Hist-GA 2790: Topics in Comparative History: Comparative Borderlands History
New York University
Spring 2016
Mondays 9:30 am to 12:15 pm
KJCC 607

Professor Rachel St. John
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Office: KJCC 705
Office Hours: TBD

Description:
This reading seminar will introduce students to works of borderlands history drawn from a wide variety of geographic and chronological fields. Course topics will include indigeneity, empire, national territory and identity, smuggling and trade, voluntary and forced migration, and boundaries, borders, and walls.

Course Requirements:

Participation:
It is essential that you attend class and participate in class discussions. If you must miss class for any reason, you will need to contact me before class and complete a 3-5 page review of the week’s readings.

Beyond just attending class, you need to actively participate. This means that you must have completed all of the week’s readings and be engaged in classroom discussion. Every student’s participation is essential to promoting a thoughtful, interesting, and useful discussion. While critical and possibly controversial perspectives are welcome, participants are expected to be respectful and open to other’s interpretations.

Texts:

- Kate Brown, *A Biography of No Place: From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland*
- Wendy Brown, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*
- C. Patterson Giersch, *Asian Borderlands: The Transformation of Qing China’s Yunnan Frontier*
- Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire*
- Michel Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line: Creating a Border and Dividing a People*
- Paul Nugent, *Smugglers Secessionists & Loyal Citizens: On The Ghana-Togo Frontier*
- Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees*
- Annemarie H. Sammartino, *The Impossible Border: Germany and the East, 1914-1922*
- Eric Tagliacozzo, *Secret Trades, Porous Borders: Smuggling and States Along a Southeast Asian Frontier, 1865-1915*
- Arthur Waldron, *The Great Wall of China: From History to Myth*
• Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*
• Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948*

Assignments:

• **Weekly Synopsis and Reading Response – Due weekly by Sunday at 5 pm**
  Each week each student will submit a brief (1-2 pages double-spaced) paper that summarizes and evaluates the major arguments and contributions of the week’s text and raises questions, makes critiques, or acknowledges important points of comparison for discussion. These papers should be clearly written, coherent, grammatically correct, and spell-checked, but can be fairly informal. The intended audience should be me and your fellow classmates and can thus be fairly conversational. You can also presume knowledge of previous readings and class discussions. These should be posted to the course website by 5 pm Sunday night before class.

• **Book Review – Due at your discretion; no later than April 11th**
  Select one of the course texts and write a critical review. For preparation for this assignment you can consult the book reviews sections of most major academic journals (for instance, the *American Historical Review, Journal of American History, the Hispanic American Historical Review*, etc). Using these reviews as a model, write a 1000-word review of the book in which you summarize its approach and argument and critically evaluate its contribution to its field and the field of borderlands history. You are welcome to use any text that we will be reading during the semester, although if you choose a text from the last month of the class you will necessarily need to read ahead.

• **Historiographic Essay – Due May 11th**
  The final assignment of the course is to write a historiographic essay in which you delve further into some aspect of borderlands history. In preparing for this essay you will need to choose a subset of borderlands history and select 3-5 books and articles to read that will allow you to analyze how historians have written about your topic. You are welcome to use books that we read in class. I just ask that you include at least two additional texts (or 1-3 articles in place of a book). I am more than happy to help you in identifying a topic and selecting appropriate readings. Your historiographic essay should make an argument about how historians have written about this topic and make some suggestions for future work.

Evaluation:

• Class Participation – 25%
• Weekly Reading Response Papers – 20%
• Book Review – 20%
• Historiographic Essay – 35%
Schedule:

January 25\textsuperscript{th}: Introductions
Readings:
- none

February 1\textsuperscript{st}: Approaching Borderlands History
Readings:
- M. Baud and Willem van Schendel, “Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands”, Journal of World History 8:2 (Fall 1997): 211-242
- Charles Maier, “Consigning the Twentieth Century to History: Alternative Narratives for the Modern Era,” American Historical Review 105, no. 3 (June 2000): 807-31

February 8\textsuperscript{th}:
Readings:
- Richard White, 	extit{The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815}

February 15\textsuperscript{th}: **NO CLASS PRESIDENTS’ DAY HOLIDAY**

February 22\textsuperscript{nd}:
Readings:
- C. Patterson Giersch, 	extit{Asian Borderlands: The Transformation of Qing China’s Yunnan Frontier}

February 29\textsuperscript{th}:
Readings:
- Pekka Hämäläinen, 	extit{The Comanche Empire}

March 7\textsuperscript{th}:
Readings:
- Peter Sahlins, 	extit{Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees}

March 14\textsuperscript{th}: **NO CLASS SPRING BREAK**

March 21\textsuperscript{st}:
Readings:
- Eric Tagliacozzo, 	extit{Secret Trades, Porous Borders: Smuggling and States Along a Southeast Asian Frontier, 1865-1915}
March 28th:
  • Paul Nugent, *Smugglers Secessionists & Loyal Citizens: On The Ghana-Togo Frontier*

April 4th:
Readings:
  • Michel Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line: Creating a Border and Dividing a People*

April 11th:
Readings:
  • Annemarie H. Sammartino, *The Impossible Border: Germany and the East, 1914-1922*

April 18th:
Readings:
  • Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948*

April 25th:
Readings:
  • Kate Brown, *A Biography of No Place: From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland*

May 2nd:
Readings:
  • Wendy Brown, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*

May 9th:
Readings:
  • Arthur Waldron, *The Great Wall of China: From History to Myth*

**Historiographic Essay Due May 11th**