

the western film

Course #: FILM 125
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Office Hours: By email or appointment
Semester: Spring 2013
Day & time: Thursday, 4:00p – 6:50p
Building: #1200, Room #1231

course description

This course will trace the origins, history and current condition of the Western film, examining its complex ideology, and its many variations of form. We will start by examining the classical period of the genre, identifying its key conventions, and progress through the revisionist period of the 1960s and 70s, to the current postmodern condition.

student learning outcomes

Critically assess the western genre through an understanding of its history, modes of production, popular actors and directors, social implications, aesthetics, and core conventions.

course requirements

Class Lectures & Screenings: You are responsible for attending the class lectures every Thursday, as each week is structured to introduce you to a particular theme or concept pertaining to the popular horror film. There is no talking/discussion during the films or clips. I will dismiss you from the course if you become a disruption during the film screenings. If at any time you decide that you do not wish to continue with the course, it is your responsibility to drop, as I do not take it upon myself to drop anyone from the roster at any time.

I encourage you to use your personal computer, iPad, or other learning tool during class time if you are using it appropriately (viewing class slides, taking notes), however, be sure to turn off any noisemaking functions on those and any other electronic devices such as cell phones, iPods, etc. Please keep the brightness levels on all LED screens at low intensity. There is no food allowed in class at any time (drinks are okay). Copies of all the lectures are available on the course website for download and review.

Readings: It is incumbent upon you to be prepared, and you should come to class each week having read the reading assignment posted on the schedule. We will be spending as much time discussing the readings as the films, and a firm understanding of them will benefit your overall understanding/interpretation of the film texts. All readings are located on the course website.

Discussion: You are encouraged to be actively involved in the class discussions, as your participation is key to your success in this course. My goal is to aid in the development of your analytical/critical skills, and I expect everyone to maintain an open mind, and take a creative approach to the material. Be respectful of your fellow classmates when addressing and critiquing conflicting viewpoints.

Film Notes: To compliment any notes you may be taking on the lectures and discussions, you will be required to keep a separate notebook with your notes on each of the films. This is a good habit to practice when watching and analyzing films, as it will help you to remember important narrative and stylistic elements to be used as supportive examples in your writing. This notebook will be checked on the final week of the semester (May 29th).

Essay Guidelines: You are required to write three 4-5 page essays this semester. There are four assigned essays overall, and you only need complete three of them to receive credit. All papers are due on the designated due dates without exception, and no late papers will be accepted. I do not accept physical papers, so please email all of your assignments to me through the Turnitin application (discussed in further detail in the *Example Essay* on the website). All emergency situations leading to late papers will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. There will be no opportunity for re-writes after grading, as good writing skills are a must in this course. Each of the essay questions, as well as an example of an *A* paper are located on the course website. It is required that you visit the website to view the example paper, as there are additional guidelines for writing successfully in this course.

**** Note ** ~ Plagiarism and other issues concerning academic integrity will not be tolerated, and are grounds for an automatic failure in the course. Acknowledge all reading and research sources with appropriate footnotes and bibliography.** Keep all copies of your essays, exams, and notes until you have received a final grade for this class. ~

Quizzes: There will be four reading quizzes given at the beginning of class on selected dates throughout the semester. All quizzes will cover the reading materials assigned up until the date of the quiz, and there will be no opportunity for making-up any missed quizzes.

assessments

Film Notes & Participation	20%
Four reading quizzes	30%
Three 4-5 pg. essays	50%

texts & materials

1. Jim Kitses and Gregg Rickman, The Western Reader. New York: Limelight, 1999.
2. All materials posted on the course website @ www.apwadenius.com.
3. All films screened in class, as well as any excerpt screened during the lectures.

Please remember that if you have any questions about the readings, assignments, or any of the course materials that I am readily available to help answer them. I can be reached through the email address above, the course website, or by placing a note for me in my box.

schedule

week #1 ~ (Jan. 23rd) ~ introduction to the western film

Lecture: Intro to Course
Screening: *High Noon*, dir. Fred Zinnemann (1952)

week #2 ~ (Jan. 30th) ~ the new American frontier

Reading: The Western Reader, "Authorship and Genre: Notes on the Western," Jim Kitses
The Western Reader, "A Home in the Wilderness: Visual Imagery in John Ford's
Westerns," Michael Budd
Screening: *Stagecoach*, dir. John Ford (1939)

week #3 ~ (Feb. 6th) ~ the classic western

Reading: The Western Reader, "Six Creeds That Won the Western," Durgnat and Simmon
Screening: *Rio Bravo*, dir. Howard Hawks (1959)

week #4 ~ (Feb. 13th) ~ a garden in the desert

Reading: The Western Reader, "The Evolution of the Western," Andre Bazin
The Western Reader, "Movie Chronicle: The Westerner," Robert Warshow
Screening: *My Darling Clementine*, dir. John Ford (1946)

**** Essay #1 due ****

week #5 ~ (Feb. 20th) ~ the western film *par excellence*

Reading: "The Searchers: An American Dilemma," Brian Henderson. Movies and Methods,
vol.II, Bill Nichols, ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.
"The Margin as Center: The Multicultural Dynamics of John Ford's Westerns,"
Charles Ramirez Berg. John Ford Made Westerns, Gaylyn Studlar and Matthew
Bernstein, eds. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001).
Screening: *The Searchers*, dir. John Ford (1956)

week #6 ~ (Feb. 27th) ~ the cowboy as spectacle

Reading: The Western Reader, "Interview with Anthony Mann," Christopher Wicking & Barrie
Pattison
The Western Reader, "Anthony Mann: Looking at the Male," Paul Willemen
Screening: *Bend of the River*, dir. Anthony Mann (1952)

**** First reading quiz ****

week #7 ~ (Mar. 6th) ~ masquerade in the west

Reading: The Western Reader, "The Competing Tunes of *Johnny Guitar*: Liberalism, Sexuality,
and Masquerade," Jennifer Peterson
Screening: *Johnny Guitar*, dir. Nicholas Ray (1954)

week #8 ~ (Mar. 13th) ~ the ranown cycle

Reading: The Western Reader, "Budd Boetticher," Lee Russell
Screening: *The Tall T*, dir. Budd Boetticher (1957)

week #9 ~ (Mar. 20th) ~ revitalizing the genre

Reading: The Western Reader, "He Went Thataway: The Form and Style of Leone's Italian
Westerns," Marcia Landy
Screening: *A Fistful of Dollars*, dir. Sergio Leone (1964)

week #10 ~ (Mar. 24th to Mar. 29th) ~ no class

**** Spring break ****

week #11 ~ (Apr. 3rd) ~ violence and utopia

Reading: The Western Reader, "Peckinpah Re-visited: *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid*," Jim Kitses

Screening: *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid*, dir. Sam Peckinpah (1973)

**** Essay #2 due ****

week #12 ~ (Apr. 10th) ~ masculinity in the west

Reading: The Western Reader, "Maybe He's Tough But He Sure Ain't No Carpenter: Masculinity and In/competence in *Unforgiven*," Janet Thumim

The Western Reader, "A Fistful of Memories: Interview with Clint Eastwood," Kenneth Turan

Screening: *Unforgiven*, dir. Clint Eastwood (1992)

**** Second reading quiz ****

week #13 ~ (Apr. 17th) ~ representing women in the west

Reading: The Western Reader, "An Exemplary Post-modern Western," Jim Kitses

The Western Reader, "Women and the Western," Pam Cook

Screening: *The Ballad of Little Jo*, dir. Maggie Greenwald (1993)

week #14 ~ (Apr. 24th) ~ the revisionist western

Reading: The Western Reader, "The Western Under Erasure: *Dead Man*," Gregg Rickman

Screening: *Dead Man*, dir. Jim Jarmusch (1995)

**** Essay #3 Due ****

week #15 ~ (May 1st) ~ the postmodern western

Reading: The Western Reader, "Post-modernism and The Western," Jim Kitses

Screening: *Once Upon a Time in Mexico*, dir. Robert Rodriguez (2003)

**** Third reading quiz ****

week #16 ~ (May 8th) ~ re-appropriating the western narrative

Reading: "Oral History as Political Resistance: *Posse* and *Once Upon a Time in Mexico*," by Adam Wadenius. Forum: The University of Edinburgh Postgraduate Journal of Culture and the Arts. Issue No. 9 – Voices, November 2009.

Screening: *Posse*, dir. Mario Van Peebles (1993)

week #17 ~ (May 15th) ~ final class session

*** Fourth reading quiz ***

*** Essay #4 due ***

*** Film notes due ***

*** Please note that the final class session will be held on May 15th at the usual time and location. ***