The Western

Course Description: The genre film is inextricably linked with the Hollywood style of production. Yet our assumption will be that popular movie genres are not simply entertainment; they also present, challenge, and negotiate particular cultural values, assumptions, and conflicts. The Western is probably the most studied genre since it is closely tied in complex ways to American history itself. Until the mid 1970s, the Western was also the most perennially popular American movie genre; at this point it virtually disappeared. Why? The objectives of the class are: to describe some of the major conventions and concerns of the Western genre and its history; provide tools of film criticism and analysis applicable to a variety of films and genres; and understand how and why the Western evolved in relation to particular industry and historical forces over the years. Overall, we will study the movies with reference to American culture.

Learning Objectives under the University Curriculum 2012 and 2016 revision:
2012 Creativity and Aesthetics Level I:
1. Students will be able to identify methods, techniques, or languages of a particular art form, creative endeavor or craft(s) and explain how those inform the creation, performance or analysis of creative work.
2. Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of concepts fundamental to the creative impulse through analysis, performance, or creation.

2016 Creativity and Aesthetics:
1. Students will identify and/or employ methods, techniques, or languages of a particular art form and describe how these inform the creation, performance or analysis of that form.
2. Students will demonstrate an understanding of concepts fundamental to creativity through explanation and analysis

GRADING. There will be MID-TERM and a FINAL EXAM of 100 pts. Each exam will consist of objective and essay questions drawn from the lectures, readings, and films screened in class. You will also write a 4-5-page paper (50 pts.) discussing and analyzing a Western of your choice. Papers will be marked down one letter grade for each day late. Class attendance and participation: 30 pts. The assignment for the paper appears on the last page of the syllabus. Before each major exam I will give you a study guide outlining pertinent terms, themes, concepts, etc. that will be covered. Your final grade will be computed as a percentage of the total of 280 pts. You are strongly advised to stay current with the reading and attend class regularly. *You miss lectures and skip film screenings at your own risk.

**MAKE-UP EXAMS: Make-ups for the mid-term and final will be arranged for medical emergencies only. A verifiable letter from a doctor will be required for non-penalty make-ups. Under certain circumstances a make-up will be given for non-medical reasons. The results of such an exam will be marked down one letter grade. “Early” exams cannot be given for any reason.
Disability Accommodations: Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first register with Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies (DASS). Students can call 214-768-1470 or visit http://www.smu.edu/Provost/ALEC/DASS to begin the process. Once registered, students should then schedule an appointment with the professor as early in the semester as possible, present a DASS Accommodation Letter, and make appropriate arrangements. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and require advance notice to implement.

Religious Observance: Religiously observant students wishing to be absent on holidays that require missing class should notify their professors in writing at the beginning of the semester, and should discuss with them, in advance, acceptable ways of making up any work missed because of the absence. (See “Religious Holidays” under University Policy No. 7.22)

Excused Absences for University Extracurricular Activities: Students participating in an officially sanctioned, scheduled University extracurricular activity should be given the opportunity to make up class assignments or other graded assignments missed as a result of their participation. It is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements with the instructor prior to any missed scheduled examination or other missed assignment for making up the work. (See 2018-2019 University Undergraduate Catalogue)

**ACADEMIC DISHONESTY**: This course is operated in accordance with the SMU HONOR CODE, violations of which may be punished with a failing grade or expulsion from the university. Academic dishonesty may be defined as a student’s misrepresentation of his or her academic work or of the circumstances under which the work is done. This includes plagiarism in all papers, projects, take-home exams, or any other assignment in which the student represents work as being his or her own. Academic dishonesty also includes cheating on examinations, unauthorized access to test materials, and aiding another student to cheat or participate in an act of academic dishonesty. Failure to prevent cheating by another may be considered as participation in the dishonest act. See the 2018-2019 Undergraduate Catalogue for further details.

**COMPUTERS and cell phones must be put away during lectures and screenings. No exceptions.**

READING ASSIGNMENTS and SCREENING SCHEDULE. Please note that the screening list is tentative and subject to change based on any number of unforeseeable factors. Lectures are designed to both reinforce and supplement the reading.

Tues. June 18-- Introduction to the Course. The Frontier Myth in the 19th Century.

The Battle at Elderbush Gulch (Biograph, 1913) D.W. Griffith

The Last of the Mohicans (1992) Michael Mann

   Read: Chapt. 4

Blue Steel (Mascot, 1934) star, John Wayne [excerpts]
Stagecoach (UA, 1939) John Ford

Thurs. June 20-- The Classical Western model.

My Darling Clementine (1946) John Ford
Fri. June 21-- The Post-World War II Western.
Read: chapt. 6, p. 128-46.

**Red River** (1948) Howard Hawks
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Mon. June 24- The ‘Psychological’ Western.

**The Naked Spur** (1953) Anthony Mann

**Tues. June 25. First EXAM.** (2 hrs.)

**High Noon** (1952) Fred Zinnemann

Read: chapt. 7, p. 166-175; chapt. 10, p. 238-43.

**One-Eyed Jacks** (1961) Marlon Brando [excerpts]
**Ride The High Country** (1962) Sam Peckinpah [excerpt]

**A Fistful of Dollars** (Italy, 1964/67) Sergio Leone

Thurs. June 27-- Breaking the Classical Pattern.
Read: (pdf) P. Bondanella, “A Fistful of Pasta: Sergio Leone & the Spaghetti Western”

**Django** (Italy, 1966) Sergio Corbucci [excerpts]
**Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid** (1969) George Roy Hill

*Fri. June 28-- The Vietnam Era Western, cont. PAPER DUE TODAY.

**Buck and the Preacher** (1972) Sidney Poitier

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Mon. July 1-- Reviving the Western? Review for Final.
Read: (pdf) R. Worland & E. Countryman, “The New Western Historiography & The New Western”


Tues. July 2: **FINAL EXAM.**
PAPER ASSIGNMENT.
**You must submit your papers through Canvas (in either Word .docx or PDF formats only) and give me a hard copy in class.

If you experience any problems uploading your papers to Canvas, don’t call me—call the campus IT Help line at once: 214-768-HELP.

***“The dog/computer/internet ate my homework” will never be an acceptable excuse. Papers not submitted to Canvas will be automatically reduced by one letter grade.

GRADING RUBRIC: Each paper should be Double-spaced, with one-inch margins. Your writing will be evaluated on i) How well you state and introduce your THESIS or central point, stated with relevant and specific aspects of your analysis; ii) The clarity and organization of your argument with regard to specific examples and evidence cited from the TV show; and iii) The technical quality of your writing, paying attention to the mechanics of good writing: sentence structure, spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc. [See “Additional Stylistic Tips” below.]

The purpose of the paper is to analyze a Western film of your choice (from any period) thematically (in relation to its major ideas or attitudes, probably as typical of the genre) and formally (i.e., in relation to elements of visual/cinematic style: editing, shot composition, lighting, music, performance, etc.) Remember, form is content: HOW something is being said or presented is WHAT is being said.

Choose at least two scenes of the film that you regard as the most important, memorable, powerful, etc. that reflect the style and major themes of the film; and in relation to concerns or meanings in the Western genre that we have discussed. However, do not neglect the film as a whole. There should be discussion of how these scenes figure into the entire work.

**This is NOT a research paper. I neither want nor expect you to conduct additional research and report what others have said. I want your opinions and analysis in relation to course concepts we have addressed.

Additional stylistic tips for writing your papers:
It’s acceptable occasionally to say “I think”, etc. in a formal critique. However, this should be used sparingly.

Film and book titles should be italicized. Every time. Do not footnote dialog quotes from the movie.

Avoid this phrasing: “In the movie The Wizard of Oz...” We know it’s a movie.

Avoid tedious “here I go” statements that just waste space: e.g., “I have chosen to analyze for this assignment the film X”; or “I will now do this”, “I have just done that”, etc. Just get to it.

Avoid awkward uses of common words that have particular meanings in film production and analysis, e.g.,

--“zooms in on” when you really mean “cuts to a close up” or simply “emphasizes”. The automatic variable focus lens (“zoom” lens) did not come into general use until the late 1950s, btw.

--“focuses on” when you really mean “emphasizes” or “concentrates our attention on”. Every shot of every film “focuses on” something.

--a “dramatic change” when writing about...drama. You really mean “significant” or “sudden” change in the story development. These simple things will improve the style of your anal