HIST F434-F71: Women on the American Frontier

This course will investigate the experience of women on the American frontier, concentrating on the nineteenth century. Since it was usually men who made the decision to “go west,” and women followed, women’s perceptions of this experience were often dramatically different from men’s. Selections from letters, diaries and other accounts written by women at the time and during succeeding generations will be used to analyze the women’s own interpretations of what the frontier experience meant.

Topics to be covered will include:

Week one: Women’s history
The frontier thesis; the myth of the west

Week two: Missionaries, religious communities
Other intentional communities

Week three: The overland trail
Gold rushes; mining camps

Week four: Homesteading
Encounters with the “other”

Week five: The urban frontier
Women’s employment

Week six: Women’s suffrage, equality
Conclusions

Representative examples of works from which selections will be available on Blackboard:

Narcissa Whitman, *Letters and Journals of ... 1806-1848*
Willa Cather, *My Antonia* (1918).