

Final Report
The Santa Fe Trail: In Search of the Multiracial West
Chican@ and Latin@ Studies 330
May 31 to June 16, 2005
University of Wisconsin-Madison

In June of 2005, a team of eight faculty members, staff, and teaching assistants at the University of Wisconsin-Madison offered thirty-five undergraduate and graduate students a unique opportunity to learn about the history of race, ethnicity, and indigeneity in the U.S. West through a two-week, on-the-road summer course, "The Santa Fe Trail: In Search of the Multiracial West." This three-credit course, sponsored by the Chican@ and Latin@ Studies Program (CLSP), involved two classroom days of academic instruction and team-building exercises, followed by a fifteen-day bus trip that took students from Wisconsin through Illinois to Missouri, across Oklahoma and Texas to New Mexico, and then back to Wisconsin through Colorado, Nebraska, and Iowa. We visited sites of racial construction and reconstruction, racial discrimination and violence, racial resistance and racial reconciliation related to the history of American Indians, African Americans, Latina/os, and Asian Americans. We also met with academics, tribal leaders, social justice activists, participants in community history projects, and survivors (and their descendants) of some of the West's key racial traumas. In addition, we turned the bus itself into a moving classroom where we watched documentary and feature films, listened to regional music, heard relevant lectures, read scholarship and creative work, wrote journals, and engaged in spirited discussion of the history and politics of race in the West. This innovative course was made possible by generous funding from the College of Letters and Science, the Pathways to Excellence Program, and the UW System Institute on Race and Ethnicity, and by institutional support from CLSP.

Although we have appended to this report a full syllabus for the course and detailed daily itineraries, the following abbreviated list of places we visited and people we met gives a sense of the physical, cultural, and intellectual ground we covered in just over two weeks:

Wisconsin: send-off by Winnebago Sons, Ho-Chunk drummers

Illinois: Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site

Missouri: Jefferson National Expansion Memorial and the Mississippi River waterfront in St. Louis (with tour by environmental historian Andrew Hurley)

Oklahoma: Greenwood Cultural Center in Tulsa (with a presentation by Tulsa Riot Commission member Eddie Faye Gates), Cherokee Heritage Center (with presentation by Principal Chief Chad Smith), and the historically African American town of Rentiesville (with tour by Black Town Tours coordinator Cassandra Gaines, and a night of music by bluesman D.C. Minner)

Texas: Levi Jordan (Brazoria) and Varner Hogg (West Columbia) plantations (with tour by anthropologist Ken Brown), Project Row Houses in Houston (with tour by artist/activist and founder Rick Lowe), American G.I. Forum sites in Corpus Christi (with tour by State Commander Ram Chávez), San Antonio Missions National Historic Park and the Alamo in San Antonio, and the U.S.-Mexico border at El Paso

New Mexico: Isleta Pueblo (with presentation by environmental specialist Ramona Montoya), Museum Hill in Santa Fe (with presentation by State Historian Estévan Rael-Gálvez), poetry reading by Jimmy Santiago Baca, Bandelier National Monument, Los Alamos County Historical Museum, San Juan Pueblo, Hacienda de los Martínez in Taos, Taos Pueblo, and Sanctuario de Chimayó

Colorado: Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site, site of Japanese American internment camp at Amache (with presentation by John Hopper, Granada high school teacher and coordinator of Amache Museum), and Sand Creek massacre site (with presentation by Cheyenne and Arapaho Sand Creek descendants, National Park Service staff, and Kiowa County officials)

One key component in the success of the course was the diversity of the students, staff, teaching assistants, and faculty members involved. We cannot give exact numbers of participants identified with particular ethnocultural and/or racial groups, because no one was asked to identify in this way. But it is our impression that European Americans constituted roughly 40 percent of participants, with the rest representing a variety of ethnocultural groups, in the following descending order by number of participants: Latina/o, African American, and American Indian. Asian Americans were the least represented group among us, though a small handful of students had southwestern Asian roots. But even this characterization of our diversity flattens a much richer cultural mosaic—and erases the presence of mixed-race participants—in which students, staff, and faculty alike invoked racial/ethnic identities, ethnocultural backgrounds, religious affiliations, and national origins as varied as Swedish, Tejano, Syrian, Italian, hispana, German, Canadian, Jewish, Potawatomi, Scottish, Chicano, white, Eastern European, West African, Navajo, Catholic, Puerto Rican, Norwegian, Creole, Irish, Spanish, black, Danish, Ojibwe, Scotch Irish, Polish, métis, Mexican, Mandan-Hidatsa, Persian, Apache, Chinese, Australian, Shoshone, Protestant, Cherokee, and French. There were a few more women than men on the bus (participants were 57 percent female, 43 percent male, plus a male bus driver), and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) participants probably were as well represented as they are in the general UW-Madison population (though we did not ask participants to identify themselves in this way). Of the 35 students on the bus, 20 were undergraduates and 15 were graduate students (one was a graduate student from the American Culture Program at the University of Michigan).

Eight people constituted what we informally called the “teaching team” for this course. There were four faculty members, all affiliated with CLSP: Ned Blackhawk, History and American Indian Studies; Camille Guerin-Gonzales, History; Susan Johnson, History; and Ben Márquez, Political Science. Professors Johnson and Márquez participated in the entire 17-day course, while professors Blackhawk and Guerin-Gonzales joined the group for specific segments of the trip (and were compensated accordingly). There were also two staff members: Aaron Bird Bear, American Indian Student Academic Services, and Tricia Price, CLSP. Last, but certainly not least, there were two teaching assistants: Michel Hogue and Tyina Steptoe, both Ph.D. students in History.

Tyina Steptoe and Michel Hogue are last but not least in this list because the initiative for this course was theirs. Ms. Steptoe had been a participant in the course “Freedom Ride

2001: The Sites and Sounds of the Civil Rights Movements,” the brilliant precursor that served as model for our class. In 2002, both Ms. Steptoe and Mr. Hogue were students in Professor Johnson’s graduate seminar in the history of the American West, where they were exposed to the complicated histories of race, ethnicity, and indigeneity in the region. Meanwhile, Ms. Steptoe had completed her M.A. in Afro-American Studies, and Mr. Hogue (who already had an M.A. from the University of Calgary) had gained expertise in American Indian history through Professor Blackhawk’s graduate seminar. By the fall of 2003, Ms. Steptoe and Mr. Hogue together came up with the idea for a western version of the “Freedom Ride” course, one that would explore the intertwined histories of Latina/os, African Americans, Asian Americans, and American Indians in the West, as well as issues of race, ethnicity, and indigeneity more broadly defined. They approached professors Blackhawk, Guerin-Gonzales, and Johnson about serving as instructors for the course. As the project evolved, we also invited Professor Márquez to join us as a fourth instructor. In addition, Mr. Hogue and Ms. Steptoe negotiated with Professor Guerin-Gonzales about offering the course through CLSP, which she directs.

The next year and a half was a whirlwind of maps, websites, funding requests, syllabus design, student selection, phone calls, emails, letters, and meetings. Ms. Steptoe and Mr. Hogue coordinated most of this, with crucial assistance from Tricia Price, the CLSP administrator. We secured a Curriculum Development grant from the UW System Institute on Race and Ethnicity, seed money that was later supplemented by the College of Letters and Science. This funding allowed us early on to pay for postage, make photocopies, purchase course supplies, and, most important, employ Mr. Hogue and Ms. Steptoe as Project Assistants during the summer of 2004. But these two graduate students also donated countless hours during the 2004-05 academic year completing the logistics of seeking funds; scheduling events; planning site visits; engaging a bus and driver; ensuring proper publicity; organizing meals and lodging; and, in the end, managing a budget of over \$100,000. They convened meetings of harried and overworked (and thus often grumpy) faculty members, coaxed us to live up to our promises of contacting academics and community members along our route, contributed invaluable suggestions for our syllabus (indeed, the syllabus was one of few aspects of the course for which the faculty assumed full responsibility), and visited undergraduate classes and student organizations to publicize the course and encourage students to submit applications (all students went through an application and selection process before they were admitted to the course). Meanwhile, Aaron Bird Bear assisted us in the application and selection process, and in setting up team-building and diversity workshops for our first two days of classroom instruction.

In the final weeks leading up to the start of the course, Ms. Price, Mr. Bird Bear, Ms. Steptoe, and Mr. Hogue managed the funding we received from the Pathways to Excellence Program as well as other resources to ensure that no student selected to participate in the course would have to withdraw for financial reasons. Students were required to pay a \$325 activity fee in addition to tuition for a three-credit course. These activity fees helped pay for transportation, lodging, and food (the total cost for each student’s participation was approximately \$1000). Because a summer course can present a particular financial challenge to undergraduate students (many of whom had to delay or

even forgo summer employment to take the course), we used the funding from Pathways to Excellence to provide all twenty undergraduate participants with activity fee waivers. We also secured assistance from the History Department for the activity fees of two graduate students who otherwise would have been unable to participate. In addition, ten students received tuition scholarships, based on financial need.

By the morning of May 31, 2005, we were ready to go. Our group spent two full days on campus hearing faculty lectures (including a guest lecture by William Cronon, Frederick Jackson Turner and Vilas Research Professor of History, Geography, and Environmental Studies), discussing readings, critiquing TV westerns, and engaging in two interactive exercises, an Adventure Learning Program workshop (physical activities that promote trust and teamwork) and a Diversity Education Program workshop (interpersonal activities that highlight issues of identity, power, and privilege). At the same time, Ms. Steptoe, Mr. Hogue, Ms. Price, and Mr. Bird Bear were making sure we were ready to board the bus the morning of June 2 with daily itineraries, a traveling scholarly library, music CDs and film DVDs, video cameras, snacks, water, first aid supplies, disinfectant hand sanitizer (which proved important when conjunctivitis got on the bus with us), and information packets for students full of maps, speaker biographies, coin laundry locations, and roommate assignments for motels en route. What all of this preparation meant was that students and faculty alike boarded the bus ready to learn and teach and grow together, knowing that the details of life on the road were under control.

The bus trip itself was a 4,594-mile journey (plus “one mile in reverse,” the driver reminded us after the bus had to be towed out of the sand, fittingly, at the Sand Creek Massacre site). But it was also an intellectual and personal journey during which the travelers learned far more than any of us ever anticipated. There was a waterfront tour along the Mississippi River in St. Louis that uncovered a racial/ethnic and environmental past that would be almost invisible to the untrained eye. There was a trip to the Greenwood Cultural Center in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where we met with survivors of the 1921 race riot and held their grandchildren in our arms. There was a moment of awe when we toured Project Row Houses in Houston, and saw how a community can revive a dying neighborhood, establishing art galleries, a bicycle shop, and housing for poor families, while preserving an architectural style with roots in West Africa. There was our warm embrace in Corpus Christi, where veterans of the post-World War II civil rights group, the American G.I. Forum, educated us about Mexican American history in Texas. There was our attendance at San Antonio feast day dances at San Juan and Taos pueblos in northern New Mexico, where many wondered what it meant for so many outsiders to be welcomed to a ceremonial gathering of insiders. There was our sadness and anger at Amache, the site of a Japanese American internment camp, as we rolled past cement foundation after cement foundation, all that is left of the barracks that had housed internees during World War II.

The learning that took place on this journey, however, did not come about only through these formal events, nor solely through the lectures, films, and music that occupied our time and filled our minds as the bus covered the vast distances to, from, and around the Southwest. Much of the learning that took place on this journey came from the pleasures

and challenges of fifteen days spent in close quarters with an extraordinarily diverse group of students, staff, teaching assistants, and faculty. This was an immersion experience that could never begin to be replicated in a traditional classroom. Learning took place in quiet conversations on the bus. Learning took place in small groups gathered outside motels, singing and laughing and teasing one another. Learning took place when we disagreed with each other over how to handle the very differences among us that, at other moments, we so valued: age, academic status, race, gender, religion, personal style. Learning took place when each of us stole moments to think, write, or look out the window at new landscapes, wondering about the people who called each place home. Learning took place so constantly that most of us got off the bus convinced that we would not fully understand what we had gained from the ordeal for weeks, or months, or even years. Most of us are processing still.

But we did gather course evaluations in the final hours of the course, as the bus entered southwestern Wisconsin on Highway 151, and those evaluations reveal the value of this educational experience for students who participated. Allow us, then, to summarize student responses to some of the questions posed on the course evaluations. These questions asked students to respond on a 5-point scale, with 5 being the highest possible score (all students completed evaluations):

Ability of teaching team to communicate course material:	4.56
Course's success in offering broader and deeper understanding of subject:	4.71
Would recommend course to other students:	4.68

As these evaluations suggest, “The Santa Fe Trail: In Search of the Multiracial West” was an experience that students will not soon forget. As one student put it, “Experiential learning is always so powerful—experiencing a site of history and meeting people who lived it or teach it means a lot. Also, being in the company of such a diverse group of students provided amazing dialogue.” As another put it, “The travel and hands-on experience greatly enhanced the class. It made history come alive. I loved talking to our guests and lecturers. The journal was a cool idea [all students kept a daily journal]. I loved this experience. It was transformative!” Still another wrote, “The teaching team did a terrific job managing the logistics, so that we could concentrate on the learning experience.” Some students singled out our teaching assistants, the central coordinators of the course: “Course content overall was well planned and amazing (thanks Tyina & Michel!).” Most students, however, focused on the collective aspects of the course, which we believe reflects positively on the experience the teaching team created.

In their advice to peers who might take a class like this in the future, students revealed the most about their overall assessments of the course. One wrote, “TAKE IT! Be open with others. When a conflict arises, just discuss it and don't spread it around in petty gossip. . . . Take notes on the lectures/speakers because it REALLY helps for journals and connecting the different sites. Join in on late-night social circles; you will learn amazing

things from others on the trip and about yourself.” Another said, “Go in with absolutely no expectations because you are going to have your mind blown. If you go into the experience feeling self-righteous or privileged not only will that affect you but it might hurt you. And SLEEP!” Still another warned, “Be prepared for lack of sleep, discomfort physically and mentally, and constant engagement. . . . I honestly did my best learning the past two weeks.” One student reflected, “I bet this was a hard class to ‘teach’—risky, time consuming, energy draining, and at times frustrating. Thank you to all of you for giving us this once in a lifetime experience!!!” Another advised, “Put your guilt behind you. . . . Don’t be afraid to expose your ignorance. Don’t bring a cell phone.” Still another wrote, “It was exhilarating and exhausting physically, emotionally, and intellectually. . . . Be prepared to stretch yourself in all three ways. I’m so glad and thankful for the opportunity to take this class.” One student was especially succinct: “It will be the toughest course you will ever love.”

We append to this report materials that provide even greater insight into “The Santa Fe Trail: In Search of the Multiracial West”:

--statements by Tyina Steptoe and Michel Hogue, the two graduate students who initiated the course and served as teaching assistants

--the course syllabus

--daily itineraries for our 15-day road trip

--numerical course evaluations and summaries of student comments

--curricula vitae for faculty members and teaching assistants, resumé for staff members

Please feel free to contact any member of the teaching team for further information.

Respectfully submitted,

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and Chican@ and Latin@ Studies