

Course Syllabus

Course Information

HUMA 3300.002 Reading and Writing Texts
T 4-6:45 p.m. AH1.204 Spring 2010

Professor Contact Information

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Office Hours: T 2:30-4; R 1:30-3 and by appointment

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

This course focuses on a significant topic or issue through which students are offered an opportunity to gain experience in various analytic and interpretive approaches. It explores connections among artistic and intellectual endeavors appropriate to a range of courses in the Arts and Humanities. This course is a requirement for all AHST, AP, HIST, and LIT majors and should be taken prior to completing first twelve hours of upper-division course work. Prerequisite: HUMA 1301 or equivalency.

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 undergraduate program in the School of Arts and Humanities. 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, aesthetic explication and interpretation of a variety of texts, and the production of analytical discussion.

This course is part of the General Education Requirement in Communications. It is designed to develop students' mastery in writing. Students must demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively in clear and correct prose and to master specific forms of writing tailored to the professional standards in the School of Arts and Humanities. This course will require that students write, receive detailed feedback about, and revise at least 15 double-spaced pages.

The theme of this semester's approach will be the American West as icon, 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 and the Westerner 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 are 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 nine published works of American literature and approximately four films, all 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 may be collected for evaluation.

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

Roughing It, by Mark Twain

The Virginian, by Owen Wister

The Ox-Bow Incident, by Walter Van Tilburg Clark

Son of the Morning Star, by Evan S. Connell

The Last Picture Show, by Larry McMurtry

Tracks, by Louise Erdrich

Blood Meridian, by Cormac McCarthy

MLA Guide for Writers of Research Papers, 7th Edition

Suggested Course Materials

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

Assignments & Academic Calendar

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

12 **First Class Meeting - Introduction**

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

26 Cooper and the Early Western Myth

February

2 FILM

9 Wister and the Genesis of the Cowboy Hero (**Paper One Due**)

16 Clark and the West as Mythical Cosmos

23 FILM (**Paper One Revised Due**)

March

2 Mark Twain, The Myth Examined **Midterm**

9 FILM

16 **Spring Break**

23 The Myth Explained, Evan S. Connell

30 FILM (**Paper Two Due**)

April

6 McMurtry, The West Revealed

13 Erdrich, The West Exposed

20 FILM

27 McCarthy, The West Undone (**Paper Two Revised Due**)

May

4 **Final Examination Period**

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 16. 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.