goal of supplementing your intellectual work by asking you to consider the theoretical or interpretive or representational dimension to your study, and also to provide inspiration through exposure to particularly insightful and challenging writers.

The only requirement for this part of the seminar is for you to bring each week a critical paragraph about the relevance of that week's readings to your own research concerns. The "critical" part of this assignment is to identify a problem or question about the assertions of that week's text.

Assigned Readings, Books (most to be read partially)

- Alexander, Amir. 2024. *Liberty's Grid: A Founding Father, a Mathematical Dreamland, and the Shaping of America*. Univ. Chicago Pr. 2024.
- Baumgartner, Alice L. 2020. *South To Freedom: Runaway Slaves to Mexico and the Road to the Civil War*. NY: Basic Books, 2020. (Chapters 1-6)
- Basso, Keith. *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache*. Univ of New Mexico Press, 1996.
- Donna Haraway, *Staying With The Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Duke 2016) (Chaps 1-4).
- Hernandez, Kelly Lytle. *Bad Mexicans: Race, Empire and Revolution in the Borderlands* (Norton 2022).
- Erika Pérez 2018. *Colonial Intimacies: Interethnic Kinship, Sexuality, and Marriage in Southern California, 1769-1885*. (Chaps 2-5)
- Radding, Cynthia. *Bountiful Deserts: Sustaining Indigenous Worlds in Northern New Spain*. (Arizona Univ. Press, 2022). (Chaps 1-3)

Week 1 Anthropocene or Chthulucene?

JAN 15

Part A: Introductions of Ourselves and Research Projects.

- Ourselves: How I got to this PLACE Intellectually +
- Our Research: What is my empirical problem? What is my theoretical problem?
- Syllabus and Research-Writing Plan of Work

Part B: Discussion

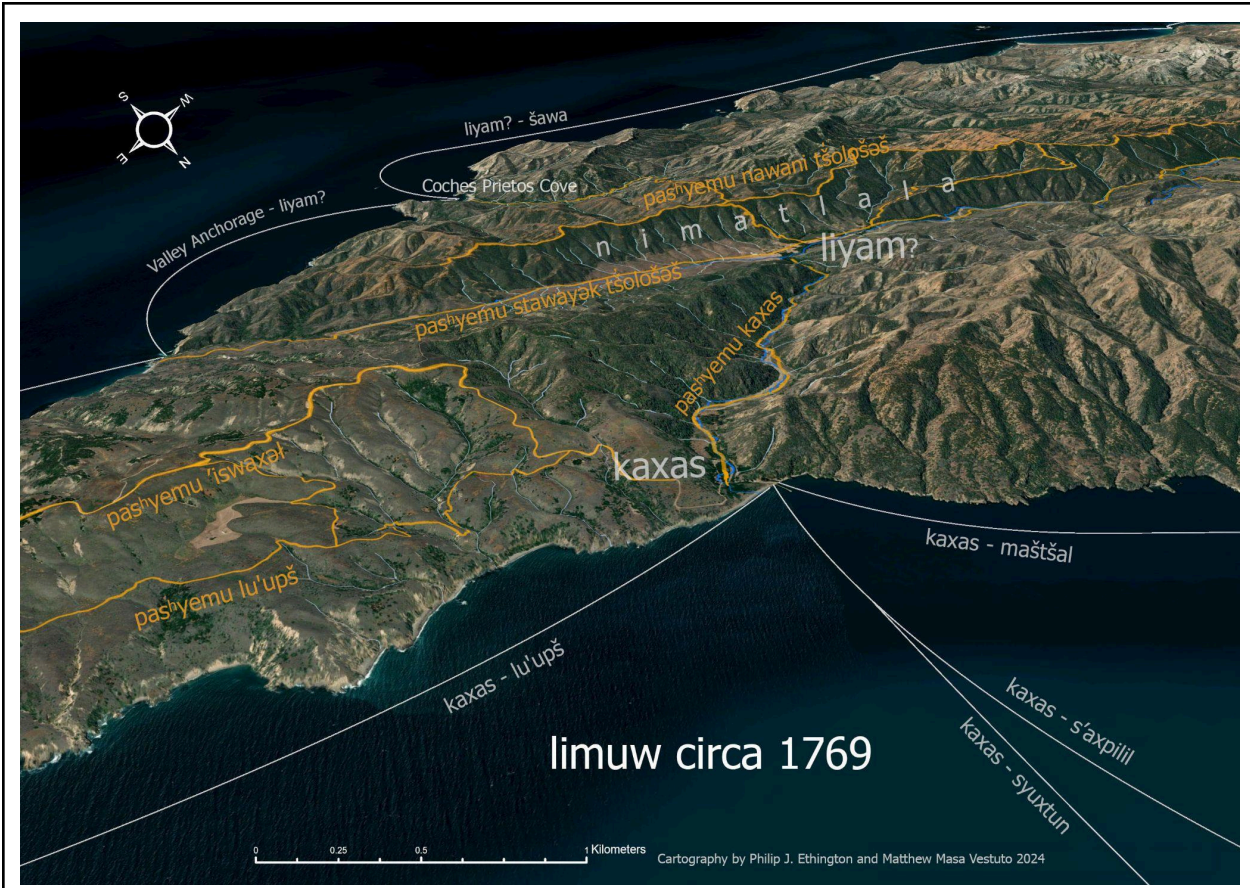
- Donna Haraway, *Staying With The Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Duke 2016) Read, Ch 1: "Playing String Figures with Companion Species"; Ch 2: "Tentacular Thinking: Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene"; Ch 3:

Week 2

JAN 22 – Co-Producing Landscapes : Or, How *xutaš* Inscribes Culture

Part A Workshop: Toward the Indigenous Landscape

Recent Cartography of the “Indigenous Landscape” by Ethington and Vestuto.



limuw circa 1769. *kaxas* (Prisoner’s Harbor) was a major port village connected via *tomot* (plank canoe) traffic (white lines) between other *limuw* villages and mainland villages, such as *syuxtun* (Santa Barbara) and *šaxpilil* (Goleta Slough-UCSB campus). Beige lines represent estimated ancient trails linking the island’s villages. While archaeologists have long located the island’s capital village of *liyam* on the south side of the island at Coches Prieto cove, our team is exploring the hypothesis that *liyam* was more likely at the very location of the TNC Ranch and the SCI Reserve station. Centrally located to communicate with all the island’s

villages, at the place where the island's largest watershed converges, this location better matches the ethnohistoric account by Kitsepawit (Fernando Librado, Chumash) and other sources. Cartography by Philip J. Ethington and Matthew Masa Vestuto, 2024.

Part B Critical Discussion

- Cynthia Radding, *Bountiful Deserts: Sustaining Indigenous Worlds in Northern New Spain*. (Arizona Univ. Press, 2022). First three chapters.

Other Readings on “Environmental History”

Anderson, M. Kat. (2013). *Tending the Wild: Native American Knowledge and the Management of California's Natural Resources*. Berkeley, University of California Press.

Akins, Damon B. and William J. Bauer Jr. 2021. *We Are the Land: A History of Native Brown*,

Brown, Frederick. 2016. *The City is More Than Human: An Animal History of Seattle*. University of Washington Press.

Cronon, William. 1992. *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*. Norton.

Cronon, William. ed, 1996. *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*. Norton.

Hämäläinen, Pekka. (2010) “The Politics of Grass: European Expansion, Ecological Change, and Indigenous Power in the Southwest Borderlands.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* April 2010, Vol. 67, No. 2 (April), pp. 173-208.

Nash, Linda. 2007. *Inescapable Ecologies: A History of Environment, Disease, and Knowledge*. UC Press.

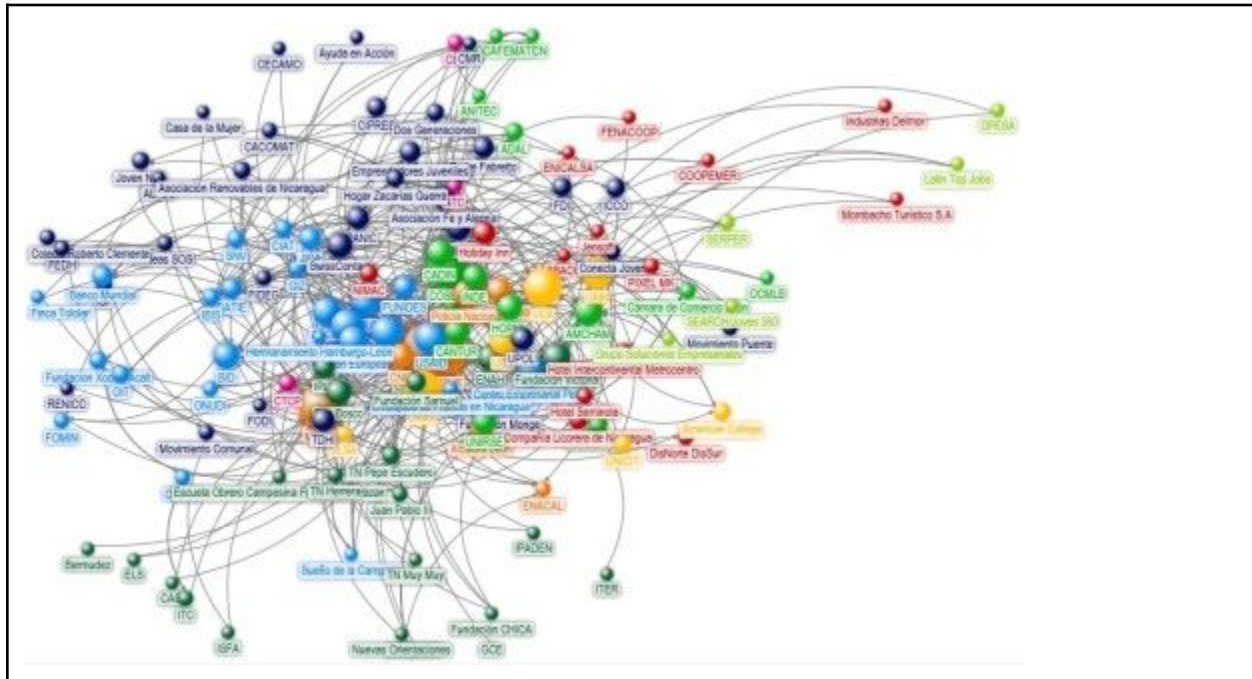
Needham, Andrew. 2014 *Power Lines: Phoenix and the Making of the Modern Southwest* Princeton University Press.

Spence, Mark. 2000. *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks*. Oxford.

Donald Worster, 1993. *The Wealth of Nature: Environmental History and the Ecological Imagination*. Oxford.

Week 3

Jan 29 Social Position, Perspective, and Networks



Network Map for Workforce Development in Nicaragua (Managua, Matagalpa and Leon)
<https://linclocal.org/2015/10/21/linc-nicaragua-social-network-analysis-results/>

Part A Workshop (3:00-4:45): **Manuscripts, Printed Ephemera, Correspondence**

In this workshop we will examine hand-written manuscripts, letters, and ephemera. We will focus on two challenges: 1) The material facts of an archival collection pertaining to a living or deceased individual or an active or defunct organization. How does the availability of this kind of evidence structure the questions we can ask and how does this body of evidence represent the subject?

The second challenge is that of hermeneutics— or interpretation, as defined by the philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey in the 1890s. The challenge Dilthey posed is that human beings must empathize in order to interpret the thoughts of other interpretive beings. This implies a radical historicism, in which we as historians must reconstruct the mental world of the historical subject, presuming an ignorance of the future that spans the time between that subject and myself, then presume to stand in her shoes, and then interpret their outlook, or *weltanschauung* today, in a new round of discourse, a new and unfolding *weltanschauung*. In short, how well, or intimately, do we need to “know” (or *understand*) the author of archival writings, whether handwritten, printed, or otherwise?

Part B: Critical Discussion of Social Position, Perspective, and Networks

Sayes, Edwin. 2014. "Actor-Network Theory and methodology: Just what does it mean to say that nonhumans have agency?" *Social Studies of Science* , February 2014, Vol. 44, No. 1 (February 2014), pp. 134-149. PDF on Brightspace

Latour, Bruno. 1996. "On actor-network theory: A few clarifications." *Soziale Welt* , 1996, 47. Jahrg., H. 4 (1996), pp. 369-381. PDF on Brightspace

Further Readings on the Theme:

Allen, Casey D. 2011. "On Actor-Network Theory and landscape." *Area* , SEPTEMBER 2011, Vol. 43, No. 3 (SEPTEMBER 2011), pp. 274-280.

Ethington, Philip J. 2011. "Sociovisual Perspective: Vision and the Forms of the Human Past," in Barbara Stafford, ed, *A Field Guide to a New Meta-Field: Bridging the Humanities-Neurosciences Divide* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

Week 4 **Senses of Space and the Phenomenology of Placeness** **Feb 5**

Part A: Landscapes of the Past, Workshop on LA Landscape History

<https://lalandscapehistory.org/>

Part B: Critical Discussion

- Edward S. Casey, "How to get from space to place in a fairly short stretch of time: phenomenological prolegomena." In Feld, Steven. and Basso, Keith H., eds, *Senses of Place*, Seattle, University of Washington Press; 1996.

Related: Ethington, Philip J. 2007. "Placing the Past: 'Groundwork' for a Spatial Theory of History," forum with responses by Thomas Bender, David Carr, Edward Casey, Edward Dimendberg, and Alun Munslow, *Rethinking History* 11:4 (December): 463-530.

Week 5

Feb 12: Re-Presenting The Past: Visual History Part I – Photographic and Cinematic



P. Ethington, *Ghost Neighborhood*. Temple-Beaudry, Los Angeles. 1997.

Part A: Workshop on Photographic Sources in USC Special Collections.

Part B: Critical Discussion

Essays from Liz Wells, Ed. *Photography: A Critical Introduction*

Critical Photographic Histories

Karlos K. Hill, *The 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre: A Photographic History* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2021)

Nicole Dawn Strathman, *Through a Native Lens: American Indian Photography* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2020)

Heather Ahtone, Faith Brower, and Seth Hopkins for *Warhol and the West* (University of California Press, 2019)

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James R. Swensen, *In a Rugged Land: Ansel Adams, Dorothea Lange, and the Three Mormon Towns Collaboration, 1953-1954* (University of Utah Press, 2018)

Marian Wardle and Sarah E. Boehme for *Branding the American West: Paintings and Films 1900-1950* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2016).

Sergei Kan for A Russian American photographer in Tlingit country : Vincent Soboleff in Alaska (University of Oklahoma Press, 2013)

Eric L. Muller, *Colors of Confinement: Rare Kodachrome Photographs of Japanese American Incarceration in World War II* (University of North Carolina Press, 2012)

Margot Liberty, ed. Commentary by John Woodenlegs for A Northern Cheyenne Album: Photographs by Thomas B. Marquis (University of Oklahoma Press, 2006)

David Harris with Eric Sandweiss, eds. *Eadweard Muybridge and the Photographic Panorama of San Francisco, 1850-1880* (MIT Press, 1993).

Critical Studies of Cinematic Portrayals of the American West.

Black, Liza. *Picturing Indians: Native Americans in Film, 1941–1960*. Nebraska.

LeAnne Howe, Harvey Markowitz, Denise K. Cumming. 2013. *Seeing Red—Hollywood's Pixeled Skins: American Indians and Film*. Michigan State.

Rollins, Peter C. and John E. O'Connor, eds. 2003. *Hollywood's Indian: The Portrayal of the Native American in Film*. Kentucky.

Wardle, Marian and Sarah E. Boehme. 2016. *Branding the American West: Paintings and Films 1900-1950* (University of Oklahoma Press).

Week 6

Feb 19 – Indigeneity and Indigenous History

Part A: Interview with Chumash Elder Matthew Masa Vestuto

Part B: Critical Discussion, Basso's *Wisdom Sits in Places*

- Keith Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache*. Univ of New Mexico Press, 1996.

Important Titles In the Very Large Field of Native American History:

Akins, Damon B. and William J. Bauer Jr. 2021. *We Are the Land: A History of Native California*. Univ of California Press.

Axtell, James. 1981. *The European and the Indian: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America*. Oxford.

Bauer Jr., William J. 2016. *California through Native Eyes: Reclaiming History* University of Washington Press.

Berkhofer, Robert F. 1979. *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present*

Blackhawk, Ned. *The Rediscovery of America: Native Peoples and the Unmaking of U.S. History* (Yale 2023).

Blackhawk, Ned. 2008. *Violence over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West*. Harvard.

Cronon, William. *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*

DeLoria, Philip J. and Neal Salisbury, eds. 2008 *A Companion to American Indian History* (Wiley Blackwell Companions to American History Book 3). Wiley-Blackwell.

DeLoria, Philip J.. 2004. *Indians in Unexpected Places*. (Univ Press of Kansas)

Dunbar-Ortiz, Roxanne. *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* (2015).

Hämäläinen, Pekka. (2022) *Indigenous Continent: The Epic Contest for North America*. New York: Liverlight / W.W. Norton.

Hämäläinen, Pekka (2008) *The Commanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press).

Witgen, Michael J. 2002. *Seeing Red: Indigenous Land, American Expansion, and the Political Economy of Plunder in North America* (University of North Carolina Press and The Omohundro Institute).

Classics and Bestsellers:

Brown, Dee. (1970) *Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee*

Crow Dog, Mary. (1990). *Lakota Woman*. New York, Harper Perennial.

Delora Jr, Vine. (1971). *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*.

Jackson, Helen Hunt. *A Century of Dishonor* (1881)

Neihardt, John G. (2014) *Black Elk Speaks: The Complete Edition*, Philip J. Deloria (Introduction), Vine Deloria Jr. (Foreword). Bison Books.

Week 7

Feb 26 – WEEK 7 presentations and interpretations

- 30-Minute researcher presentations and open discussions. What is my biggest interpretive challenge? Present this challenge with an example of an empirical object and your interpretation of it.

Week 8

MAR 5 – Borderlands N,S, E and W

Part A: BYOB (Bring Your Own Borderland)

Borderlands are spaces in between. They can be terrestrial or aqueous, metaphorical or symbolic. They exist everywhere there are categories and boundaries, because those are always porous at a certain scale. Borderlands experience movement between: Migrations, immigrations, raids, expulsions. This concept is broad enough that everyone should have a borderland story in their article or chapter. The first part of this week's seminar will be to share these stories and formulate some initial conclusions about borderlands as a general historical process.

Part B: Critical Discussion of Baumgartner, *South To Freedom*

Alice L. Baumgartner, *South To Freedom: Runaway Slaves to Mexico and the Road to the Civil War*. NY: Basic Books, 2020.

Readings in the Theme

Adams, David Wallace. 2016. *Three Roads to Magdalena: Coming of Age in a Southwest Borderland, 1890-1990*. University Press of Kansas.

Barba, Paul. 2021. *Country of the Cursed and the Driven: Slavery and the Texas Borderlands*. University of Nebraska Press.

Barr, Juliana. 2007. *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands*. Univ. of North Carolina Press.

Conrad, Paul. 2021. *Apache Diaspora: Four Centuries of Displacement and Survival*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Crandall, Maurice. 2019. *These People Have Always Been a Republic: Indigenous Electorates in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands, 1598-1912*. University of North Carolina Press.

DeLay, Brian. 2009. *War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the U.S.-Mexican War*. Yale.

Gilbert, Matthew Sakiestewa. 2018. *Hopi Runners: Crossing the Terrain between Indian and American*. University Press of Kansas.

Greenberg, Amy S., 2013. *A Wicked War: Polk, Clay, Lincoln, and the 1846 U.S. Invasion of Mexico*. Vintage.

Lim, Julian. 2017. *Porous Borders: Multiracial Migrations and the Law in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (University of North Carolina Press).

Reséndez, Andrés. 2017 *The Other Slavery: The Uncovered Story of Indian Enslavement in America*. Mariner.

Smith, Stacy. 2014. *Freedom's Frontier: California and the Struggle over Unfree Labor, Emancipation, and Reconstruction*. UNC Press.

Torget, Andrew. 2016. *Seeds of Empire: Cotton, Slavery, and the Transformation of the Texas Borderlands, 1800-1850* (University of North Carolina Press)

Weber, David J. 1992. *The Spanish Frontier in North America*. Yale.

Weber, David J. 1982. *The Mexican Frontier, 1821-1846: The American Southwest Under Mexico*. New Mexico.

Molina, Natalia. 2022. *A Place at the Nayarit: How a Mexican Restaurant Nourished a Community*. University of California Press.

WEEK 9

Mar 12 : – Re-Presenting The Past: Visual History Part 2 – – Workshop on Historical Cartography and Cartographic History

Part A: Workshop on Mapping as Critical Discourse

Hands-on Cartography workshop using live data sets provided by Ethington or supplied by students. GIS applications from ArcGIS Pro to Google Earth. We foreground the question of what story we want to tell in visual space? There are many ways to represent the past in maps. These choices are equivalent to the modes of emplotment we choose when we write semantic

prose. In this workshop we will gain a practical understanding of the role of scale, symbology, and visual communication in telling cartographic stories that are not mere illustrations of a written narrative, but instead harness the affordances of visual thinking.

Part B: Critical Discussion on Historical Social Geography

- Ethington and Pallol, "Disorder at the Border" The Fractal Structure of Diversity and Segregation in Los Angeles County, 1930s." Article Draft, TS, December 2024. PDF on Brightspace

Some Readings on the Theme

David Bodenhamer and John Corrigan, eds., *Deep Maps and Spatial Narratives* (Indiana University Press, 2015).

Griffiths, Sam, y Laura Vaughan. 2020. "Mapping Spatial Cultures: Contributions of Space Syntax to Research in the Urban History of the Nineteenth-Century City". *Urban History*, vol. 47, n.o 3, (Aug), pp. 488-511.

Harley, J.B. 2002. *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography*. Johns Hopkins.

Hillier, Amy, and Anne Knowles.. 2008. *Placing History: How Maps, Spatial Data, and GIS Are Changing Historical Scholarship*. ESRI Press.

Knowles, Anne K. 2002. *Past Time, Past Place: GIS for History*. ESRI Press.

SPRING BREAK 16-23 MARCH

Week 10

MAR 26 –Spatial Imaginaries

Part A: Workshop on Recent Historiography

Blackwell's 2004 landmark A Companion to the American West, edited by William Devereil, is now 20 years of age. In 2004, each of the volume's essays represented the cutting edge of

historiographic discussion of its themes. For this assignment each student is to choose an essay from the *Blackwell's Companion* and write an outline of how you would bring it up to date.

Part B: Critical Discussion of Alexander, *Liberty's Grid*, with Guest discussion leader: William Deverell.

- Amir Alexander, *Liberty's Grid: A Founding Father, a Mathematical Dreamland, and the Shaping of America*. Univ. Chicago Pr. 2024.

Readings on the Theme

Aron, Stephen. 2004. "The Making of the First West and the Unmaking of Other Realms," in *The Blackwell Companion to the American West* (hereafter BCAW)

West, Elot. 2004. "Thinking West," BCAW

Robbins, William. 1999. "In Pursuit of Historical Explanation: Capitalism as a Conceptual Tool for Knowing the American West," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 30 (Autumn), 277-294

Faragher, John Mack ed, 1999. *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner: The Significance of the Frontier and Other Essays*. Yale.

Limerick, Patricia, Clyde Milner, and Charles Rankin. 1991. *Trails: Towards a New Western History*. Kansas.

Klein, Kerwin. 1999. *Frontiers of Historical Imagination: Narrating the European Conquest of Native America, 1890-1990*. California.

Valerie Matsumoto and Blake Allmendinger, eds, 1999. *Over the Edge: Remapping the American West*. California.

David Wrobel and Michael Steiner, eds, 1997. *Many Wests: Place, Culture, & Regional Identity*. Kansas

Week 11

APR 2: Rebellion, Resistance, Uprising, Revolution, Reaction

- Kelly Lytle Hernandez *Bad Mexicans" Race, Empire and Revolution in the Borderlands* (Norton 2022).

Readings on the Theme

Davis, Mike. 1999. *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster*. Verso.

Escobar, Edward J. 1999. *Race, Police, and the Making of a Political Identity: Mexican Americans and the Los Angeles Police Department, 1900-1945*. California.

Ethington, Philip J. 2008. "Global Spaces of Los Angeles, 1920s-1930s," in Gyan Prakash and Kevin Kruse, eds, *The Spaces of the Modern City: Imaginaries, Politics, and Everyday Life*. (Princeton University Press, 2008), pp. 58-98.

Kim, Jessica. 2021. *Imperial Metropolis: Los Angeles, Mexico, and the Borderlands of American Empire, 1865–1941*. North Carolina.

Sanchez, George J. 2021. *Boyle Heights: How a Los Angeles Neighborhood Became the Future of American Democracy*. California.

Week 12

Apr 9 Colonial and Modern Intimacies

Part A: Workshop on “Soft Power.”

Come with examples from your research of power relations that do not involve war or politics.

Part B: Critical Discussion of Pérez, Colonial Intimacies.

- Erika Pérez 2018. *Colonial Intimacies: Interethnic Kinship, Sexuality, and Marriage in Southern California, 1769-1885*. (Chaps 2-5)

Week 13

Apr 16 WRITING WEEK, NO SEMINAR

Week 14

APR 23 – INDIVIDUAL DRAFT DISCUSSION MEETINGS

During this week there will be no seminar. Instead I will hold 40-minute individual meetings with each of the seminar participants to discuss their latest drafts.

Week 15

APR 30 – FINAL DISCUSSIONS, Dinner Celebration

Discussion of research and writing process,