While the American West invokes cowboy virtues of the real, authentic, genuine item, and so on, the Southwest, with its desert mirages and indigenous cultures also has an air of the exotic, nightmare, mystical vision, or dream. The texts we will read this semester all make varying claims to the region we call the Southwest as real, unreal, surreal, magically real, or hyperreal. We will explore these literary portrayals of the Southwest, considering the issues of regional representation or performance: why is it so difficult or impossible to capture the essence of place? What is at stake? We will also consider issues that are intrinsic to these texts, including questions of U.S. and borderlands history, environmental and cultural justice, and ethnicity.

Texts:
Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire*
Ana Castillo, *So Far From God*
Cormac McCarthy, *Blood Meridian*
Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony*
Rebecca Solnit, *Savage Dreams*
Alfredo Vea, *La Maravilla*
Joy Williams, *The Quick and the Dead*
Shorter Readings available as e-texts (PDFs) through WT Class

**Work**

Short Essays (40%): As there are no exams in this course, you will have a number of short essays to write. I will always give you a specific prompt and at least a week’s notice before they are due. They will be of varying type, from straight literary analysis to more exploratory writing. These essays will be submitted into “drop boxes” in WT Class.

Quizzes and Participation (20%): We will have quizzes periodically which will be of various kinds, from short answer questions over the assigned reading and main ideas from lecture to paragraph responses to quotes or prompts. Quizzes will be significant as a more quantitative measure of learning. Into this grade I will also factor in a participation grade, based on your engagement, contributions, and courtesy in the class.

Final Researched Essay (30%): You’ll have the option here either of pursuing the theoretical question of the real as developed in this course or of providing cultural/historical context for a reading of one of the assigned texts. You will hand in a topic proposal for approval of your topic. The final product should be a five-page + essay with a bibliography of four + secondary sources. We will discuss this more later.

Presentation of Final Researched Essay (10%): Instead of a final exam, you will give a conference-style presentation of your final researched essay. We will get into more specific parameters of this later.

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1 This phrase, which we will discuss further, has its origins in Borges, Baudrillard, Zizek, and *The Matrix*. 
Policies
Office Hours: I encourage you to visit during my office hours or to make an appointment to meet with me to discuss any aspect of this course.

Attendance: I take role every day. More than 4 absences will affect your grade dramatically. An absence is an absence; budget carefully. Excessive tardiness can constitute an absence.

Work: Please be prepared for and committed to the reading load for this course! You must complete all assignments to succeed in the course. Your shorter papers will be evaluated largely on your analysis or close reading of the text. The final paper, part of which is a formal topic proposal, will have a modest research component, but the emphasis will still be on your thoughts, analysis, and engagement of the text. Frequent reading quizzes and daily participation will a significant factor in your grade. Late papers will be penalized; quizzes may not be made up.

Participation: Participation is of great importance to the success of this course, your learning, and our shared enjoyment of our scholarly work. Therefore, coming to class prepared and willing to take part in discussion will be rewarded. Poor citizenship, on the other hand, will be detrimental to your final grade. One important component of your participation will be your service as a discussion leader during the term.

WTAMU seeks to provide reasonable accommodations for all qualified persons with disabilities. This university will adhere to all federal, state, and local laws, regulations and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations as required to afford equal educational opportunity. It is the student’s responsibility to register with Disability Support Services and to contact the faculty member in a timely fashion to arrange for suitable accommodations.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty: All work submitted for this course must be your own and must be written exclusively for this course. The use of all sources (ideas, paraphrases, summaries, quotations) must be properly documented. Academic dishonesty has dire consequences at WTAMU. I photocopy suspected plagiarized papers for a leisurely investigation that may continue long after I hand them back. For university rules and consequences, check the following link:

WT Academic Integrity Code:
http://www.wtamu.edu/administrative/ss/code/appendix1.htm

This syllabus constitutes a contractual agreement between professor and student. I expect that you have read and understood the work load and policies for this course.
## Schedule (subject to revision)

### Week 1
- Jan. 13: Intro to Course
- Jan. 15: Turner/Bolton/Anzaldúa (PDFs, WTClass, under “Lessons”—print and bring to class)

### Week 2
- Feb. 20: Graves, “The Last Running” (PDF)

### Week 3
- Feb. 27: Abbey 95-195
- Feb. 29: Abbey 196-269

### Week 4
- March 3: Momaday, from *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (PDF); Silko (get started reading)
- March 5: Silko, *Ceremony* 1-84

### Week 5
- March 10: Silko 84-201
- March 12: Silko 201-62

### Week 6
- March 17: McCarthy, *Blood Meridian* 3-150
- March 19: McCarthy 151-222

### Week 7
- March 24: McCarthy 223-337
- March 26: McCarthy, PPHM

### Week 8
- March 3: “Atzlan” Materials (PDF); Castillo, *So Far From God* 19-113
- March 5: Castillo 114-189

### Week 9
- March 10: Castillo 190-252
- March 12: Flores (PDF); Field-Writing Exercise

### Week 10
- Spring Break

### Week 11
- April 24: Vea, *La Maravilla* 1-112
- April 26: Vea 113-88

### Week 12
- April 31: Vea 189-305
- April 2: *Plutonium Circus*; get a good start on Solnit’s *Savage Dreams*
Week 13
7  Solnit, *Savage Dreams* xi-212
9  Solnit 215-93

Week 14
14  Solnit 294-387
16  Williams, *The Quick and the Dead* 3-105

Week 15
21  Williams 106-218
23  Williams 219-308

Week 16
28  Conclusions / Lessons Learned / Resolutions
30  DEAD DAY

Final Exam: