

Gender in the North American West



Teacher with picture cards giving English instruction to Navajo students, circa 1954.
Navajo Area Office, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior, US National Archives.

This class looks at how gender functioned in the “wild wild west.” Popular conceptions of “the west” loom large in the North American imaginary, but the binaries it suggests (Indian/cowboy, empty/settled, savage/civilized) do little to help us understand the history of the region. As this class will show, adopting a gender analysis significantly enhances our comprehension of the complexities of the North American West in the 19th and 20th centuries. Looking first at how constructions of Indigenous and settler masculinity, femininity, and alternative genders functioned in the region, we will then turn to assessing the different ways that gender, race, class, sexuality, family, immigration, and violence affected each other in particular moments, over time, and across borders.

Assignments

Seminar Participation	25%
Reading Responses	15%
Letter to the Editor	25%
Creative Assignment	35%

Readings

All course readings available on Canvas

Learning Goal #1

Develop understandings of and begin to apply theories and methods in gender history.

Learning Goal #2

Understand how the diverse constructions of gender in the North American West were contingent on social and environmental factors, and were fluid over time.

Learning Goal #3

Enhance writing abilities through technical skills and self-reflective practice.