Race and Gender on Imperial Frontiers

History 9718B -- Winter 2016
University of Western Ontario
Mondays, 9:30-11:30am LwH 2270C

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In this course we will read and discuss recent literature on the history of settler colonialism in North America alongside comparative studies of other settler societies around the globe. In the past few decades, scholars have begun to use “settler colonialism” to describe societies in which outsiders (white Europeans in most cases) invaded a place in order to settle there permanently, and used political, legal, cultural, and economic structures to transform it into their space, turning themselves into its “natives.” Unlike other kinds of imperial regimes, large numbers of women from the invading culture helped to colonize settler colonies, but they were otherwise very similar to other imperial ventures, and to varying degrees most combined the appropriation of indigenous land with resource extraction and forced labor. New gender norms and racial hierarchies arose from white settler colonial methods of taking land and extracting labor. These new relations of power and privilege had very different consequences for white settlers, displaced Indigenous people, and imported laborers. Due to time constraints, this course will focus mainly on the experiences and interactions of Indigenous peoples and invading settlers, with less time (though not importance) given to the forced migrants and enslaved people that European empires and settlers exploited.

Your final course grade will be determined as follows:

weekly participation in seminar (20%)
Did you attend? Had you done the reading effectively? Were you prepared to ask questions and interact with the readings and your peers in a respectful and critical manner? Did you ask questions or make comments that drew common threads or useful comparisons across different readings (from this or any week of the course)? Did you participate meaningfully each week, or only when we read something you were interested in? Did you share your thoughts, positive or negative, or did you save “what you really think” for discussions outside of class? If you must miss a seminar meeting due to illness or a family emergency, please inform me in writing and provide any available documentation.

discussion leadership in seminar (5%)
Once during the seminar you (and possibly 1-2 others) will begin our discussion of the week’s readings with a short presentation (5-10 minutes) to the whole seminar that outlines: 1) main arguments 2) methodologies 3) sources 4) reviews of author(s)’s work and its implications for the field and 5) discussion questions. Hit each of these effectively, and you’ll earn all 5 points.

five book reviews (25%)
We will read seven monographs in this course. You must write a 500-800 word review of five of them. Send each to lshire@uwo.ca before class on the date we discuss the book. A good book review pinpoints and pithily summarizes the thesis, methods, and sources of the study; identifies the most important implications of the research findings and places them in conversation with others who agree and disagree in the field; points out any substantive omissions or problems; indicates what new questions the study has raised for future research. If you are unsure what a good book review looks like, browse the review section of your favorite academic history journal. These cannot be accepted after the seminar meets on that book (whether or not you attend), so please plan accordingly.

18-20 page essay (50%)
Choose a reasonably delimited question about the history of settler colonialism (anywhere in the world and at any time in history) and conduct original research into primary and secondary sources to answer it. You might choose a particular cultural artifact/event or primary source to analyze, or carve out a small piece of a larger research project to explore in this essay. You should use as many of our shared course materials as are relevant to your research question, in addition to those you find in your research. Your final draft is due on April 29, 2016 by 12 noon. It must include a title, footnotes or endnotes, and a bibliography in Chicago/Turabian (exceptions will be made for students from disciplines that use other citation styles, discuss with me please). If possible and appropriate, you are encouraged to use this to begin research for a conference paper, journal article, MA cognate, or dissertation chapter. If your seminar paper does continue into one of those venues, I will be happy to provide feedback even after the course is complete.

Course Materials (in DBW library, available at the bookstore and/or online):
Pekka Hämäläinen The Comanche Empire (2008). Isbn: 0300151179

Weekly Seminar Topics and Readings:
All of the readings are mandatory – but you should be reading them strategically for argument and relevant content (not reading every word, necessarily, and certainly not in order from page 1 to the end).
*available on-line via Western Libraries.
**available as .pdfs on the course OWL site.

11 Jan. Week 2 – Interdisciplinary Foundations in Settler Colonial Studies
- Lorenzo Veracini, *The Settler Colonial Present*
- tequila sovereign “Why ‘Settler Colonialism’ isn’t exactly right” and “More musings on why ‘settler colonialism’ doesn’t work for me” and “Reply to Wolfe and Rifkin” at https://tequilasovereign.wordpress.com/?s=settler&submit=Search

18 Jan. Week 3 – Comparative Colonial History

25 Jan. Week 4 – Post-Colonial Theory

1 Feb. Week 5 – The Law as a Tool of Empire in Settler Colonial Spaces

8 Feb. Week 6 – Intersections of Race, Sexuality, and Gender in Settler Colonies

22 Feb. Week 7 - Gender/Race/Family in the U.S. and Australia

29 Feb. Week 8 – Intersections of Sexuality, Race, Gender in North America, South Africa, Hawaii, and Latin America
7 March. Week 9- Gender/Race/Family in Brazil


14 March. Week 10 – Queer Settler Colonial Studies


21 March. Week 11- Gender/Race/Family in Canada


28 March. Week 12 – Indigenous Empires? and Native Resistance!

- Pekka Hämäläinen *The Comanche Empire* (2008).

4 April. Week 13 – The Settler Colonial World in which We Live, or, Is there such a thing as “post”-colonial?

- “Indian Country Diaries Episode 2: Spiral of Fire,” Carol Patton Cornsilk (Amazon Instant Video)