Reading and discussion questions for McGrath, *Gunfighters, Highwaymen & Vigilantes*:

   A. Discuss the major interpretations of frontier violence prior to the publication of McGrath’s book.
   B. How do McGrath’s conclusions build on or depart from earlier historians?
   C. How do McGrath’s conclusions compare with Brown’s?

2) Reading for Feb. 14: Preface & pp. 1-85
   A. Pisani lecture on the Sacramento Squatter Riot of 1850
   B. What characterized the mining town of Esmeralda?
   C. Much of the white violence toward Indians grew out of misunderstandings between the two groups. Discuss how the two perceived each other.
   D. Did Aurora differ from Esmeralda or were the characteristics of the two towns similar?

3) Reading for Feb. 16: pp. 102-164:
   A. Bodie was founded after Esmeralda and Aurora. Did that make a difference?
   B. Why was violence toward the Chinese less common than violence toward Indians recounted in chapter 2?
   C. Historians often focus on contests over property as being the most important source of violence in the West. But what political issues animated residents of Bodie and the other mining towns?

4) Reading for Feb. 21: pp. 165-224:
   A. How did “highway robbery” differ from other forms of violence discussed earlier in the book?
   B. McGrath points out (p. 176) that “no attempt was ever made to rob either of Bodie’s two banks.” He claims this was because bank officers and tellers were armed. Can you think of any other reasons?
   C. How did the ethnic composition of towns contribute to violence or lawlessness?
   D. On p. 191, McGrath notes that in contrast to Aurora, “politics was never a factor in Bodie shootings or shoot-outs.” Can you speculate why that was true?

5) Reading for Feb. 23: pp. 86-101 and 225-246:
   A. Having viewed the Ox-Bow Incident, compare and contrast vigilantism and the group violence associated with the Daly Gang.
   B. The Ox-Bow Incident is a film about the sociology of violence. Who or what is most responsible for the hangings?

6) Reading for Feb. 28: None; prepare papers.