

**THE WESTERN**  
**Topic in Genre**  
**Film Studies (FILM) 305.03 L03**  
**Winter 2013**  
**Tu 1300-1445 and Fr 1200-1450**

**Instructor:** Dr. Andrew Nelson  
**Office Location:** SS336  
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**Web Page:** Blackboard  
**Office Hours:** Tu 1600-1700 and by appointment

**Course Description**

An examination of the Western, covering the genre's key periods, figures, and developments.

**Objectives of the Course**

This course surveys the Western's development from the 1930s to the present, with a focus on the genre's "classic" period of the late-1930s to the mid-1960s. Over the course of this near-thirty-year span the Western remained one of Hollywood's most reliably popular products. Yet, at the end of this period, the Western experienced a precipitous fall from grace, reflected in not only a dramatic decline in the number of films produced, but also in a more negative and at times caustic attitude towards the genre by critics and filmmakers.

This history suggests a number of questions that are central to our examination of the Western. How does the Western change over time, and how might we explain those changes? Why would a genre with such a limited setting – the American frontier in the 1870s and 1880s – so appeal to American moviegoers in the 1940s and 50s, who were presumably far removed from the concerns of their pioneer ancestors? And why did the genre then fall out of favor with audiences in the 1960s and 70s, to the degree that today only one or two Westerns are released annually?

Answering these questions requires an exploration of both how the Western has developed and how scholars and critics have sought to understand that development. Our investigation will be centered on the viewing of 25 influential Westerns, supplemented by seminal writings in Western and genre criticism – in particular approaches that examine the relationship between movies and their wider social and historical contexts.

Through a series of writing assignments, including short papers and a final research essay, students will have the opportunity to demonstrate their comprehensive knowledge of the history of the Western and their ability to productively apply various critical approaches to the analysis of the genre.

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 an informed, thoughtful and respectful manner. Students are responsible for catching up on any material missed due to absence.

### **Internet and electronic communication device information**

Mobile phones must be turned off during class. Students may use laptops or tablets during lectures and discussions for note-taking purposes *only*. No electronic devices whatsoever may be used during screenings.

### **Textbooks and Readings**

Wright, Will. *Sixguns and Society: A Structural Study of the Western*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975.

Additional readings will be available on Blackboard and are designated [BB] in the schedule of readings.

Although there are no prerequisites for this course, students who are new to the academic study of cinema are strongly encouraged to visit the Yale Film Studies "Film Analysis" website (<http://classes.yale.edu/film-analysis/>) in order to familiarize themselves with basic film terms and concepts.

### **Assignments and Evaluation**

Detailed information about assignments, the mid-term test, and the final exam will be available on Blackboard.

- 15% 1000-word structural analysis, due in class on Feb 12. An analysis of a single classic Western using the structural methodology of Will Wright. A list of films will be provided.
- 15% 1000-word representation analysis, due in class on March 19. Students will analyze the representation of either women or Indians in a single Western. A list of films will be provided.
- 35% 2000-word final essay, due in class on April 16. A list of topics will be available on blackboard.
- 35% Final take home exam, due April 23 (one week after the last day of class). Three, 500-word responses to questions covering material from lecturers, screenings and readings. Questions will be available on Blackboard on April 16.

All assignments must be completed or a grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

Written assignments must be composed in formal, error-free, academic English, and formatted according to either MLA or Chicago documentation and presentation standards. Your name and student number must appear on each page. Please staple all work – no paper clips or folders. Writing support resources, including citation and style guides, can be found on Blackboard under "External Links."

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-schedule Final Exam: No.**

Please note: If your class is held in the evening, the Registrar's Office will make every attempt to schedule the final exam during the evening; however, there is NO guarantee that the exam will NOT be scheduled during the day.

### 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: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

### 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

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 (3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Taylor Family Digital Library, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>) 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.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds>

### **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 – 403-220-5333**

Campus Security will escort individuals day or night -- call 403-220-5333 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/ethics/cfreb>

### **Schedule of Readings and Screenings**

Available on Blackboard