

North American Wests  
Spring 2002  
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Office Hours: Monday: 3:30- 5:00

This is the second sequence of a seminar that began last spring. It is intended to allow students to develop a set of research skills and a knowledge of the social and environmental history of the American West while at the same time doing research that will actually inform management policy at Point Reyes National Seashore. Instead of reinventing the wheel each year, this year's seminar will build on the work done last year. Each participant will receive a cd-rom containing many of the papers and the sources from last year's seminar. This will be the starting point for this year's seminar.

The class will function as a combination research seminar/colloquium. We will have a core set of readings that are designed to give students models on how to write environmental and social studies of the American West. The main work of the class, however, will be researching a set of historical topics that are critical to the current management of the park. This is real and potentially very difficult historical research in that the materials need to be found, evaluated and then turned into a historical narrative. There is no guarantee that all the questions that you ask will be answerable or that the answers will be anything more than tentative.

If the research is successful, however, there will be a potentially significant outcome. Over time, Point Reyes may be managed and portrayed differently than it is now because of research done in the seminar.

Most of the work will take place at Stanford, but at least two visits and tours of Point Reyes will be necessary. It is therefore essential that all students have at least some days that they can devote entirely to a trip to and from Point Reyes.

#### Readings:

These are intended as models of 1) how local histories can address large problems, and 2) the difficulties of dealing with memoirs and oral histories as historical sources.

Dewey Livingston and Martin L. Griffin, Saving the Marin-Sonoma Coast  
The Battles for Audubon Canyon Ranch, Point Reyes, and California's Russian River  
William deBuys: Salt Dreams  
William Cronon: Nature's Metropolis

#### Class Schedule

April 8 Make arrangements for Point Reyes field trips and research schedules.

April 15 Questions

Readings: Cronon: Uncommon Ground, 23-131, 171-203, 379-408

April 22 Stories

Readings: William deBuys: Salt Dreams (entire)

April 29 Where We Start From

Readings: You should have read the papers and glanced at the materials from last year.

May 8 Tour the Park (tentative)

May 15 The Park and What It Means

Readings: Selections from Saving the Marin Sonoma Coast

May 22 Projects

May 27 No class, Holiday

June 3 Projects

## Assignments

Students will pick one of the topics from a list that will be distributed in class. They will then, either working as a group or individually, research and write a paper on that topic. The paper must use such primary sources as are available. Students will be responsible for finding these sources.

The following assignments will be graded pass/fail. Each must pass to go on to the next stage. All of these assignments should be submitted by e-mail to the instructor and all other members of the seminar at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting of the seminar.

April 15      Preliminary selection of topic with a brief (one paragraph) justification.

- April 22      Preliminary bibliography: potential sources, where you are going to look and why.
- April 29      So what? A one to two page essay explaining why your topic matters and why. I want you to give me the questions (and there should not be more than three) that you are going to ask and why they are important. I realize that you have not done much research, but the purpose of the assignment is to explain to a skeptical reader why what you are doing matters.
- May 15      Reading the physical world. The date of this may be change since it depends on a visit to Point Reyes. I would like each of you to give me a single page describing how reading the physical landscape can contribute to the questions you will ask about your topic.
- May 22      Absences. As a project develops and begins to take form, a certain line of vision develops. This line of vision reveals not only the scope of the project but also where the researcher is standing. And where the researcher stands creates absences as well as presences. No project can do everything; they are all composites of presences and absences. But we need to be as aware as possible of what we are doing. The danger is that what should be a crucial presence will be erased and become an absence. The assignment will be to offer a formulation of the project as it now stands, and then to step back and describe what is absent.

## Grades

The grades will be based on the final papers and on class participation. For those doing group projects, the project will be graded and not the students themselves. If a group feels that one member is not doing their fair share of the work, they may ask that student to leave the project. In that case, the student will be responsible for doing an individual paper.

Papers--80%

Class participation--20%