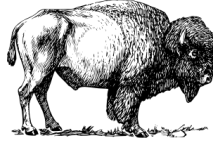


# HIST 323

## The Canadian Prairies

Simon Fraser University  
Spring 2015



**Lectures:** Mondays 12:30-2:20 pm & Wednesdays 12:30-1:20 pm, AQ 5004

**Tutorials:** Wednesdays 1:30-2:20 pm, AQ 5038

**Canvas website:** <https://canvas.sfu.ca/courses/19552>

**Instructor:** Dr. Tina Adcock ([tina.adcock@sfu.ca](mailto:tina.adcock@sfu.ca))

**Office hours:** Mondays 2:30-3:30 pm & Tuesdays 12-1 pm, AQ 6236

### Course description

In the last ten years, the Prairie Provinces—Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba—have become arguably the most dynamic region in Canada. This course places the recent “rise of the West” in context by examining the political, socio-cultural, and environmental history of the Canadian Prairies. We will consider the many, often contradictory ways this region has been constructed and imagined by Aboriginal and settler peoples over roughly the last 350 years: as a homeland or hinterland, a barren or fertile landscape, and a national or transnational region. We will explore the relationships between humans, non-humans, and Prairie landscapes, discovering how the material and biological conditions of life in this region have changed over time, and with what consequences. We will investigate how intersecting social identities of gender, race, and class shaped the experiences of different Prairie dwellers in particular times and places, as well as their ability to determine the course of their lives and of regional events. Finally, we’ll take a critical look at the genre of Prairie regional history. We’ll situate it within Canadian historiography more broadly, weigh its benefits and limitations, and question its continued utility and relevance in a globalizing and decolonizing nation.

### Course objectives

By the end of this course, you will be able:

- To compare and contrast different representations of the Prairie region, and to relate each representation to its particular historical and cultural context
- To explain the causes and consequences of changes in Prairie environments over time
- To illustrate how gender, race, and class affected the perspectives and agency of Prairie dwellers in different times and places
- To critically appraise the genre of Prairie regional history with reference to its historical, historiographical, and contemporary contexts
- To practice and hone the skills of interpreting, evaluating, and synthesizing primary and secondary historical materials in oral and written form

### Course readings

There are two required texts for this course:

John Herd Thompson. *Forging the Prairie West*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1998. \$39.95.

James Daschuk. *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life*.  
Regina: University of Regina Press, 2014. \$31.00.

New copies of these books are available at the SFU Bookstore. You may source your own new or used copies on Amazon, abebooks.com, or elsewhere. These books have also been placed on 4-hour reserve at Bennett Library.

All other readings are available on the course's Canvas website or will be provided to you in class. Assigned readings for lectures should be completed before class on Mondays, and for tutorials before class on Wednesdays. The success of our meetings depends on everyone having done the readings.

### Course evaluation

Your final grade will be determined as follows:

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Participation                           | 15% |
| Book review: <i>Clearing the Plains</i> | 20% |
| Research essay:                         |     |
| Proposal                                | 5%  |
| Final essay                             | 30% |
| Take-home final exam                    | 30% |

You are expected to prepare for and attend every lecture and tutorial. Your **participation** will enhance your enjoyment of this course, contribute to a dynamic and mutually profitable classroom environment, and greatly increase your understanding and retention of the material. I expect you to come to class with the readings in hand or with the files on your laptop or tablet, having read them carefully and thoughtfully. I also expect you to reflect critically on lectures, readings, and primary sources in written and spoken form, to listen to your peers and engage with their viewpoints, and to practice expressing your ideas and arguments clearly, concisely, and convincingly.

If you have to be absent from a lecture or tutorial unexpectedly, please send me an email explaining why, and provide documentation from another instructor, a program director, or a medical professional, if appropriate. If you know you will have to miss class due to religious observances/practices or another such conflict (e.g. athletic competitions, interviews for professional programs), please let me know as soon as possible. Excused absences will not affect your participation grade.

### Course assignments & examinations

Your first assignment is a **book review** of James Daschuk's *Clearing the Plains*, a recently published, award-winning monograph that tells a deeply unsettling story about federal policy toward aboriginal peoples on the late nineteenth-century Prairies. In addition to discussing Daschuk's thesis, arguments, use of evidence, and contributions to historical understanding, you will also be asked to reflect upon the public reaction to his book, which has received an unusually large amount of attention in popular media (for an academic book, anyway). We will discuss the details of this assignment further in class. The review should be **4-6 pages long** and will be due on **Monday, February 16**.

Your second assignment will be a **research essay** on a topic of your choice within the historical and geographical remit of this course. I encourage you to draw ideas from readings, class lectures,

or even from material encountered in other course. Please feel free to meet with me some time in the first half of the term, before or after class or during office hours, to discuss potential topics.

Beginning your work on this paper early will help ensure that you produce a well thought-out and well-researched piece of scholarly writing. The first step will be to write a tentative **research proposal**, which should consist of the research question that your essay intends to answer; an initial thesis statement, or answer to that question; and a list of 5-10 primary or secondary sources that you intend to cite in your bibliography. Your proposal will not be graded, but its submission counts for 5% of your overall course grade. You will therefore receive a zero for this portion of your grade if you submit nothing. The proposal should be about **1 page long** and is due **Monday, March 2**.

Your research essay will build upon this plan, although your question and thesis statement will likely evolve from their initial form as you become more immersed in your chosen topic. Your essay must articulate your thesis clearly, and construct your supporting arguments in a logical and organized fashion. Your arguments should draw upon thoughtfully chosen examples and evidence found in your primary and secondary sources, which (of course) will be cited appropriately. The essay should be **10-12 pages long** and will be due on **Wednesday, April 8**.

This course will conclude with a **take-home exam**, which will consist of essay questions asking you to synthesize course material in order to make broad arguments about the course's overarching themes. I will hand out the examination on the last day of class, and it will be due in hard copy in my mailbox in the History department by **5 pm on Friday, April 24**. This exam will be open-book. You may make use of any course materials to answer the questions, including readings, lecture notes, excerpts from primary sources, video clips or films, and so on.

### **Policies regarding assignments**

All assignments are due at the beginning of class and must be submitted in hard copy. Please include your name, the date, and some kind of descriptive title on the first page. A separate title page is not necessary. Please also number the pages of the assignment. All assignments must be word-processed, using standard 1-inch margins, at least 1.5-inch spacing, and 11 or 12-point font. Use Chicago style for footnotes or endnotes (you may employ whichever of the two you prefer) and for lists of works cited.

A late assignment will have **5%** of its final mark subtracted for each day it is late. Excuses will not be entertained unless you can produce relevant official documentation, such as a doctor's note. Extensions must be requested at least 72 hours in advance of an assignment's due date. Please do not request an extension unless personal or medical circumstances seriously warrant one.

### **Academic honesty**

By enrolling in classes at SFU, you have consented to a student contract that includes a commitment to academic honesty:

<http://www.sfu.ca/students/calendar/2015/spring/fees-and-regulations/student-contract/academic-honesty.html>

It is your responsibility to ensure that you understand what constitutes academic dishonesty, which includes but is not limited to plagiarism. This guide clarifies what actions are considered academically honest and dishonest at SFU:

<http://www.sfu.ca/students/academicintegrity/resources/academichonestyguide.html>

### **Classroom etiquette**

Please arrive to class in a timely fashion to avoid disrupting our learning environment. Please also do not leave the room during class unless it is absolutely, physically unavoidable.

Please turn your cell phones to silent and refrain from using them during class. Feel free to use your laptop, tablet, or netbook to take notes or look up things, but please don't use such devices in ways (Facebook, YouTube, etc) that will disrupt the attention of other students around you. A little courtesy toward your classmates and me goes a long way.

I may make minor changes to the syllabus during the term. I will notify you of these. You will always be able to find the most recent version of the syllabus on the course's Canvas website.

### **Course schedule: Topics, readings, and due dates**

#### Week 1: Introduction

Lecture: Wed Jan 7  
Course introduction & review of syllabus

Tutorial: There will be no tutorial this week.

#### Week 2: Defining the Prairies

Lectures: Mon Jan 12 & Wed Jan 14

Readings: John Herd Thompson, *Forging the Prairie West*, introduction and chapter 1 (9 pgs)  
James Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, introduction and chapters 1 and 2 (40 pgs)

Tutorial: Wed Jan 14

Readings: Gerald Friesen, "The Prairie as region: The contemporary meaning of an old idea," in *River Road* (1996) (18 pgs)  
Merle Massie, "When you're not from the prairie: Place history in the forest fringe of Saskatchewan," *Journal of Canadian Studies* (2010) (20 pgs)  
Alison Calder, "The importance of place, or why we're not post-prairie," in *Place and Replace* (2012) (10 pgs)

#### Week 3: Exploration and the fur trade

Lectures: Mon Jan 19 & Wed Jan 21

Readings: Herd Thompson, *Forging the Prairie West*, chapter 2 (15 pgs)  
Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, chapters 3 and 4 (30 pgs)

Tutorial: Wed Jan 21

Readings: Carolyn Podruchny, "Baptizing Novices: Ritual Moments among French Canadian Voyageurs in the Montreal Fur Trade, 1780-1821," *Canadian Historical Review* (2002) (31 pgs)  
Sylvia Van Kirk, "'Women in Between': Indian Women in Fur Trade Society in Western Canada," *Historical Papers* (1977) (16 pgs)

#### Week 4: The Metis and Red River

Lectures: Mon Jan 26 & Wed Jan 28

Readings: Herd Thompson, *Forging the Prairie West*, chapter 3 (20 pgs)  
Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, chapter 5 (19 pgs)

- Tutorial: Wed Jan 28  
 Readings: George Colpitts, "Provisioning the HBC: Market Economies in the British Buffalo Commons in the Early Nineteenth Century," *Western Historical Quarterly* (2012) (25 pgs)  
 Nicole St-Onge and Carolyn Podruchny, "Scuttling along a Spider's Web: Mobility and Kinship in Metis Ethnogenesis," in *Contours of a People* (2012) (33 pgs)

Week 5: Science, environment, and expansion

- Lectures: Mon Feb 2 & Wed Feb 4  
 Readings: Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, chapter 6 (20 pgs)  
 Doug Owrarn, "A means to empire: Canada's reassessment of the West, 1857-69," in *Promise of Eden* (1982) (18 pgs)

- Tutorial: Wed Feb 4  
 Readings: Owrarn, as above  
 Greg Gillespie, "I Was Well Pleased with Our Sport among the Buffalo': Big-Game Hunters, Travel Writing, and Cultural Imperialism in the British North American West, 1847-72," *Canadian Historical Review* (2002) (30 pgs)

Mon Feb 9 and Wed Feb 11: **Reading Week—no classes**

Week 6: The death of a way of life

- Lectures: Mon Feb 16 & Wed Feb 18  
 Reading: Herd Thompson, *Forging the Prairie West*, chapter 4 (28 pgs)  
**\*Review of *Clearing the Plains* due Mon Feb 16**

- Tutorial: Wed Feb 18  
 Reading: Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*

Week 7: Making the West... Canadian?

- Lectures: Mon Feb 23 & Wed Feb 25  
 Reading: Geoff Read and Todd Webb, "'The Catholic Mahdi of the North West': Louis Riel and the Metis Resistance in Transatlantic and Imperial Context," *Canadian Historical Review* (2012) (25 pgs)

- Tutorial: Wed Feb 25  
 Readings: Read and Webb, as above  
 Sarah Carter, "Transnational Perspectives on the History of Great Plains Women: Gender, Race, Nations, and the Forty-Ninth Parallel," *American Review of Canadian Studies* (2003) (32 pgs)  
 Michel Hogue, "Between Race and Nation: The Creation of a Métis Borderland on the Northern Plains," in *Bridging National Borders in North America* (2010) (28 pgs)

Week 8: Strangers in a strange land

- Lectures: Mon Mar 2 & Wed Mar 4  
 Reading: Herd Thompson, *Forging the Prairie West*, chapter 5 (33 pgs)  
**\*Paper proposal due Mon Mar 2**

- Tutorial: Wed Mar 4  
 Readings: Alison Marshall, "The Western Manitoba Laundry," in *The Way of the Bachelor* (2011) (25 pgs)  
 Ashleigh Androsoff, "A Larger Frame: 'Redressing' the Image of Doukhobor-Canadian Women in the Twentieth Century," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* (2007) (26 pgs)

#### Week 9: Rural life and politics

- Lectures: Mon Mar 9 & Wed Mar 11  
 Reading: Bradford J. Rennie, "'A Far Green Country Unto a Swift Sunrise': The Utopianism of the Alberta Farm Movement, 1909-1923," in *The Prairie West as Promised Land* (2007) (16 pgs)

- Tutorial: Wed Mar 11  
 Readings: Rennie, as above  
 Lesley A. Erickson, "'A Very Garden of the Lord'? Hired Hands, Farm Women, and Sex Crime Prosecutions on the Prairies, 1914-1929," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* (2001) (21 pgs)  
 Mary-Ellen Kelm, "Manly contests: rodeo masculinities at the Calgary Stampede," *Canadian Historical Review* (2009) (41 pgs)

#### Week 10: Cities and politics

- Lectures: Mon Mar 16 & Wed Mar 18  
 Readings: Theodore Binnema, "'A Feudal Chain of Vassalage': Limited Identities in the Prairie West, 1870-1896," *Prairie Forum* (1995) (18 pgs)  
 Tom Mitchell and James Naylor, "The Prairies: In the Eye of the Storm," in *The Workers' Revolt in Canada* (1998) (40 pgs)

- Tutorial: Wed Mar 18  
 Readings: Binnema, as above  
 Mitchell and Naylor, as above  
 Esyllt Jones, "Contact across a Diseased Boundary: Urban Space and Social Interaction during Winnipeg's Influenza Epidemic, 1918-1919," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* (2002) (21 pgs)

#### Week 11: Western landscapes

- Lectures: Mon Mar 23 & Wed Mar 25  
 Readings: John Sandlos, "Not Wanted in the Boundary: The Expulsion of the Keeseekoowenin Ojibway Band from Riding Mountain National Park," *Canadian Historical Review* (2008) (33 pgs)

- Tutorial: Wed Mar 25  
 Sandlos, as above  
 Sterling Evans, "Dependent Harvests: Grain Production on the American and Canadian Plains and the Double Dependency with Mexico, 1880-1950," *Agricultural History* (2006) (29 pgs)  
 Shannon Stunden Bower, "Watersheds: Conceptualizing Manitoba's Drained Landscape, 1895-1950," *Environmental History* (2007) (24 pgs)

Week 12: Depression, despair, and drought

Lectures: Mon Mar 30 & Wed Apr 1

Reading: Herd Thompson, *Forging the Prairie West*, chapter 6 (33 pgs)

Tutorial: Wed Apr 1

Readings: Barry Potyondi, "Loss and Substitution: The Ecology of Production in Southwestern Saskatchewan, 1860-1930," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* (1994) (33 pgs)

Erik Strikwerda, "'Married Men Should, I Feel, Be Treated Differently': Work, Relief, and Unemployed Men on the Urban Canadian Prairie, 1929-1932," *Left History* (2007) (22 pgs)

Week 13: Oil and conservatism in the New West

Mon Apr 6 **Easter Monday—no class**

Lecture: Wed Apr 8

Reading: Herd Thompson, *Forging the Prairie West*, chapters 7 and 8 (50 pgs)  
Kate Beaton, "Ducks" (2014)  
**\*Research paper due**

Lecture: Mon Apr 13

Course review & closing discussion

**\*Take-home final exam due 5 pm, Friday, April 24**