

LAURA J. ARATA

Department of History, Oklahoma State University
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Academic Employment

Oklahoma State University, Assistant Professor of History, 2014 – present
Oklahoma State University, Director of Public History, 2020 – present

Education

PhD – Washington State University, 2014

Dissertation: “Race and the Wild West: Sarah Bickford and the Construction of Historical Memory in Virginia City, Montana, 1870 – 1930”

Committee: Dr. Robert Bauman, Peter Boag, Laurie Mercier, Jennifer Thigpen

Master’s degree – Washington State University, 2009

Thesis: “Embers of the Social City: Business, Consumption and Material Culture in Virginia City, Montana, 1863-1945”

Bachelor’s degree – University of Washington, 2005 (*magna cum laude*)

Majors: American History, English

Minor: American Indian Studies

Publications

Race and the Wild West: Sarah Bickford, the Montana Vigilantes, and the Tourism of Decline, 1870 – 1930, Volume 17, Race and Culture in the American West series, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2020)
2021 Western Writers of America Spur Award Winner – Best First Book

Published Peer Reviewed Articles

“‘To Better My Condition’: African American Women in the Tri Cities, 1940 – 1970,” in Robert Bauman and Robert Franklin, eds., *Echoes of Exclusion and Resistance: Voices from the Hanford Region*, Hanford History Series, Volume 3, (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 2020), 111 – 133

“Orchards and Open Arms: Women in the Priest Rapids Valley,” in Robert Bauman and Robert Franklin, eds., *Nowhere to Remember: Hanford, White Bluffs and Richland to 1943* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 2018), 63 – 92

“Terror and Tourism: Race, Historical Memory, and the Montana Vigilantes.” *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, Vol. 106, No. 4 (Fall, 2015), pp.183 – 198

“Beyond the ‘Mongolian Muddle’: Reconsidering Virginia City, Montana’s China War of 1881.” *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, Vol. 62, No. 2 (Spring, 2012), pp. 23 – 35

Peer Reviewed Articles and Chapters – Accepted for Publication

“Mickey Mouse Cowboys: Memory, Authenticity, and Disney’s Wild West,” in Jeremy Johnstone and Douglas Seefeldt, eds., *Buffalo Bill As He is Today: Wild West Personas, Performers, and Legacies* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, anticipated 2021), *accepted, in final review*

Published Reviews

- Michelle Delaney, *Art and Advertising in Buffalo Bill's Wild West*, in *The Public Historian*, Vol. 42, No. 4 (Nov., 2020), pp. 201 – 203
- David M. Wrobel, *America's West: A History, 1890 – 1950*, in *Western Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 49, No. 4 (Oct., 2018), pp. 467 – 468, viewable online at
- John M. Rhea, *A Field of Their Own: Women and American Indian History, 1830 – 1941* in *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Vol. XCV, No. 1 (Spring 2017), pp. 99 – 100
- Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum, Oklahoma City, Okla. *Journal of American History*, Vol. 102, No. 3 (Dec., 2015), pp. 806 – 812, viewable online at
- Mark C. Dillon, *The Montana Vigilantes: Gold, Guns, and Gallows in The Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, Vol. 105, No. 2 (Spring 2014), p. 99
- Martha Kohl, *I Do: A Cultural History of Montana Weddings in The Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, Vol. 103, No. 3 (Summer, 2012), p. 146
- Steve Turner, *Amber Waves and Undertow: Peril, Hope, Sweat, and Downright Nonchalance in Dry Wheat Country in The Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, Vol. 100, No. 3 (Summer, 2009), pp. 51 – 52

References and Other Publications

- “Sarah Bickford,” Oxford African American Studies Center Biographies, August 2018
- “Isaac Gammon,” Oxford African American Studies Center Biographies, August 2018
- “Cultural Resource Assessment of Stones River National Battlefield,” Murfreesboro, Tennessee, in *Tennessee's Civil War Battlefields*, National Parks Conservation Association, April 2008

Teaching

Oklahoma State University

Assistant Professor of History, 2014 – present

Undergraduate Courses Taught

- History 1103: Survey American History
- History 1483: American History to 1865
- History 3713: Women in the American West
- History 3980: Honors Seminar: Women in the American West
- History 3980: Honors Seminar: Race and Gender in the Wild West
- History 3980: Honors Seminar: American Popular Culture
- History 4033: Introduction to Public History
- History 4063: Introduction to Historic Preservation
- History 4073: Digital Methods in History
- History 4493: Frontier in American Memory
- History 4903: Senior Seminar (Steele Scholars)

Graduate Courses Taught

- History 5220: Research Seminar – American West
- History 5030: Internship (supervisor)
- History 5033: Public History
- History 5053: Museum Studies
- History 5063: Historic Preservation
- History 5073: Digital Methods in History

History 6100: Independent Readings – Borderlands / Native North America
History 6100: Independent Readings – Digital History / Public History
History 6130: Women in the American West

Washington State University

Graduate Teaching Instructor, 2012 – 2014

American Popular Culture 1930 – present

American Popular Culture, 1800 – 1930

United States History since 1877

History of Women in the American West

Graduate Teaching Assistant, 2007 – 2014:

General Education 110: World Civilizations Through 1500

General Education 111: World Civilizations 1500—Present

History 395: Lesbian and Gay History: Culture, Politics, and Social Change in the
United States, Early America – the Present

Research and Teaching Interests

Public History

Historic Preservation

North American West

Race and Gender

American Popular Culture

Conference Presentations

“Oklahoma in Drag,” Compelling Evidence: Telling New Stories from Familiar
Narratives

National Council on Public History Annual Conference (virtual), April 2021 – *panel
accepted*

“Oklahoma in Drag: Building the Diverse Gender and Sexuality Collection in the
Oklahoma Oral History Research Program”

LGBTQ+ Public History II: Conversations Coast-to-Coast, LGBT Committee sponsored
panel, American Historical Association Annual Conference (virtual) January 2021 –
panel accepted; postponed due to COVID-19

“To Better My Condition,” Race and Contested Spaces in the Tri Cities, Washington
Pacific Northwest History Conference (virtual), October, 2020

“Mickey Mouse Cowboys,” Mickey Mouse, Memory, and Mixed Races: Family Saga as
Palimpsest of Western History

Western History Association Annual Conference, (virtual), October 2020

“Critical Conversations in Mentorship: Facing Challenges from Imposter Syndrome to
Implicit Bias”

Western Association of Women Historians Annual Conference, (Costa Mesa, CA) April
2020 – *round table accepted; rescheduled to 2021 due to COVID-19*

“‘Four Days Jammed Full of Joy:’ Virginia Davidson and Oklahoma’s ‘Big State Negro
Fair’ of 1920”

Western Association of Women Historians Annual Conference, (Portland, OR) April
2019

“The African American Women’s West” Round Table

Western History Association Annual Conference, (San Antonio, TX) October 2018

- “African American Women in the Tri Cities”
Western History Association Annual Conference, (San Antonio, TX) October 2018
- “Mickey Mouse’s Wild West”
Lightening Round, WHA Technology Committee sponsored panel – Buffalo Bill and His Publics, Western History Association Annual Conference, (San Diego, CA) November 2017
- “Orchards and Open Arms: Women at White Bluffs and Hanford, 1863 – 1943”
Western History Association Annual Conference (San Diego, CA) November 2017
- [“Mickey Mouse Cowboys: Memory, Authenticity, and Disney’s Wild West”](#)
[Buffalo Bill Centennial Symposium](#), (Cody, WY) August 2017
- “Speaking of Race: Recovering the History of African American Women in the Rural West”
Western Association of Women Historians Annual Conference (San Diego, CA) April 2017
- “Willing Victims and Blameless Executioners: Lynching and Commemoration in Nineteenth Century Montana”
Nineteenth Century Studies Association Conference, (Charleston, SC) February 2017
- “Terror and Tourism: Popular Culture and the Montana Vigilantes”
Branding the American West Symposium, Brigham Young University, (Provo, UT) March 2015 – *paper and presentation delivered in absentia due to father’s death*
- “‘We Became Hanford’: Citizenship and Patriotism Among Early Hanford Residents and Workers”
Pacific Northwest History Conference, (Vancouver, WA) April 2012
- “Terror and Tourism: Constructing Narratives of the Vigilante and Nez Perce Trails in Montana”
National Council on Public History Annual Conference, (Ottawa, Canada) April 2013
- “Race and the Wild West: Constructing Historical Memory in Virginia City, Montana, 1870 – 1930”
Pacific Northwest History Annual Conference, (Tacoma, WA) October 2012
- “Building Freedom in the Territorial West: Sarah Bickford and the Color of Citizenship, 1850 – 1930”
American Historical Association – Pacific Coast Branch Annual Conference, (Seattle, WA) August 2011
- “The Public History Field School: Virginia City, Montana, A Case Study”
American Association of State and Local History Annual Conference, (Indianapolis, IN) August 2009
- “Creating Digital Archives for the Classroom: the Lucullus V. McWhorter Photograph Collection”
Pacific Northwest History Conference and Heritage Extravaganza, (Portland, OR) April 2009
- “Virginia City’s China War: Race, Religion and Violence in a Montana Mining Community, 1881”
Pacific Northwest History Association Annual Conference, (Corvallis, OR) April 2008

Invited Talks

- “Oklahoma Authors: Race and the Wild West”
Oklahoma State University OLLI Course, Stillwater, Oklahoma, March 12, 2021
- [“Extreme History Project: Race and the Wild West”](#)
Extreme History Project, Bozeman, Montana, February 25, 2020

- “Race and the Wild West: A Conversation with Laura J. Arata and Lauren Francis-Sharma”
Montana Book Festival, September 12, 2020 (*held virtually due to COVID-19*)
- “Black Panther, White Noise: James Coody Johnson, Alfalfa Bill Murray, and the Fight to Define Inclusion in Jim Crow Oklahoma”
Oklahoma State University Murray Hall Civil Rights Speaker Series, (Stillwater, OK)
February 27, 2020
- “Professionalization in the Classroom”
Oklahoma State University Department of History Teaching Colloquium, (Stillwater, OK) October 30, 2019
- The Last Year of the War* and *When the Men Were Gone* Panel Moderator for Oklahoma Book Festival, (Oklahoma City, OK) September 21, 2019
- Fire in Beulah*. Presentation and discussion leader for Oklahoma Humanities Council Let’s Talk About it Oklahoma, Enid Public Library, (Enid, OK) August 8, 2019
- “Emancipation, Segregation, and Creating the African American Cowboy”
Juneteenth Brown Bag, Cherokee Strip Regional Heritage Center, (Enid, OK) June 19, 2019
- Shell Shaker*. Presentation and discussion leader for Oklahoma Humanities Council Let’s Talk About it Oklahoma, Blackwell Public Library, (Blackwell, OK) April 29, 2019
- [“Whitewashing and White Hats: Creating the American Cowboy”](#)
Gender and Identity in the American West Symposium, Gilcrease Museum, (Tulsa, OK)
October 12, 2018
- Cheyenne Madonna*. Presentation and discussion leader for Oklahoma Humanities Council Let’s Talk About it Oklahoma, Perkins Public Library, (Perkins, OK)
March 2017
- “Mitigating Implicit Bias in Faculty Hiring and Evaluation Processes”
Research Week WFC/ ITLE/CAS sponsored panel, Oklahoma State University, (Stillwater, OK) February 2017
- “Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Grad School but Were Afraid to Ask”
Oklahoma State University Phi Alpha Theta colloquium series, (Stillwater, OK)
September 2016
- Miko Kings*. Presentation and discussion leader for Oklahoma Humanities Council Let’s Talk About it Oklahoma, Pioneer Woman Museum, (Ponca City, OK) August 2015
- “Stereotypes and the Wild West.” Presentation and discussion for Phi Alpha Theta colloquium series, (Stillwater OK) April 2015
- “Images of the Nez Perce War: Digitizing the Lucullus Virgil McWhorter Collection”
William R. Wiley Exposition of Graduate and Professional Studies, Pullman, Washington, November 2008; invited second presentation at the Washington State University Academic Showcase, (Pullman, WA) March 2009

Mentions and Media

- [“Extreme History Project features Life of Sarah Bickford.”](#) KZBK Montana, February 28, 2021

Interviewed Scholar: *Greenwood is Burning*, Student Documentary, September 2020
Featured Scholar: [New Books Network Podcast](#), August 2020
Interviewed Scholar: *You Need to Know This* Podcast, June, 2020
Featured Faculty: Walk to Class with CAS, February, 2020
Interviewed Scholar: *Amplified Oklahoma* Podcast, Episode 39: [Women on the Home Front](#), July 19, 2019
Pictured: *Good Morning, Oklahoma*, [“Gender and Identity in the American West Fall Symposium”](#) promotion, ABC News 8, Tulsa, Oklahoma, October 4, 2018
Quoted in Kaelynn Knoernschild, “Racially insensitive posts protected under First Amendment,” in *O’Colly*, February 19, 2017
Quoted in Ginnie Graham, “Name-change Process Worthwhile,” in *Tulsa (Oklahoma) Tulsa World*, August 16, 2017, A1

Public History

Certifications

Memory Sites and Human Rights (2020, Global Human Rights Campus)
Oral History IRB (2019, Oklahoma Oral History Research Program)
Preparing Online Instructors (2016, Oklahoma State University ITLE)

Projects and Experience

Booker T. Washington School Documentation Project, Coordinator and Faculty Mentor, Stillwater, Oklahoma – December 2020 – present
[“Savages and Princesses: Persistent Native American Stereotypes”](#) Faculty Mentor, exhibit in partnership with Stillwater Museum of History at the Sheerar, on display November 7, 2020 – January 9, 2021
“Remnants and Light: The Historic Stained Glass Windows of Vernon AME Church,” Principle Author and Faculty Mentor, Commissioned by Daughters of the American Revolution, Tulsa, Oklahoma, August – December, 2020
“Black Settlers in Tulsa,” Faculty Supervisor, exhibit in partnership with Oklahoma State University, Tulsa, 2020
Diverse Gender and Sexuality Oral History Project, Principle Investigator and Faculty Mentor, Oklahoma Oral History Research Program, June 2019 – present
[Women’s Rodeo Archive](#), Faculty Mentor, August 2016 – May 2019
[Hanford History Project](#), Graduate Assistant and Co-Principal Investigator, August 2013 – July 2014
“Building Freedom in the Territorial West,” Consulting Historian, Montana Heritage Commission, Virginia City, Montana, June 2010 – June 2011
“A Century of Peace: A History of Peace Lutheran Church,” Principle Author, Colfax, Washington, August 2008 – March 2010
Sue M. Durant Papers, Archivist Intern, Manuscripts, Archives and Special Collections, Washington State University Libraries, Pullman, Washington, 2009
Lucullus V. McWhorter Collection, Archivist Intern, August 2008 – December 2008
“Girls Who Did,” Graduate Assistant, University of Idaho School of Law Centennial Project, Moscow, Idaho, August 2008 – August 2009
Primary research assistant to Dr. Robert McCoy for *To Develop Righteous Law and Promote Justice: The University of Idaho College of Law, 1909 – 2009* (Moscow: University of Idaho College of Law, 2013)

“Stones River National Battlefield,” National Parks Conservation Association,
Consulting Historian, January – April 2008
Natural History Interpreter, Alaska State Parks, Fort Abercrombie, Kodiak, Alaska, May
2007 – August 2007
Washington State University Field School, Virginia City, Montana, May 2007

Honors and Awards

Grants – Internal

Oklahoma State University College of Arts and Sciences CAS-ASR+1 Summer Research
Award, 2020
Oklahoma State University History Department Research Leave, 2017
Oklahoma State University History Department Summer Travel Award, 2016 and 2017
Oklahoma State University Dean’s Incentive Grant for Research, 2015 and 2016

Grants – External

Charles Redd Center for Western Studies Research Grant, 2013
National Trust for Historic Preservation Partnership in Scholarship Grant, 2009
Washington State University Pettyjohn Travel Grant, 2008

Awards

2021 Western Writers of America Spur Award – Best First Book (Nonfiction)
Finalist: Best Biography
Student Travel Award, National Council on Public History, 2013
Frederick Dumin Teaching Assistant Merit Award, Washington State University, 2011
Graduate and Professional Student Association, Washington State University, 2009
William R. Wiley Exposition of Graduate and Professional Studies, Washington State
University, 2009

Graduate Scholarships

Pettyjohn Graduate Fellowship, 2012 – 2013, \$2500
Claudius O. And Mary W. Johnson Graduate Fellowship, 2012 – 2013, \$2000
Herman Deutsch Memorial Fellowship, 2011 – 2012, \$400
Wayne M. Stanford Scholarship, 2008 – 2009, \$1400 – awarded for the most promising
proposal for a Master’s Thesis
John and Loella Kassebaum Scholarship, 2007 – 2008, \$500
Robert and Maude Cline Scholarship, 2007 – 2008, \$350

Undergraduate Advising

Senior Projects

Senior Project Reader, Hannah Fite, “One Step Forward, Two Steps Back: The Social
Dilemma of Wrongful Convictions” – Reader, Spring 2016

Honors Thesis Projects

Tanner Luther, “A Gay Union: Union and LGBT+ Solidarity in the 1980s” – Reader,
Summer 2020
Allison Richmond, “Women and Medicine in the American West” – Reader, Spring 2020

Wentz Research Projects

Mentor for Claire Ringer, Wentz Scholarship Award Winner

2018 – 2019: “‘I Am Still Myself’: Women in the Oklahoma Dustbowl”
2019 – 2020: “WAVES in a Landlocked State”

Graduate Advising

Current PhD Students

Jana Brown (History) – Advisor
Jason Harris (History) – Advisor
Kristina Rogers (History) – Committee Member
Jon Ketchem (History) – Committee Member
Jesse Andrews (Geography) – Outside Committee Member
Kimberly Johnson (Geography) – Outside Committee Member
Jordan McAlister (Geography) – Outside Committee Member

Completed

Alyce Webb (History PhD, December 2017) – Advisor
“The Race of Races: Ethnicity, Gender, Class and Performance in Pawnee Bill’s Wild West Show, 1888 – 1913”
Tabby Toney (History PhD, April 2018) – Committee Member
“‘Until We Fall to the Ground United:’ Cherokee Resilience and Interfactual Cooperation in the Early Twentieth Century”
Josian Meints (English PhD, December 2019) – Outside Committee Member
“The Rhetorical Playbook: Football, Race, Rhetoric and Play Possibility Spaces of the American University”

Current MA Students

Katanna Davis (History) – Committee Member
Emily Duncan (History) – Advisor
Jorge Enriquez-Chavez (History) – Advisor
B Hinesley (History) – Advisor
Ally Kummell (History) – Advisor
Arlowe (History) – Adviser

Completed

Kaitlyn Weldon (History M.A., 2020) – Adviser
“Missions Unaccomplished: Women Missionaries, Native American Rights, and Media in the Nineteenth Century American West”
Emma Huffstetter (Art History M.A., 2018) – Outside Committee Member
“From Sahagun to the Mainstream: Flawed Representations of Latin American Culture in Image and Text”
Jon Ketchem (History M.A., December 2017) – Committee Member
“The Way We Never Were: Native Americans in Popular Culture: A Proposal for a Virtual Reality Based Exhibit”
Emma Fritz (History M.A., May 2017) – Committee Member
“Memory and Adaption: The Cherokee Use of Recollection in the Post-Civil War Era”
Trent Riley (History M.A., May 2016) – Committee Member
“Islands of the Forgotten: The Pacific War and the Struggle for American Memory”
Clinton Girkin (History M.A., December 2015) – Committee Member
“*Bad Men and Good Bad Men: The Cherokee Strip Outlaws*, An Exhibit for the Cherokee Strip Regional Heritage Center”

Service

Oklahoma State University – Department of History

Libraries and Technology Committee
Space Allocation Committee
African American History Search Committee
Borderlands Search Committee
Environmental History Search Committee
Native North America Search Committee

Oklahoma State University – College of Arts and Sciences

Murray Hall Civil Rights Speaker Series Committee
Academic Integrity Facilitator
College of Arts and Sciences ADVANCE Equity and Diversity Task Force
Student Technology Fee Committee Representative

External

Board Member, Vice President, Stillwater Museum of History at the Sheerar, 2020 – present

Reviewer

Oklahoma State University Women’s Faculty Council Awards
University of Oklahoma Press
Routledge Press
The Public Historian
Western Historical Quarterly

Professional Affiliations

Member

American Association of State and Local Historians
American Historical Association
Association for the Study of African American Life and History
National Council on Public History
National Trust for Historic Preservation
Nineteenth Century Studies Association
Western Association of Women Historians
Western History Association

Honor Societies and Honoraries

Horatio Alger Society
Mortar Board
Phi Alpha Theta (Gamma Psi Chapter)
Phi Eta Sigma
Golden Key