

Course Syllabus

Course Information

HUMA 5300.001 Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Arts & Humanities
R 4-6:45 p.m. JO4.312 Spring 2009

Professor Contact Information

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JO 4.624
Office Hours: M 3-4:30; R 2-3:30 and by appointment

Course Pre-requisites, Co-requisites, and/or Other Restrictions

This course is intended to introduce students to the intellectual and professional requirements of advanced study in literature, history, and the fine arts; the course serves as the core course in the graduate program in the School of Arts and Humanities and is required. The recommendation is that students take it earlier rather than later in their degree plans; the assumption is that students in the course have not mastered the skills the course is supposed to develop. These skills include but are not limited to critical reading, explication and interpretation of both literary and historical texts, and the production of analytical discussion.

The theme of this semester's approach will be the American West as ideal, with a special emphasis on the frontier as both myth and reality. Particular attention will be given to the constantly evolving notions of the West as concept and identity in American history, literature, and art.

MLA style (particularly as regards punctuation and documentation method) will be required on all written work; other style or rhetorical or grammatical formats will *not* be acceptable, regardless of a student's major discipline or background. This especially applies to style manuals published by the APA, ABA, AMA, or your high school or junior college English teacher.

Hard copy of all written work is required. Email attachment, and other forms of electronic submission of written work is not acceptable. Specific requirements for preparation of written work will be distributed in advance of the first written assignment.

Course Description:

This will be a reading intensive course. We will focus on the examination of two histories and twelve major works of American literature covering nearly two hundred years. Each of the selected works will be examined and discussed in light of the perceived tensions that exist between the myths and realities of the American West as it was variously perceived and displayed in American history. A departure point for discussion will be *The Virgin Land*, by Henry Nash Smith, but Evan S. Connell's *Son of the Morning Star* will also be used in the course of the semester. Of special interest in the course will be an examination of how these works and their authors approach concepts of the American West. Additional materials drawn from the visual and performing arts will supplement the course's content. Course format will be lecture/seminar/discussion.

Course Requirements:

Students will be expected to read and be prepared to discuss all assigned work on the date due. Failure to complete reading assignments will be regarded as an indifferent attitude toward one's performance evaluation and duly noted as such.

For each meeting, each student will prepare a question or statement that may be used as a basis of discussion for the assigned work. Connections to previously assigned and discussed work are encouraged. The question or statement should be typed and be turned in at the start of the class session.

Each student will make a seminar presentation. These will be scheduled early in the term. Specifics regarding these assignments will be discussed during the first or second class meeting. The presentation should be accompanied by a three-to-five page précis of the presentation, which will be evaluated for grade.

Each student will write a brief (five to seven pages) proposal for a major research paper. The proposal should indicate a breadth of research and citations should be properly documented.

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

- 1. Students will be able to examine a variety of works from the arts & humanities, particularly those connected to literature and history.**
- 2. Students will be able to demonstrate their ability to analyze and compare and contrast the works with each other in a prescribed context.**

3. Students will be able to apply considered analysis and respond to works in the arts & humanities as examples of human expression and aesthetic and philosophical principles.

Required Textbooks and Materials

The Virgin Land by Henry Nash Smith

The Prairie, by James F. Cooper

The Virginian, by Owen Wister

Death Comes for the Archbishop, by Willa Cather

Riders of the Purple Sage, by Zane Grey

The Ox-Bow Incident, by Walter Van Tilburg Clark

The Bounty Hunters, by Elmore Leonard

Son of the Morning Star, by Evan S. Connell

Welcome to Hard Times, by E. L. Doctorow

Leaving Cheyenne, by Larry McMurtry

The Day the Cowboys Quit, by Elmer Kelton

Tracks, by Louise Erdrich

With His Pistol in His Hand, by Américo Paredes

Blood Meridian, by Cormac McCarthy

MLA Guide for Writers of Research Papers

Recommended

The Hunters of Kentucky, Ted Franklin Belue

Suggested Course Materials

A quality notebook with blank paper and antique writing implement, such as ink pen or sharpened pencil.

Assignments & Academic Calendar

(A full and complete calendar will be distributed at the first or second class meeting. Students should arrive in the course having read at least Henry Nash Smith's *The Virgin Land*. It would be advisable to begin reading the first two novels on the list, as well, as they are dense and will require a space of time.)

Calendar

The dates and assignments below are subject to change and adjustment as the semester progresses. Please be aware of announcements regarding revisions and alterations in the course schedule.

January

15 **First Class Meeting - Introduction**

22 The Evolution of the Myth of the American West: Background Reading: Henry Nash Smith

29 Cooper and the Early Western Myth

February

5 Wister and the Genesis of the Cowboy Hero

12 Film

19 Cather and the Agrarian Hero

26 Grey and Clark and the West as Mythical Cosmos

March

5 Discussion

12 The Myth Examined: Background Reading: Evan S. Connell,

19 **Spring Break**

26 Leonard and Doctorow—The West Revised

April

2 Film

9 McMurtry and Kelton—The West Revealed

16 Erdrich and Paredes—The West Exposed

- 23 Film
30 McCarthy—The West Undone

May

- 7 **Final Examination Period**
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Grading Policy

The final grade in this class will be determined by an evaluation of the student's written work, class participation, and general attendance. Written work will be evaluated for content quality, organizational and structural integrity, *and* grammatical correctness and proper format.

Course & Instructor Policies

Absentee policy is very simple. The class will meet once weekly, save for Spring Break, March 19. If for some reason the class cannot meet at a scheduled time, then there will be no meeting. Otherwise, students will be *required* to attend *all* meetings, to be *on time* and prepared to begin when the class commences. Class participation is a vital part of the student grade. Students who must miss class for *any* reason are subject to grade penalty, even failure of the class.

Late or incomplete work is *not* acceptable; incompletes will *not* be given in this class.

Please note: The use of tape recorders, personal or laptop computers, *cellular telephones*, beepers or other electronic gimcrackery and geegawery is not permitted during this class. Students are encouraged, however, to take notes in long-hand. Children, pets, and other guests are not permitted in class without prior permission of the instructor.

Special Note: Plagiarism, confederate or counterfeit work, cheating of any sort or kind, however practiced, will be dealt with under a policy of zero tolerance. Any student deemed to be involved in any sort of dishonest presentation or representation of work as his or her own that has been taken without permission and due and properly formatted credit and citation from another source, will be subject to the maximum penalties that can be imposed by the university. Ignorance is no excuse! Be aware of this policy for your own well-being.