

Film Studies (FILM) 305 - 60
Topic in Genre: The Western
Summer 2011
Tu & Th 10:00-14:50 PF 128

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Course Description

A survey of the Western's development from the late 1930s to the present, with an emphasis on the ways in which the genre regenerates itself over time. This course will introduce students to key approaches in cinema genre study, including those that weigh in on the relationship between movies and their wider social and historical contexts.

Objectives of the Course

Over the course of the class, students will endeavor to answer the following questions:

- How does the Western change over time, and how might we account for those changes?
- What is the relationship between the Western and American history and culture?
- What are the advantages and limitations of the various critical methodologies that have been used to examine the Western?
- How might we account for the Western's popularity in the 1940s and 50s?
- Why did the genre fall out of favor with audiences in the 1960s and 70s?
- Can a single film really "kill" a genre?
- Is the Western still relevant today?
- Are Westerns produced in other national contexts "real" Westerns?
- Is the genre sexist? Racist?
- Is "genre auteur" not a contradiction in terms?
- Why has the Western proven so enduringly attractive to film scholars and critics?

In order to achieve these objectives, it is imperative that students come to class **prepared**, having completed the assigned readings or other preparatory tasks and willing to discuss pertinent issues with both the instructor and their peers in a thoughtful and respectful manner.

Internet and electronic communication device information

Mobile phones must be turned off during class. Students may use laptops or tablets for **note-taking purposes only**. Breaks will be provided, during which you can update your Facebook status, check your Twitter feed, or perform other vital functions.

Textbooks and Readings

Kitses, Jim and Gregg Rickman, eds. *The Western Reader*. New York: Limelight Editions, 1998.
Wright, Will. *Sixguns and Society: A Structural Study of the Western*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975.

Additional readings will be available on Blackboard

Students who are new to the academic study of cinema may wish to consult *Film Art: An Introduction* by David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson.

Assignments and Evaluation

30% 2000-word essay, due week 5 (7/19). An analysis of a single Western using the structural methodology of Wright. A list of films will be provided.

25% Final essay, part one: essay outline, filmography, and annotated bibliography of five sources, due week 8 (7/28). A list of essay topics will be provided, but students may elect to develop their own topic in consultation with the instructor.

The outline must include a clear thesis statement and a list of the essay's key points with supporting evidence. The outline must demonstrate that you have thought carefully about how to support your argument and have organized your ideas in a logical order.

The filmography is a list of films, properly documented, that you intend to analyze.

For the annotated bibliography, each entry of 300-400 words must provide a succinct summary of the source followed by a critical analysis and an indication of how the source will fit into your own argument.

35% Final essay, part two: 3000 word essay, due week 13 (8/16)

10% Attendance and participation. Attendance will be taken at the start of each class. Students are responsible for catching up on any material missed due to absence. If you are going to miss class, you must let the instructor know **ahead of time** by email. Students are permitted one unexplained absence, after which 1% per class will be deducted, up to the maximum of 10%. Be advised that simply being physically present in the classroom does not constitute participation.

All work submitted for evaluation must be in proper MLA format, typewritten in a standard twelve-point font with 1" margins on all sides, paginated and stapled. No paper clips or folders, please. Your name and student number must appear on each page.

All assignments must be handed in at the start of class on the day on which they are due.

In cases of illness or bereavement, late assignments will only be accepted if accompanied by official documentation (e.g. a note from your physician). All other late assignments will be penalized according to the policy detailed below.

It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment.

Note: Please hand in your essays directly to your tutor or instructor if possible. If it is not possible to do so, a daytime drop box is available in SS320; a date stamp is provided for your use. A night drop box is also available for after-hours submission. Assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, and placed in the instructor's mailbox.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

This course is conducted in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP). As one consequence, **students should identify themselves on all written work by placing their name on the front page and their ID number. Also you will be required to provide a piece of picture identification in order to pick up an assignment or look at a final exam from SS320 after classes have ended.**

For more information see also <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>.

Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, although to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. For details see <http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/needtoknow>. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc) but also general clarity and organization. Research papers must be properly documented.

If you need help with your writing, you may use the Writing Centre. Visit the website for more details: www.efwr.ucalgary.ca

Grading System

The following grading system is used in the Department of Communication and Culture:

	Grading Scale
A+	96-100
A	90-95.99
A -	85-89.99
B+	80-84.99
B	75-79.99
B-	70-74.99
C+	65-69.99
C	60-64.99
C-	55-59.99
D+	53-54.99
D	50-52.99
F	0-49

(Revised, effective September 2008)

Where a grade on a particular assignment is expressed as a letter grade, it will normally be converted to a number using the midpoint of the scale. That is, A- would be converted to 87.5 for calculation purposes. F will be converted to zero.

Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. Readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. This includes assignments submitted in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media, and material taken from such sources.

Please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (MacEwan Student Centre 4th floor, efwr.ucalgary.ca) if you have any questions regarding how to document sources.

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and the consequences thereof please see the current University of Calgary Calendar at the following link;
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability who may require academic accommodation, it is your responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Centre (220-8237) and discuss your needs with your instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the start of the course.

Students' Union

For details about the current Students' Union contacts for the Faculty of Arts see
<http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html>

Student Ombudsman

For details on the Student Ombudsman's Office see <http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/services/student-services/student-rights.html>

Emergency Evacuation and Assembly points

For information on the emergency evacuation procedures and the assembly points see
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>

"SAFEWALK" Program -- 220-5333 Campus Security will escort individuals day or night -- call 220-5333 for assistance. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot booths.

Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants (i.e. surveys, interviews, observation) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve of your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see

The Department of Communication and Culture Research Ethics site:
<http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/ethics>

or the University of Calgary Research Ethics site:
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/research/cfreb>

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

Week 1 Introduction (7/5)

- Screening *Seven Men from Now* (Budd Boetticher, 1956, 78 min)
A Fistful of Dollars (Sergio Leone, 1964, 99 min)
- Reading Will Wright, *Sixguns and Society*, 4-28
Robert Warshow, "Movie Chronicle: The Westerner," *The Western Reader*, 35-48
Jim Kitses, "Authorship and Genre: Notes on the Western," *TWR*, 57-68
Richard Slotkin, "Introduction: The Significance of the Frontier Myth in American History," *Gunfighter Nation*, 1-28 [BB]

Week 2 The Classic Western (7/7)

- Screening *Shane* (George Stevens, 1953, 118 min)
- Suggested *Dodge City* (Michael Curtiz, 1939, 104 min)
- Reading Will Wright, *SG&S*, 29-59, 124-153
André Bazin, "The Evolution of the Western," *TWR*, 49-56

Week 3 The Psychological Western (7/12)

- Screening *High Noon* (Fred Zinnemann, 1952, 85 min)
Stagecoach (John Ford, 1939, 90 min)
- Suggested *The Man from Laramie* (Anthony Mann, 1955, 104 min)
Broken Arrow (Delmar Daves, 1950, 93 min)
- Reading Will Wright, *SG&S*, 59-84, 124-163
Richard Combs, "Retrospective: *High Noon*," *TWR*, 167-172
Nick Browne, "The Spectator-in-the-Text: The Rhetoric of *Stagecoach*," *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology*, 102-119 [BB]

Week 4 The Professional Western (7/14)

- Screening *Rio Bravo* (Howard Hawks, 1959, 141 min)
- Suggested *The Wild Bunch* (Sam Peckinpah, 1969, 145 min)
- Reading Will Wright, *SG&S*, 85-124, 164-184
Robin Wood, "*Rio Bravo* & Retrospect," *TWR*, 173-194

Week 5 Authorship and Genre I: John Ford (7/19)

- Screening *The Searchers* (John Ford, 1956, 119 min)
- Suggested *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (John Ford, 1962, 123 min)
- Reading Brian Henderson, "*The Searchers*: An American Dilemma," *Movies and Methods Vol. II*, 429-449 [BB]
Thomas Schatz, "John Ford and the evolution of the Western," *Hollywood Genres*, 63-80 [BB]
Michael Budd, "A Home in the Wilderness," *TWR*, 133-148
Peter Lehman, "Looking at Look's Missing Reverse Shot: Psychoanalysis and Style in John Ford's *The Searchers*," *TWR*, 259-268
- Suggested Edward Buscombe, "Inventing Monument Valley," *TWR*, 115-130
Tag Gallagher, "Angels Gambol Where They Will: John Ford's Indians," *TWR*, 269-276
- Evaluation 2000-word analytical essay due

Week 6 Women and the Western (7/21)

- Screening *Johnny Guitar* (Nicholas Ray, 1954, 100 min)
Forty Guns (Samuel Fuller, 1957, 79 min)

Suggested Reading *Hannie Caulder* (Burt Kennedy, 1971, 85 min)
Pam Cook, "Women and the Western," *TWR*, 293-300
Blake Lucas, "Saloon Girls and Ranchers' Daughters," *TWR*, 301-320
Jennifer Peterson, "The Competing Tunes of Johnny Guitar," *TWR*, 321-340

Week 7 The Italian Western (7/26)

Screening *Vamos a Matar, Compañeros* (Sergio Corbucci, 1970, 118 min)
Suggested Reading *Once Upon a Time in the West* (Sergio Leone, 1968, 165 min)
Reading Marcia Landy, "He Went Thataway: The Form and Style of Leone's Italian Westerns," *TWR*, 213-222
Christopher Frayling, *Spaghetti Westerns*, 37-67 and 121-137 [BB]
Austin Fisher, "A Marxist's Gotta Do What a Marxist's Gotta Do: Political Violence on the Italian Frontier," *Scope* 19 (February 2009), <http://www.scope.nottingham.ac.uk/cultborr/chapter.php?id=14>

Week 8 The Revisionist Western (7/28)

Screening *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid* (Sam Peckinpah, 1973, 115 min)
Suggested Reading *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* (Robert Altman, 1971,
Reading Richard Maltby, "The Empire of Genres," *Hollywood Cinema*, 93-101 [BB]
Doug Williams, "Pilgrims and the Promised Land," *TWR*, 93-114
Jim Kitses, "Peckinpah Re-visited," *TWR*, 223-244
Evaluation Outline and annotated bibliography due

Week 9 The Traditional Western (8/2)

Screening *Big Jake* (George Sherman, 1971, 110 min)
Suggested Reading *The Outlaw Jose Wales* (Clint Eastwood, 1976, 135 min)
Reading John G. Cawelti, "The Western: A Look at the Evolution of a Formula" [excerpt], *Adventure, Mystery, Romance*, 242-259 [BB]
Tag Gallagher, "Shoot-out at the Genre Corral," *Film Genre Reader III*, 262-276 [BB]
Jack Nachbar, "Riding Shotgun: The Scattered Formula in Contemporary Western Movies," *Focus on the Western*, 101-112 [BB]
Steve Neale, "Westerns and Gangster Films Since the 1970s" [excerpt], *Genre and Contemporary Hollywood*, 27-38 [BB]

Week 10 The End of the Western? (8/4)

Screening *Heaven's Gate* (Michael Cimino, 1980, 220 min)
Suggested Reading *The Long Riders* (Walter Hill, 1980,
Reading Raymond Durgnat and Scott Simmon, "Six Creeds that Won the Western," *TWR*, 69-84
J. Hoberman, "How the Western was Lost," *TWR*, 85-92
Robin Wood, "Heaven's Gate Reopened," *MOVIE* 31.2 (1986), 72-83 [BB]
Barry Langford, "Revisiting the 'Revisionist' Western," *Film and History* 33.2, 26-35 [BB]
Will Wright, "The Empire Bites the Dust," *Social Text* 6 (Autumn 1982), 120-131.

Week 11 Authorship and Genre II: Clint Eastwood (8/9)

Screening *Unforgiven* (Clint Eastwood, 1992, 131 min)
Suggested Reading *High Plains Drifter* (Clint Eastwood, 1973, 105 min)
Reading Kenneth Turan, "A Fistful of Memories," *TWR*, 245-249
Janet Thumim, "Masculinity and In/competence in *Unforgiven*," *TWR*, 341-354
Paul Smith, *Clint Eastwood: A Cultural Production*, 1-54 [BB]

Week 12 The Postmodern Western (8/11)

Screening *The Ballad of Little Jo* (Maggie Greenwald, 1993, 121 min)
Suggested *Tombstone* (George P. Costmatos, 1993, 130 min)
Reading Jim Kitses, "Post-modernism and The Western," *TWR*, 15-31
 Tania Modleski, "Our Heroes Have Sometimes Been Cowgirls," *TWR*, 355-366
 Jim Kitses, "An Exemplary Post-Modern Western," *TWR*, 367-380
 Alexandra Keller, "Historical Discourse and American Identity in Westerns since
 the Reagan Era," *Hollywood's West*, 239-260 [BB]

Week 13 Conclusion (8/16)

Screening *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford* (Andrew Dominik,
 2007, 160 min)
 Students' choice of one of the following four films:
 Bandidas (Joachim Rønning and Espen Sandberg, 2006, 93 min)
 Gunless (William Phillips, 2010, 88 min)
 The Last Rites of Ransom Pride (Tiller Russell, 2010, 82 min)
 Jonah Hex (Nevelandine/Taylor, 2010, 81 min)
Evaluation Final essay due