

# GWS 100AC

## Women and the Frontier

March 31, 2016

- Adventures in the wilderness seem very 'narratable' because they're thought of as very 'simple' stories. Not a huge amount of plot twists or extra characters.
- Dunbar-Ortiz: unconscious manifest destiny
  - The current borders of the nation were inevitable.
  - Heavily reflects the idea of terra nullius
- *A cowboy gazes down into the Grand Canyon: We have the space we need to pursue our every dream.*
- Look at Spanish colonization: deeply sidelined with most histories of the United States. But in the retelling of the United States, it comes in later.
- Why is Spanish colonization sidelined?
  - The idea that our American origin was becoming independent from Britain.
  - The Spanish occupation of California was religion based; people in California are pretty sensitive to religion.
  - The violence of the Spanish missionaries is visible (but the actions of Puritans were nasty too).
  - Racism: The U.S. is explicitly establishing itself as a nation based on white supremacy. It's the racial quality that establishes people as American.
- Spanish colonists are not understood as white.
- When Spanish colonists first came in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, they were extractionist colonists. Came for gold, not interested in staying.
- Between the Spanish *conquistador* and native people, they were creating a new race. Lots of cultural mixing, no idea of 'staying pure'

- Later on in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (after the Pueblo revolts), the Spanish came back with the intent to stay.
- The Colorado Plateau: About 1500 years ago, the Pueblo people were enabled by corn. Became successful and stable organizations.
- Maria Melendez's *Mujeres de Maiz*: going to Southern Mexico to look for corn. There's a lot of stories about how corn came to be the plant it did. Maize was developed from a wild grass. Recent evidence shows domestication took place in southern highlands of Mexico.
- Pueblos and Mogollon migrated towards New Mexico after depleting resources in original land. Wasn't a happy coming-together.
- Attendance quiz: Pueblo!
- In cultural situations, women are often the mediators (captives, family members, translators).
- After the Pueblo revolt, the Spanish motivated women from New Spain to move to the new colonies. Women who took up this offer were poorer and/or of mixed race.
- **Coverture** was a legal doctrine whereby, upon marriage, a woman's legal rights and obligations were subsumed by those of her husband. Women can't own property (some exceptions made for widows). Patriarchy!
- Once U.S. won Mexican-American war, women who owned property no longer could under new law.
- Had to sell and convert to portable property like jewelry.
- Private property is central to the idea of citizenship in the United States.
- Wendy Walsh: writes about Round Valley reservation.
- Victorian "cult of domesticity" (cult of true womanhood).
- Notion of motherhood became normed through set of ideas that could only be applied to white middle/upper-class women.
- Woman's role defined as the moral expert.
- Dawes Act of 1887: Converted tribal, collectively held lands to individual ownership.

- Citizenship of Native Americans seen as dependent upon demonstration of Anglo family, gender, sexuality, and private property values.
- Within 20 years of Dawes Act, 2/3 of land owned by Native Americans was gone.