

# History of hops growing reflects the PNW of today

Virtual presentation explores the lives of workers in industry

The Observer

**LA GRANDE** — Eastern Oregon University's latest presentation in its colloquium series focuses on hop-picking cultures in Oregon, Washington and northern California from the late 19th century through the late 20th century.

Ryan Dearing, associate professor of history at Eastern Oregon University, La Grande, presents his colloquium on Thursday, Feb. 11, at 4 p.m. via Zoom. Presenting on his book project, "Beer's Dirty Work: Native, Immigrant, and American Hop-Pickers in the Pacific Northwest," Dearing explores the lives and struggles of workers in the region's hops industry.

Prized hop fields put the region in the national and international spotlight from the 1870s on as the Northwest cultivated its reputation as the hops — and later

craft beer — capital of the world. Far less is known, however, about the people who picked hops.

"Motivated through holes he noticed in scholarly research, Dearing has spent the last several years becoming more familiar with the conditions these workers faced," according to a press release from EOU. "Their labor coincided with the hops industry's massive expansion, rampant business corruption, labor radicalism, indigenous relocations, burgeoning tourism and furious campaigns against Native Americans, immigrants and labor unions with no shortage of violence and repression."

"My book should fill some gaping holes in the study of the Pacific



Hop picking at North Yakima, Washington, circa 1910. Eastern Oregon University history professor Ryan Dearing discusses his new book project about hop-picking cultures in the Pacific Northwest via Zoom at 4 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 11, 2021.

Northwest—its environment, people, culture and economy—while tying the history and legacy of its prized hops industry to national understandings of labor and immigration," Dearing said in the release.

Noting he doesn't study brewing itself, Dearing, a labor historian, focuses instead on immigration, migration, working conditions and debates over national belonging. When starting his research, two aspects of the topic stood

out. Because of the short-term, seasonal work these laborers were hired to do, there was little to no paper trail, which made the research particularly challenging and is likely the reason why no book-length studies of hop-pickers

have been written. "The second thing (was) how incredibly diverse the labor force actually was. This included a kaleidoscope of human beings — you have American resettlers, European, Asian and Mexican immigrants, Indigenous peoples, convicts, prisoners of war and ages ranging from very young to very old. All of them are picking hops, sometimes together in the same location, and they're doing it seasonally," Dearing said. "It's one of those stories that suggests to us, despite their incredible diversity, just how much working people have in common until they're told, whether through politics, xenophobia, fear or conspiracy theories—they don't."

As a historian, Dearing is interested in using stories and episodes from the past to illuminate bigger questions and issues.

"Often the most meaningful histories offer us a window into the past," according to Dearing said, "but then hold up a mirror for the present. I try to achieve this in my book."

## CAFE

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restaurant that has been a pioneer in the farm-to-table movement, a philosophy of cooking that's become popular with restaurants in the past few decades. It's a phi-

losophy that she envisions as the future of the cafe.

"It really shaped how I see food, and the food industry — and builds relationships with farmers." Funk said of her time at Panisse. Still, she wanted more from the restaurant industry and

said the slim chances for advancement within the ranks were one of the factors in her decision to move to La Grande.

The other was family. The farm-to-table philosophy requires a network of growers — a network that remains in its nascent

stages in Northeastern Oregon, where most of the area's agricultural focus is on large quantities of goods such as wheat or hay and less emphasis on restaurant staples. Funk, though, is optimistic the farm-to-table scene will grow in the coming years.

"I think there are going to be awesome farms out here, but they're a little bit more in their infancy and just starting out — and people are just starting to get interested in them to start to grow them," said Funk. "We want to build good relationships

with farmers, and not just sprinkle it in"

The big plans toward merging the two venues together is several years away. But Over is in no rush.

"We're still working things out but it's going well," Over said. "It feels good."

# Agricultural economist will offer a look into future at Ag Show

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**  
Capital Press

**PULLMAN, Wash.** — At this time of year, wheat farmers should pay attention to the pace of exports, a Northwest ag economist says.

If there are more exports than the USDA projections, that's price positive. If there are less, prices might decline, said Randy Fortenbery, small grains economist at Washington State University.

Fortenbery will offer his annual economic analysis during this year's virtual Spokane Ag Show.

For 2021, Fortenbery will look at USDA crop acreage projections, fall delivery prices for wheat and how they will affect spring plantings.

Corn acres are expected to be slightly down, but soybeans are expected to be up. He will weigh the effect on wheat plantings.

The 2021 U.S. wheat supply could be smaller than in 2019 or 2020, because carryover will be down if exports continue at their current pace. The decline could be greater than the acreage increase with average yields would produce, Fortenbery said.

"It's not clear that supply will be significantly higher even if acreage goes up," he said.

Other forecasters made early predictions that the number of U.S. wheat

acres could increase. Those projections were made before any winter wheat seeding surveys, Fortenbery said. Spring wheat seeding information is available in June.

"While there is a bit of an increase, it doesn't necessarily translate into a huge increase of supply if ending stocks go down as they're expected to this coming year," Fortenbery said.

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