History 510 • Fall 2011

The American West in Popular Culture

Lecturer: Professor Marsha Weisiger
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Office hours: Wednesday 4-5:30, or by appointment
Lecture and discussion schedule: Monday/Wednesday 10-11:20 a.m., 116 ESL
Film lab: Monday 4-6:30, 101 Jaqua

TIP: Read this syllabus carefully and refer to it often. It offers a “road map” to this course, explaining grading policies, providing weekly reading assignments, and alerting you to discussions, which require advance preparation. Adjustments to the lecture schedule, however, may occur at my discretion and will be announced in class.

Introduction
This course examines the idea of the West in the American imagination as expressed in popular literature, captivity narratives, dime novels, travel literature, art, Wild West shows, films, and television, emphasizing the 19th and 20th centuries. We will analyze these images within the context of their times and compare them with the actual lived experience in the West. Moreover, we will look at how the image of the region changed over time as Euroamericans gained more experience with the actual West. Throughout the course, we will focus on five themes: (1) the image of Western hero and the Western heroine, with an emphasis on the social construction of gender, (2) the portrayal of western violence, (3) the image of the American Indian, (4) notions of the Hispanic West, and (5) imagined landscapes. We will also examine the Western as a film genre, emphasizing the classic tropes of the genre, gender issues, filmic treatments of violence, the portrayal of American Indians, and the ways in which Western films have served as allegories for current events.

Course Objectives:
By the end of the term, you should be able to:
● Analyze the historical development of the major course themes, using interdisciplinary approaches, including historical analysis and literary and film criticism
● Understand how different cultures in the American West have been portrayed in popular culture
● Analyze and interpret “primary” sources of historical information
● Compare and contrast the imagery of the West with the actual historical experience
● Write an essay and develop your own argument
● Write a research paper that integrates your knowledge of western history, literature, and film
Readings
The following required books are available at the University Book Store and from Internet stores.

Required reading for all students:
Owen Wister, The Virginian
Jane Tompkins, West of Everything
Larry McMurtry, Horseman, Pass By

In addition, I will post on Blackboard a selection of dime novels, captivity narratives, travel narratives, and excerpts from literature. These, too, are required reading, necessary for writing assignments, discussion, and exams.

Note on how to interpret the syllabus: The reading assignments are listed at the end of each week’s lecture schedule; you are responsible for completing the reading in time for the discussion and the submission of the analytical papers or Blackboard journal entries. Lectures, which provide background for understanding the reading assignments, will take place at least one class period prior to the discussion of the associated reading. Consequently, for each topic, there will be a lag between the lecture and its reading.

Additionally, there are two “tracks” in this course: Track 1 exploring the Western film genre, and Track 2 examining various images of the West, over time. The chronology for Track 1 is not synchronized with the chronology for Track 2. One of your tasks will be to integrate both tracks within their proper chronology and discover how they influenced each other.

Grading
Grades will be based on six components, plus attendance. Failure to complete any of the components may result in an F in the course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>Short analytical papers on readings</td>
<td>150 pts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journals on Blackboard readings</td>
<td>100 pts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term Project</td>
<td>100 pts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>100 pts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance at Films</td>
<td>100 pts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation in discussions</td>
<td>50 pts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>600 pts.</td>
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Grading Scale
540-600 = A
480-539 = B
420-479 = C
360-419 = D
< 360 = F
**Examination**
The final exam will be a take-home exam. You will answer two essay questions. For each, I will give you a choice of questions to answer, and you will write coherent essays that total 6-8 pages, drawing on the lectures, films, and readings. Each essay will be graded on the basis of the argument you make, the evidence you use to support your argument, your demonstrated understanding of the information and the historical interpretations provided both in class and in the readings, and the overall coherence of the essay. You will upload your essay through Safe Assign. The final essay is due Dec. 8, by high noon (12:00 p.m.).

**Short Analytical Papers**
For each of the three books, you will write a 2-3-page analytical paper (see formatting instructions below). Each of these papers is due at the beginning of the lecture, as indicated in the syllabus. Here’s what I expect: Choose one of the course themes that seems central to the reading. Using your best English, write a 2-3-page essay analyzing the reading in light of this theme. I do not want a “book review.” The point is to think deeply about one of the themes as represented in the reading and analyze it. I reward intellectual daring. You will upload these assignments through “Safe Assign” on Blackboard before 10 a.m. on the due date.

**Journals**
For the readings on Blackboard, you will write a journal entry on Blackboard. It must be posted before the class discussion on the given reading, as the assignment portal will “close” at 10 a.m. For each set of readings, select one interesting aspect (preferably one that covers all the readings in the set), and record your reflections, thoughts, and insights. These reflections do not need to be formal essays; they need to show thoughtful consideration of relevant themes. They should be neither rants nor reviews. Strong “A” journals will show some depth of understanding and cite examples to support your points. I will provide on-line comments and post a grade on the totality of the journals at the end of the term. (Note: The undergraduates get to skip one journal, but graduate students do not.)

**Term project**
This assignment involves analyzing four Western films, in conjunction with appropriate readings. On your own, (1) view at least three additional Western films, beyond those viewed as a class, focused on a particular theme of your choice and selected from a list I will provide on Blackboard. (You may also use films that aren’t on the list, with my advance approval.) Some films are available in Knight Library and at the Eugene Public Library. You can also rent Westerns from local video stores or Netflicks, and they are sometimes screened on cable/satellite channels. I urge you to watch these films in a format larger than your computer screen. Choose a fourth film from those viewed in class and any course readings that may be appropriate. (2) Read two related novels or narratives, centering on a particular theme, genre, literary era, or literary region. I will provide a list of suggestions, although you are not bound to the list; however, you must get my approval of your selection in advance. (3) You should also read non-fictional primary sources on the issues raised in the films and (4) scholarly film criticism, as appropriate; consult me for guidance. (For example, if you choose a set of films that focus on the portrayal of Native Americans in films, you might also read historical accounts of the Indian Wars and some of the recent scholarly criticism regarding the portrayal of Native Americans on film.) It is strongly advised that you meet with me at least by the fourth week of the term to discuss your selected films and readings to ensure you get on the right track.
In your essay, analyze the treatment of at least one of the course themes (or some other theme, with my approval) in the films and novels, and place those fictional treatments within the historical context of their production. This paper should be 10-12 pages long, including footnotes. The paper will be evaluated based on your argument, your analysis of the films and their historical context, and the overall coherence of the essay. The essay should demonstrate your best English grammar, spelling, and proofreading. (For formatting instructions, see below.)

You will upload your paper through “Safe Assign” on Blackboard by 10 a.m., but also please bring a hard copy to submit in class.

Note: Late final projects will be graded down one-third letter grade for each day it is late. I will accept no papers after the final exam.

Formatting Papers
All papers should be double-spaced with one-inch margins and a Times New Roman 12-point font, so that each page averages approximately 250 words. That is, a three-page paper should be approximately 750 words in length. Indent the beginning of each paragraph by 5 spaces. Do not add a space between paragraphs. (Microsoft’s default format is 1.5 spaces with an extra space between paragraphs, so you need to reset those defaults.)

Citations: If you’re identifying a quotation within an assigned book or reading that’s the sole subject of your paper or journal entry, you should simply cite the page number in parentheses at the end of the sentence. In all other instances, please use the Chicago Manual of Style citation method (see Blackboard).

Films
Attending the films is a key component of the class. Attendance will count as follows:

100 = Attended all 10 films
90 = Attended 9 films
80 = Attended 8 films
70 = Attended 7 films
60 = Attended 6 films
0 = Attended fewer than 6 films

I strongly advise that you keep notes on the films. Immediately after viewing the film, take 15 minutes to record your reflections on the key themes, especially as they relate to the course. Note also any thoughts you have on symbolism, narrative structure, characters, and so forth. (I encourage you to post your thoughts on the class blog set up for this purpose, though that’s not required.) This will help you with class discussions, your final paper, and the final exam.
**Participation in class discussion**
Think of our discussions about the readings and films as lively conversations, and engage your classmates in that spirit. Our collective purpose is to explore, analyze, and reflect on the readings and films. I have four ground rules: (1) Come prepared for discussions by critically reading all the assigned materials, and always bring the books we read to class. (2) You must participate in our conversations with thoughtful discussion. The quality is more important than the quantity. (3) Don’t try to lead the conversation astray in an effort to cover your lack of preparedness. (4) Show respect for your classmates’ ideas, even (or especially) when they’re different from your own. NOTE: Some of you will look forward to sharing your ideas, and others may find the very thought of talking in front of a group painful. If you’re shy, remember that it’s not fair to the rest of the group to make them carry the weight of the discussion. Nor is it fair to you—you won’t get much out of the class if you don’t put your ideas on the table for discussion. If you’re confident and articulate, share your thoughts, but also recognize that those who are silent need to be given the “space” to speak, and allow them to do so. Come prepared to express your ideas and have them challenged by others.

**Attendance, Tardiness, and Make-Up Policy**
Attendance is required. More than 4 absences may result in an F in the course. Exceptions will be made only in the event of a documented university-sponsored activity, a protracted illness (with a doctor’s note), or some major calamity, at my discretion. I do not accept graded course work after the class period for which the assignment is due, except as noted above. “Make up” exams and late essays will be accepted, at my discretion, only for a documented excused absence due to illness, death or severe illness in your family, an unavoidable calamity, or a documented school-sponsored activity in which you are officially representing UO. No other excuses will be accepted, period. If you anticipate an absence that does not fall within this make-up policy, I always accept assignments early.

**Plagiarism Policy/Academic Misconduct**
All work that you turn in must be your own. Any work submitted for credit that includes the words or ideas of anyone else must fully and accurately identify your source with a citation. (By the way, submitting the same paper to more than one class for credit is also academic misconduct.) If you are confused about this or do not understand the consequences of academic dishonesty at the UO—or the ethical issues behind these university policies—please read these guidelines:
http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/
In the event of an act of plagiarism, I will impose sanctions, as provided in:
http://studentlife.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/StudentConductCode/tabid/69/Default.aspx#Academic_Misconduct. The minimum sanction will be an F on the assignment, but plagiarism can also merit an F in the course, even for a first offense.

**Classroom Etiquette**
Please be sure to turn off all electronic devices (including computers, except for a documented disability) while in class and the film lab. Ringing cell phones are my pet peeve; they disturb your classmates and me. Please also refrain from text messaging in class or in the lab. Repeated failure to turn off your electronic devices may result in dismissal from the classroom. I also request that you arrive on time and stay until the end of class, including the films.

**Accommodations:** If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please arrange to see me soon. Request a letter from Disability Services that verifies your disability.
SCHEDULE OF LECTURES AND READINGS

PART I: The Western

Week 1  M ♦ (Sept. 26)  The Dime Novel and the Creation of the Western Genre
Film Lab (Sept. 26)  Great Train Robbery (1903) and Stagecoach (1939)
W ♦ (Sept. 28)  Discussion of dime novels and Stagecoach
Journals due on Blackboard by 10 a.m.

Reading Assignment (Blackboard or link below):
Buffalo Bill, from Boyhood to Manhood (1884)
http://www-sul.stanford.edu/depts/dp/pennies/texts/ingraham1_toc.html
OR
Deadwood Dick, the Prince of the Road (1877)
http://www.gutenberg.org/files/14902/14902-h/14902-h.htm

Week 2  M ♦ (Oct. 3)  Cowboy Heroes, Western Dudes, and the Masculine Mystique
Film Lab (Oct. 3)  Fort Apache (1948)
W ♦ (Oct. 5)  Cowgirl Heroes and the Western Woman/Johnny Guitar/
Discussion of Fort Apache
►Reading Assignment: Begin reading The Virginian

Week 3  M ♦ (Oct. 10)  Western Film and Regeneration through Violence
Film Lab (Oct. 10)  High Noon (1952)
W ♦ (Oct. 12)  Discussion of the final paper/The Virginian and High Noon
Analytical paper on The Virginian by 10 a.m. (through Safe Assign)
Reading Assignment:  Wister, The Virginian (1902) (417 pp.)

PART II: Imagining the West in the 19th Century

Week 4  M ♦ (Oct. 17)  Captivity Narratives: Savage and Noble Indians
Film Lab (Oct. 17)  The Searchers (1956)
W ♦ (Oct. 19)  Picturing Indians/Discussion of readings and The Searchers
Journals due on Blackboard by 10 a.m.

Reading Assignment (Blackboard):  Olive Oatman, The Captivity of the Oatman Girls Among the Apache and Mohave Indians (1857) (excerpt)
OR
Fanny Kelly, Narrative of My Captivity Among the Sioux Indians (1871) (excerpt)
►Begin reading West of Everything
Week 5  M ♦ (Oct. 24)  Virgin Land/Picturing the Landscape
Film Lab (Oct. 24)  Magnificent Seven (1960)
W ♦ (Oct. 26)  Discussion of West of Everything/Magnificent Seven
Analytical paper on West of Everything due by 10 a.m. (through Safe Assign)

PART III: Imagining the West in the 20th Century

Week 6  M ♦ (Oct. 31)  Gunslingers
Film Lab (Oct. 31)  The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance (1962)/Discussion
W ♦ (Nov. 2)  Mexicans and Indians in Film /Discussion of readings
Journals due on Blackboard by 10 a.m.

Reading Assignment: Joaquin Murieta: The Brigand Chief of California (excerpt)
Mark of Zorro (excerpt)

Week 7  M ♦ (Nov. 7)  Regionalism in Literature and Art
Film Lab (Nov. 7)  A Fistful of Dollars (1964)
W ♦ (Nov. 9)  Discussion of readings and A Fistful of Dollars
Journals due on Blackboard by 10 a.m.

Reading Assignment (on Blackboard): Willa Cather, O, Pioneers! (1913) (excerpt)
John Steinbeck, The Grapes of Wrath (1939) (excerpt)

►Begin reading Horseman, Pass By

Week 8  M ♦ (Nov. 14)  Vietnam and the Anti-Western
Film Lab (Nov. 14)  The Wild Bunch (1969)
W ♦ (Nov. 16)  Discussion of The Wild Bunch and Horseman Pass By
Analytical paper on Horseman, Pass By due by 10 a.m. (though Safe Assign)

Reading Assignment: McMurtry, Horseman, Pass By (192 pp.)

Week 9  M ♦ (Nov. 21)  Television West
Film Lab (Nov. 21)  Little Big Man (1970)
Term Paper due at the beginning of class (please submit through Safe Assign AND bring a hard copy to class).
W ♦ (Nov. 23)  NO CLASS!

Week 10  M ♦ (Nov. 28)  Europeans and the West/Discussion of Little Big Man
Film Lab (Nov. 28)  Unforgiven (1992)
W ♦ (Nov. 30)  Wrap-up/Review/Discussion of Unforgiven

FINAL EXAM: Th ♦ (Dec. 8) ● due by 12:00 noon. (through Safe Assign)
**Dates to Remember**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 28</td>
<td>Journal due on dime novels</td>
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<td>Oct. 12</td>
<td>Analytical paper on <em>The Virginian</em> due</td>
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<td>Oct. 19</td>
<td>Journal due on captivity narratives</td>
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<td>Oct. 26</td>
<td>Analytical paper due on <em>West of Everything</em></td>
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<td>Nov. 2</td>
<td>Journal due on Mexican masked men</td>
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<td>Nov. 9</td>
<td>Journal due on regional literature</td>
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<td>Nov. 16</td>
<td>Analytical paper due on <em>Horseman, Pass By</em></td>
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