Global Valley
American Studies 111

Assignment #1
Due in class Thursday September 22
“The Raid on Deerfield: The Many Stories of 1704” (3-4 pp.)
http://www.1704.deerfield.history.museum/

Investigate the “Raid on Deerfield” website, using the following questions to guide your exploration:

❖ Who are the communities or “cultures” involved in the raid? Where are they from? How do they “see” this place?

❖ What are their motivations for participating in the raid?

❖ What argument does the website make about the raid on Deerfield? How does this framework help you to think about the history of the raid on Pocumtuck/Deerfield?

Write an essay that explores your preliminary answers to these questions. Submit this essay via Moodle on your section site, before class on Tuesday, September 18.

Please note that you will have the opportunity to expand on this essay following our field trip to Deerfield. [Assignment #2]

3-4 pages, double space
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Assignment #2
Due Monday October 3
“The Raid on Deerfield: The Many Stories of 1704” (5-6 pp.)
http://www.1704.deerfield.history.museum/

Using the website, your previous short essay, our class visit to this place, the museums built there, and everything you’ve read on the subject up to this point, answer the question:

“In what ways was the Deerfield Raid of 1704 a significant event in the history of Western Massachusetts and, indeed, North America, in the 18th century? How and why does it remain significant in the 21st century?”

5-6 pages, double spaced
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Assignment #3
Due Monday October 31
Porter Phelps Huntington Transcription Project
https://www.ats.amherst.edu/globalvalley/exhibits/show/pph-papers

The Amherst College archives hold the papers of the Porter Phelps Huntington family who occupied the same house in Hadley, Massachusetts from 1752 to 1958. The house is now a museum, which you have had a chance to visit. While segments of the enormous family papers collection has been transcribed, and scholars like Christopher Clark have drawn on these rich historical resources, much of the collection has been little used. This course is supporting the Porter-Phelps-Huntington House Museum by gradually transcribing and annotating portions of the collection that have not yet received scholarly attention. With this work you are helping to make these rich materials more generally available, and hence to make new knowledge. This is important historical work but it can be difficult work and so it calls for the collaboration of many minds, hands, and eyes. We have begun this project with the letters that Elizabeth Phelps Huntington sent to her 11 adult children in the 1830s and 40s.

The transcription and annotation work you do will be added to this public website. Each of you will be assigned a letter. Type a full transcription of your letter. Do your best and if you feel quite unsure about a reading put the phrase in brackets [what is this?] and if you can’t decipher some words at all write this: [indecipherable]. Doing your transcription together with classmates who are working on theirs in generally a good plan as sometimes someone else’s eyes can make sense of what you just can’t read. Give this process time and be patient and you will find it gets easier.

Now go through your transcript and insert a footnote at all the things you don’t quite understand or think it would be interesting to know more about. Also mark all the proper names (all the specific places and people mentioned). See how far you can get in annotating this letter. To annotate your letter provide in these notes brief bits of background information to explain the words you have marked. If you have put in a footnote about something and cannot find any additional information then write your question in the note (“What was the process for making soap?” “Who is _____, and why was Elizabeth so anxious to please her” “Here Elizabeth describes herself in the third person; did letter writers commonly do this at the time?” etc.). As you work on these annotations remember that you can use the search functions on this website to find other transcribed letters dealing with people and events mentioned in your letter, and that the website already contains brief biographies of the members of this family.
At the end of the transcription write a page about your experience transcribing and annotating this letter. What did you learn in this process? What insight into Hadley life in this period can you draw from this letter? What connections and differences do you see with other material we have studied this semester? What larger stories about the Connecticut River Valley could this document help you to tell? What feels valuable to you about the kind of evidence this sort of archival material provides, and what are its limitations, what kinds of things can’t it tell? What would you like to learn more about in order to make better sense of this letter?

Alternatively, instead of writing a page of reflections, if your transcription work makes you aware of a place, event, or person that you think would be a good addition to the informational paragraphs on this website, write no more than a page that could serve that function (and if you do a good enough job we will add it to the website).
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Assignment #4  
Due Friday November 11  
Close Observation of a Painting or a Poem (2-3 pp.)

How is an artist's rendition of a landscape an interpretation of that place? What does poetry written in a place tell you about that place? For this assignment do a close reading either of a painting/drawing/print of the Connecticut River Valley in the collection at the Mead OR of any one of Emily Dickinson's poems. In either case this is a process that calls for detailed observation and description, as well as contextualizing interpretation.

A). Visual Art

Pick a visual art object in the Mead collection that represents the local landscape. It may be one we have looked at together in class or one that grabs your attention as you explore the collection database, but it should be a work of art that in some way relates to the topics, landscape, or history that we have been discussing. Make a reservation with the Mead Study room to spend time with your piece of art.

Use a camera to take a picture of your work of art (if permitted) or download an image of it taken by the Museum (compress the image to ensure that Moodle/email can accept the file). Below it note everything you observe about this piece of art. Think about such things as color, shading, line, visual organization and structure, material, technique, tone, narrative, perspective, subject choice, and how the picture frames its subject. Each comment should be a full sentence or two; don’t just make a list of words or phrases.

Then on a separate piece of paper write a short essay that interprets what you have seen—that is, pull a relevant cluster of your observations together into a reading of this art object. Then in a final paragraph relate this image/object to some other thing we have studied this semester—how does this work of visual art make you think differently about class, gender, place, land, work, home, violence, faith, death…..

1 page of your observation notes;

1-2 page essay, double-spaced.

OR

B.) Poem
Pick a poem in *Final Harvest*. The poem may be one we have assigned or one that grabs your attention as you leaf through *Final Harvest*, but it should be a poem that in some way relates to the topics, landscape, or history that we have been discussing.

Type your poem at the top of the page. Below it note observations of everything you notice about this piece of writing. Think about imagery, word choice, syntax, punctuation, rhythm, tone, narration, perspective, how the poem moves from one observation or idea to the next. Each comment should be a full sentence or two; don’t just make a list of words or phrases.

Then on a separate piece of paper write a short essay that interprets what you have seen—that is, pull a relevant cluster of your observations together into a reading of this poem. Then in a final paragraph relate this poem to some other thing we have studied this semester—how does this poetry make you think differently about class, gender, place, land, work, home, violence, faith, death.....

1 page of your poem and observation notes;

1-2 page essay, double spaced.
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Assignment #5
Due by Friday November 30, 2016
(you may hand it in earlier)

You are each required to do one Connecticut River Valley Exploration and document it in some meaningful way that makes evident how it interacts with or augments what you have learned about the region in this course. Explorations Projects need be no longer than three pages in length if written or of commensurate size if produced in some other medium.

It is fine to do your exploring with classmates in your section or in other sections. If a group of you do an activity together, you can prepare separate projects or a larger common final product in which you make clear who contributed what: e.g., the writing of a particular section, or the carrying out of a particular research task. On the next pages you will find a list of possible explorations. Each exploration involves some kind of activity or field trip; completing the project will require some additional research and a written (or photographed, or filmed, or drawn) end-product. These are just suggested activities; we are happy to have you supplement this list with your own ideas for Connecticut River Valley explorations.
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Assignment #6
Due Tuesday December 16
Final Individual Research Paper

You should choose a final research paper topic based on course readings, discussions, trips, etc., but also conduct further research beyond the course materials and experiences. The exact topic should be chosen by you, in consultation with your section professor. You should consult also one of the research librarians, who can help you locate sources. You should begin thinking about this and talking to your professor about your plans before you leave for Thanksgiving break.

10 pages, double-spaced