

University of Calgary  
Department of Communication, Media and Film

Film Studies FILM 305.03 L01  
Topic in Film Genres: The Western  
Winter 2017  
January 9—April 12

Lab (screening): Mondays 17:00-19:45, Lecture Wednesdays 17:00-18:50

**Instructor:** Dr. Murray Leeder  
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**Office Hours:** Monday 16:00 – 17:00, Friday 11:00 – 12:00

### Course Description

One of the oldest and most durable film genres, the Western is also perhaps the genre most closely linked to American identity, and yet its appeal has never been confined to the United States. This course's focus on the Western will allow us explore how we can define genre and how genres change and evolve over time, as well as issues of gender, ideology, race and national identity.

### Additional Information

Attendance at lectures, screenings and tutorials, and informed participation are essential components of this course and will help determine your final grade. Students must come to class prepared to discuss the required reading.

### Objectives of the Course

In addition to interrogating the Western in particular, this course is also designed to deliver the fundamentals of genre analysis in general. The student will also learn about elements of American society through the frame of the Western, as well as globalization through analysis of its international popularity.

### Internet and electronic communication device information

This course observes a strict laptop and cell phone policy. Laptops are for note-taking only during lectures. Likewise, texting and cell phone use is not permitted during class time: turn off these devices when you arrive at the classroom to avoid embarrassment and annoyance. All devices should be disabled during screenings.

### Textbooks and Readings:

The following textbooks are available at the University of Calgary bookstore:  
Gregg Rickman and Jim Kitses, eds. *The Western Reader*. New York: Limelight Editions, 1999.

Other readings will be posted on Desire2Learn

**All readings are required.**

### **Assignments and Evaluation**

20% **First Assignment**, Due Feb. 6

Choose one of the following options:

1. Building on Slotkin's explanation of the frontier myth's role in American culture and the distinction between progressivism and populism, compare and contrast the role that the frontier plays in at least two of the following films: *Hell's Hinges*, *Stagecoach*, *High Noon*, *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* and *High Plains Drifter*.
2. Building on Altman's semantic/syntactic model of film genres, choose a single convention present in at least three of *Hell's Hinges*, *Stagecoach*, *High Noon*, *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* and *High Plains Drifter* and trace its development. It can be a semantic or a syntactic element; examples might include "the gun," "the horse," "the shootout," "the opening ride into town," "the love triangle," "the town," "the saloon," "the church," "the villain," etc. Be sure to explore the reasons why it changed over time, rather than simply observing that it does.
3. Explore how Kitses's set of binaries between Wilderness and Civilization are operative in at least two of *Hell's Hinges*, *Stagecoach*, *High Noon*, *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* and *High Plains Drifter*. The student will be expected to interrogate Kitses's argument about Wilderness vs. Civilization being the overriding concern of the Western.

The essay should be 4-5 pages. No essay that fails to utilize, quote and cite at least one of our readings will pass. Significantly under-length assignments may fail regardless of their quality. **Consult the style guide provided on D2L and follow it fully.** No essay that lacks proper citations (page numbers included) will pass. Marks may be deducted from papers that fail to comply.

30% **Second Assignment**, Due March 27

Choose one of the following options:

1. Compare depictions of Native Americans in *The Searchers* and/or *Dances with Wolves*, or compare either of them to one of the following films: *Broken Arrow* (1950), *Cheyenne Autumn* (1964), *A Man Called Horse* (1970), *Little Big Man* (1970), *Soldier Blue* (1970), *Buffalo Bill and the Indians*, or *Sitting Bull's History Lesson* (1976), *Dead Man* (1995), *Smoke Signals* (1998) or *The Lone Ranger* (2013).
2. Compare depictions of gender in *Rio Bravo* (1959) and *The Ballad of Little Jo* (1993), or compare either of them to one of the following films: *My Darling Clementine* (1946), *Red River* (1948), *The Gunfighter* (1950), *Ride the High Country* (1962), *The Hired Hand* (1971), *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid* (1972), *The Outlaw Josey Wales* (1976), *Unforgiven* (1992), *The Assassination of Jesse*

*James by the Coward Robert Ford* (2007), *Appaloosa* (2008) or *Meek's Cutoff* (2010).

3. Choose a country other than the United States that has produced Westerns, examining how this quintessentially American genre has adjusted to local socio-cultural and industrial contexts. Examples might include France, Italy, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Russia, Australia, Canada, South Korea, Japan or Brazil. It would be desirable to choose an individual film as a case study.

The essay should be 5-6 pages. Significantly under-length assignments may fail regardless of their quality. No essay that fails to utilize, quote and cite at least one of our readings will pass; in addition, you are required to find at least one academic source not on the syllabus. **Consult the style guide provided on D2L and follow it fully.** No essay that lacks proper citations (page numbers included) will pass. Marks may be deducted from papers that fail to comply.

### 30% **Final Exam**

Scheduled by Registrar.

### 10% **Participation**

Students are expected to both attend both lectures and labs and participate in classroom discussion. Marks will be assigned determined by the quality and volume of participation. A student who attends regularly but does not participate in classroom discussion can expect no more than 5/10.

### 10% **Online Discussion**

On the discussion board on D2L, students will be credited for a maximum of twenty posts on a pass/fail basis (each worth 0.5%). A maximum of two posts will be permitted per film, and if you post twice on the same film, one of them *must* be a response to another student's post. Posts will be due on the Sunday following a screening. A post must be a minimum of 150 words; other instructions are provided on D2L.

### **Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: Yes**

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

### **Note:**

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

**Submission of Assignments:** 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.

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments, and be prepared to provide picture ID to pick up assignments or look at marked final exams in SS 320. Personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. For more information, see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>

**Note:** It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that the proper version is submitted (particularly in courses requiring electronic submission). Including a version date in your file name may be useful.

### **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.

### **Student Accommodations:**

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit [www.ucalgary.ca/access/](http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/).

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.pdf>.

- Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should advise their instructors in advance if they will be missing quizzes, presentations, in-class assignments, or group meetings.
- When accommodations are granted, they may take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to another assignment or test.
- For information on Deferrals of Final Exams and Term Work, see sections G.6 and G.7 of the *University Calendar* at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html> and <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>

### **Writing Skills Statement**

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc) but also general clarity and organization. Sources used in 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 & Grade Scale of the Department of Communication, Media and Film**

Final grades are reported as letter grades.

The following chart outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. In calculating final grades in this course, letter grades will be converted to the midpoint of the percentage range, as shown in the final column of the table below.

<b>Grade Point Value</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Dept of CMF grade scale equivalents*</b>	<b>Letter grade % equivalent for calculations* *</b>
<b>4.00</b>	Outstanding	<b>A+</b>	96 - 100%	98.0%
<b>4.00</b>	Excellent—superior performance, showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter.	<b>A</b>	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
<b>3.70</b>		<b>A -</b>	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
<b>3.30</b>		<b>B+</b>	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
<b>3.00</b>	Good--clearly above average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete.	<b>B</b>	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
<b>2.70</b>		<b>B-</b>	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
<b>2.30</b>		<b>C+</b>	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
<b>2.00</b>	Satisfactory—basic understanding of the subject matter.	<b>C</b>	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
<b>1.70</b>		<b>C-</b>	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
<b>1.30</b>	Minimal pass—marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	<b>D+</b>	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
<b>1.00</b>		<b>D</b>	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
<b>0.00</b>	Fail – unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements.	<b>F</b>	0-49.99%	0%

\* If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades.

\*\* These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

## 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. In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

For information on citation and documentation styles (including APA, Chicago, IEEE, MLA, and others), visit the links provided at <https://ucalgary.ca/ssc/resources/writing-support/436> . If you have questions about how to document sources, please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3<sup>rd</sup> Floor TFDL, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>).

## Academic Misconduct

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

## Research Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants (e.g., surveys, interviews, or observations) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/resources/ethics>

## Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
<b>ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (ASC)</b>	SS 102 403-220-3580 <a href="mailto:artsads@ucalgary.ca">artsads@ucalgary.ca</a>
<b>CAMPUS SECURITY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Calgary Police Service</b></li> <li>• <b>Emergency Text Messaging</b></li> <li>• <b>Emergency Evacuation &amp; Assembly</b></li> <li>• <b>Safewalk Program</b></li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/">http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/</a> <b>403-220-5333</b> <b>403-266-1234</b> <b>Emergency: call 911</b> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage">http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage</a> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints">http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints</a>

	If you feel uncomfortable walking alone at any time, call Campus Security for an escort ( <b>220-5333</b> ). For more information, see <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/">http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/</a>
<b>DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support</b> • IT help line	<a href="http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students">http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students</a> 403-220-5555 or <a href="mailto:itsupport@ucalgary.ca">itsupport@ucalgary.ca</a>
<b>STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE</b> • Writing Support Services • Student Services Mobile App	<a href="http://ucalgary.ca/ssc">http://ucalgary.ca/ssc</a> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support">http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support</a> <a href="http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents">http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents</a>
<b>STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS</b> • Faculty of Arts Reps • Student Ombudsman	<a href="https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/">https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/</a> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds">http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds</a>
<b>SU WELLNESS CENTRE</b> • Counselling Services • Health Services • Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE • Online resources and tips	<b>403-210-9355</b> (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm <a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling</a> <a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health</a> <b>403-266-HELP (4357)</b> <a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus</a> If you're concerned about a friend or your own well-being, it is important to seek help early. Call or visit the SU Wellness Centre or the 24-hour crisis line.

## Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

Except where noted, readings come from *The Western Reader*

Week 1

January 9/11

**Introducing Genre, Introducing the Western**

*Hell's Hinges* (1916, Charles Swickard, USA)

*Stagecoach* (1939, John Ford, USA)

Altman, Rick. "A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre." *Cinema Journal* 23.3 (Spring 1984): 6-18.

Week 2

January 16/18

**Myth and Meaning**

*High Noon* (1952, Fred Zinnemann, USA)

In Rickman and Kitses: Combs, Richard. "Retrospective: *High Noon*."  
Slotkin, Richard. "Introduction: The Significance of the Frontier Myth in American History." *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth Century America*. New York: Athenum, 1992. 1-26.

Week 3

January 23/25

**Conventions and Revisions**

*McCabe & Mrs. Miller* (1971, Robert Altman, USA)

In Rickman and Kitses: Kitses, Jim. "Authorship and Genre: Notes on the Western."

Week 4

January 30/February 1

**The Ghost of Genre Past**

*High Plains Drifter* (1973, Clint Eastwood, USA)

Hutson, Richard. "'One Hang, We All Hang': *High Plains Drifter*," *Clint Eastwood, Actor and Director: New Perspectives*, ed. Leonard Engel (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2007), 99-118.

Week 5

February 6/8

**Gender in the Western I**

*Rio Bravo* (1959, Howard Hawks, USA)

Meeuf, Russell. "Men at Work in Tight Spaces: Masculinity, Professionalism, and Politics in *Rio Bravo* and *The Alamo*." *John Wayne's World: Transnational Masculinity in the Fifties*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013. 152-170.  
<http://site.ebrary.com.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/lib/ucalgary/detail.action?docID=10747514>

**First Assignment is due February 6**

Week 6

February 13/15

**Gender in the Western II**

*The Ballad of Little Jo* (1993, Maggie Greenwald, USA)

In Rickman and Kitses: Cook, Pam. "Women and the Western."

In Rickman and Kitses: Lucas, Blake. "Saloon Girls and Rancher's Daughters."

Week 7

February 27/March 1

**Depictions of Native Americans I**

*The Searchers* (1956, John Ford, USA) -- Monday

*Reel Injun* (2009, Neil Diamond, Canada) -- Wednesday

Colonnese, Tom Grayson, "Native American Reactions to *The Searchers*." "*The Searchers*": *Essays and Reflections on John Ford's Classic Western*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004. 335-342.

Week 8

March 6/8

**Depictions of Native Americans II**

*Dances with Wolves* (1990, Kevin Costner, USA)

In Rickman and Kitses: Robert Baird, "Going Indian: Discovery, Adoption and Renaming Toward a 'True American,' from *Deerslayer* to *Dances with Wolves*." Shively, JoEllen. "Cowboys and Indians: Perceptions of Western Films Among American Indians and Anglos." *American Sociological Review* 57.6 (1992): 725-34.

Week 9

March 13/15

**International Westerns I: The Spaghetti Western**

*Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo/The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (1964, Sergio Leone, Italy)

In Rickman and Kitses: Landy, Marcia. "He Went Thataway: The Form and Style of Leone's Italian Westerns."

Eleftheriotios, Dimitris. "Spaghetti Western, Genre Criticism and National Cinema: Redefining the Frame of Reference." *Action and Adventure Cinema*. Ed. Yvonne Tasker. London: Routledge, 2004. 309-27.

<http://site.ebrary.com.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/lib/ucalgary/detail.action?docID=10094162>

Week 10

March 20/22

**International Westerns II: The Red Western**

*Limónádový Joe aneb Koňská opera/Lemonade Joe* (1964, Oldřich Lipský, Czechoslovakia) -- Monday

*Die Söhne der großen Bärin/The Sons of Great Bear* (1966, Josef Mach, East Germany) -- Wednesday

Dika, Vera. "An East German *Indianerfilm*: The Bear in Sheep's Clothing." *Jump Cut* 50 (Spring 2008): n.p. <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc50.2008/Dika-indianer/text.html>  
Imre, Anikó. "Eastern Westerns: Enlightened Edutainment and National Transvestitism." *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 9.2 (2011): 152-69.

Week 11

March 27/9

**Genre Mixing: Musical Westerns**

*Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* (1954, Stanley Donen, USA)

Altman, Rick. "Why Are Genres Sometimes Mixed?" *Film/Genre*. London: BFI, 1999. 123-143.

**Second Assignment is due March 27**

Week 12

April 3/5

**Genre Mixing II: Science Fiction Westerns**

Guest lecture by Frederick Blichert

*Serenity* (2006, Joss Whedon, USA)

Curry, Agnes B. "We Don't Say 'Indian': On the Paradoxical Construction of the Reavers." *Slayage* 7.1. (2011): n.p.

Wills, John. "Firefly and the Space Western: Frontier Fiction on Fast Forward." *Firefly Revisited: Essays on Joss Whedon's Classic Series*. Eds. Michael Goodrun and Philip Smith. New York: Rowan & Littlefield, 2015. 1-17.

Week 13

April 10/12

**The Acid Western**

*El Topo* (1971, Alejandro Jodorowsky, Mexico/USA)

Marsden, Michael T. "El Topo: Cult Film Phenomenon or Epic Western?" *International Westerns: Re-locating the Frontier*. London: Scarecrow Press, 2014. 185-201.

**Final Exam will be scheduled by the Registrar**