

**MENG 6710**  
**Western American Literature and Criticism**  
**(2 credits, first 8-week block)**  
**CRN 32848**  
**Weber State University**  
**Spring 2011**

**Professor:** Dr. Hal Crimmel  
**Meeting Place:** Davis  
**Meeting Time:** M 5:30-9:00

**Office:** EH 456  
**Office Hours:** MWF 12:30-1:30 and by appointment  
**Phone:** 801-626-8044  
**Email:** [hcrimmel@weber.edu](mailto:hcrimmel@weber.edu)  
**Webpage:** <http://faculty.weber.edu/hcrimmel/>

**Required Texts (in order of consideration):**

Harte, Bret. *The Luck of Roaring Camp and Other Writings* (1868)  
Wister, Owen. *The Virginian: A Horseman of the Plains* (1902)  
Cather, Willa. *My Ántonia* (1918)  
Silko, Leslie Marmon. *Ceremony* (1977)  
Proulx, Annie. *Close Range: Wyoming Stories* (1999)  
Meloy, Ellen. *The Last Cheater's Waltz: Beauty and Violence in the Desert Southwest* (2001)

**Required In-Class Film Screening:**

McCarthy, Cormac. *No Country for Old Men* (Dirs. Joel and Ethan Coen, 2007)

**Course Description:**

This course engages the following questions: What is Western American literature? How have Western American writers dealt with such themes as place and identity, the frontier, the environment, gender, race, aridity, and the open spaces of the West? Finally, what role does Western American literature have in the broader canon of American literature and in the American imagination? This 8-week course will seek to answer these questions and more as we read the work of authors from Bret Harte to Ellen Meloy as well as relevant criticism.

**Policies:**

**Class Participation & Conduct:**

Please come to class on time and prepared to discuss assigned reading and your writing. Active participation improves your final grade; lack of participation hurts your final grade. No texting once class has started.

**Attendance:** *There are no "excused absences," but you get one absence without penalty. The second absence reduces your final grade by 5%. Three absences or more typically results in a failing grade. Habitually arriving significantly late to class may count toward your absences.*

**Late papers:** All work is due in class on the assigned date. Late papers will not be accepted unless you have made prior arrangements. Late paper penalties may apply.

**Academic Dishonesty:** As specified in PPM 6-22 IV D, cheating and plagiarism violate the Student Code. Plagiarism is "the unacknowledged (uncited) use of any other person's or group's ideas or work." Students found guilty of cheating or plagiarism are subject to failure of a specific assignment, or, in more serious cases, failure of the entire course.

**Core Beliefs:** According to PPM 6-22 IV, students are to "[d]etermine, before the last day to drop courses without penalty, when course requirements conflict with a student's core beliefs. If there is such a conflict, the student should consider dropping the class. A student who finds this solution impracticable may request a resolution from the instructor. This policy does not oblige the instructor to grant the request, except in those cases when a denial would be arbitrary and capricious or illegal. This request must be made to the instructor in writing and the student must deliver a copy of the request to the office of the department head. The student's request must articulate the burden the requirement would place on the student's beliefs."

**Policies, continued:**

**Disability Accommodation:** PPM 3-34 notes: “When students seek accommodation in a regularly scheduled course, they have the responsibility to make such requests at the Center for Students with Disabilities before the beginning of the quarter [semester] in which the accommodation is being requested. When a student fails to make such arrangements, interim accommodations can be made by the instructor, pending the determination of the request for a permanent accommodation.”

**Emergency Campus Closure:** In the event of an extended campus closure, check your WSU Wildcat email account for further instructions about how to keep up with class. It will be your responsibility to check in frequently with your WSU email account in order to complete the class.

**Assignments and Grades:**

Your grade for the course is based on a 100-point scale. It consists of the following assignments, which will either be distributed in class or posted on my webpage <http://faculty.weber.edu/hcrimmel/>

- Two 600-word response papers (10 points)
- One book review on a work of your choice (20 points)
- One class presentation based on the readings (10 points)
- One 12-page paper (50 points)
- Active classroom participation: (10 points)
  - includes frequent and quality contributions to class discussions, completing assigned readings, participating in peer editing workshops, etc.

**Course Outline**

**1/3 / Week One:** Course introduction + Harte, Bret. *The Luck of Roaring Camp and Other Writings* (Please read critical introduction in Penguin edition).

**Ereserve:** Crimmel, “The Apple Doesn’t Fall Far from the Tree: Western American Literature and Environmental Literary Criticism”

**1/10 / Week Two:** Wister, Owen. *The Virginian: A Horseman of the Plains*  
**Response paper #1 due.**

**1/17 / Week Three:** Willa Cather’s *My Ántonia*

**1/24 / Week Four:** Silko, Leslie Marmon. *Ceremony*  
**Response paper #2 due.**

**1/31 / Week Five:** Proulx, Annie. *Close Range: Wyoming Stories*

**2/7 / Week Six:** Meloy, Ellen. *The Last Cheater’s Waltz: Beauty and Violence in the Desert Southwest* (Read to page 150).  
**Book review due.**

**2/14 / Week Seven:** Meloy, Ellen. *The Last Cheater’s Waltz: Beauty and Violence in the Desert Southwest* (Finish)

**2/21 / Week Eight: NO CLASS / Presidents’ Day Holiday**  
Cormac McCarthy’s *No Country for Old Men* (2007) (4x academy award winner)  
**Rough draft of final paper due**

(Final draft due on scheduled exam date).

## Grading Criteria Used for MENG Essays

### **A:**

An essay or paper in this category:

- is well developed and well organized
- clearly illustrates and develops key ideas
- displays a high degree of inventiveness & originality
- displays a sophisticated and superior use of language
- demonstrates syntactic variety
- is virtually free from errors in mechanics, usage, sentence structure, and diction

### **B:**

An essay or paper in this category:

- is well organized and developed, though it may have small flaws in organization or paragraphing
- illustrates and develops some key ideas
- displays good control of language and a consistent tone
- demonstrates some syntactic variety
- is generally free from errors in mechanics, usage, sentence structure, and diction

### **C:**

An essay or paper in this category:

- is adequately well developed and organized
- illustrates and develops one or two key ideas
- displays capable and accurate use of language
- may display occasional errors in mechanics, usage, sentence structure, and diction, but not a consistent pattern of such errors