

Studies in Fiction—West of Everything

ENGL 4313.001—Fall 2007

MWF 1:00-1:50 p.m.

English Building Room ???

Course webpage—<http://www.faculty.english.ttu.edu/spurgeon>

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Office Hours: MWF 2:00-3:00 or by appointment

Course Overview:

We will examine works of fiction, poetry, and film by Native American, Chicano, Anglo American, Asian American and African American writers and directors. Some will be classics (both literary and filmic) of the genre known as the Western, and some will undermine or subvert it. We will be exploring these texts from a number of different angles: What did the myth of the frontier look like in the past and what shape is it assuming in literature and film today? How has it been used to justify or deconstruct American ideas about conquest, colonization, and empire? How might it work to define our modern ideas about gender, race, class, sexuality, national identity, borders, etc.? How has it formed the genre we know today as the “Western”? How do the works of non-Anglo Westerners writing from “the other side” of the frontier reinterpret that myth? We will be doing close readings of novels, poems, short fiction, films, and theory.

Required texts:

James Fenimore Cooper	<i>Last of the Mohicans</i>
Leslie Marmon Silko	<i>Ceremony</i>
Jimmy Santiago Baca	<i>Black Mesa Poems</i>
Zane Grey	<i>Riders of the Purple Sage</i>
Cormac McCarthy	<i>Blood Meridian, or, the Evening Redness in the West</i>
Maxine Hong Kingston	<i>The Woman Warrior</i>
Reading packet	???
	The Lone Ranger and Tonto?
Jane Tompkins	<i>West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns</i>

All texts are available from the TTU Bookstore in the basement of the Student Union Building.

Assignments, Grades, Course Policies:

Reader Review Questions

These questions will be posted on the course webpage. You should write a brief 1-2 pages total answering them. I will collect your responses in a portfolio (please give me a

pocket folder with your name on it for this) which I will grade and return at the end of the semester.

Essays

You will write four short (4-5) page analysis essays for the class based on your choice of a series of essay prompts. These essays should have a strong, concise thesis, and *no plot summary whatsoever*. Assume your audience is made up of interested scholars familiar with the text you're examining. You may do outside research if you wish, but it is not required. Please include a works cited page in MLA format, even if you only cite one text. These essays may be submitted as attachments to an email (Word compatible format, please), or on paper. You will receive a more detailed assignment sheet for the essays shortly.

Mid-Term and Final Exam

These will be cumulative, consisting mainly of identification, T/F, fill in the blank, and short answer. You will be expected to know the following basic information about each text:

- Title, author, year of publication
- Names of main characters and their relationships to each other
- Major plot points
- Major themes and ideas for poetry and essays

In addition, the short answer sections may ask you to make connections between texts, draw insights from authors' lives, talk about the role of history, tradition, regionalism, gender, race, etc.

Reader Review Questions	10 pts. (total)	
Essay One	10 pts.	<u>SCALE</u>
Essay Two	10 pts.	90-100 = A
Essay Three	10 pts.	80-89 = B
Essay Four	10 pts.	70-79 = C
Mid-term Exam	20 pts.	60-69 = D
<u>Final Exam</u>	30 pts	<u>59-less = F</u>
TOTAL POSSIBLE	100 points (no extra credit)	

- *Attendance* - Mandatory. You will get three free absences. You will be penalized one point per absence after that.
- *Participation* - Mandatory. This class will consist of both lectures and class discussions. This will require you to have done all readings for the day *before* you come to class. I will call periodically on everyone in the class. If too many people are sitting quietly while only a few carry on class discussions, or if too many people are coming to class without doing the readings, I will switch to standard lecture format with weekly quizzes. I will post discussion questions for each reading on the class website. **Please check this regularly!**

- *Plagiarism* - This means submitting writing as your own that was actually done by someone else. This means whenever you take words directly from another text, they **MUST** be in quotations and cited, no exceptions. Even a small amount of plagiarized material in your essay will result in a zero on the assignment, possibly an F for the class, and/or expulsion from the University.
- *Due dates* - All essays and reader reviews are due on the dates indicated. **If you speak with me in advance**, you may receive a one week extension without penalty on one essay and one reader review. If you do not speak with me in advance, grades will drop by 1 point for each weekday past the due date. **DO NOT** wait until the night before an assignment is due to write, type, or print it. **ALWAYS** save your work on a back-up disc. Excuses like “my computer crashed” or “my printer isn’t working” will be met with sympathy, but you’ll still lose 1 point per day.

UNIT ONE – Roots of the Western: Captivity Myths, Identity, and Empire

Texts: James Fenimore Cooper, *Last of the Mohicans* (1826)
 Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony* (1977)
 Jane Tompkins’ *West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns* (1991)

Films: John Ford’s, “The Searchers” (1956)
 Ron Howard’s, “The Missing” (2003)

UNIT TWO—Myth and Anti-myth: The White Men Speak

Texts: Zane Grey, *Riders of the Purple Sage* (1912)
 Cormac McCarthy, *Blood Meridian* (1985)

Films: Clint Eastwood’s “Unforgiven” (1992)

UNIT THREE—On the Border/Off the Map: Race, Nationalism and Identity in Western Literature

Texts: Jimmy Santiago Baca’s *Black Mesa Poems* (1989)
 Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior* (1976)
 From reading packet: Louise Erdrich’s poem “Dear John Wayne” 1984
 Octavia Butler’s ???

Films: The Business of Fancy Dancing? (2005)
 Tommy Lee Jones’ “The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada” (2005)

Semester Calendar

UNIT ONE – Roots of the Western: Captivity Myths, Identity, and Empire

M 8/28 Intro to class. Begin reading *Last of the Mohicans*.

W8/30 Lecture and class discussion of Cooper.

- F 9/1 Lecture and class discussion of Cooper. Bring in typed answers to reader review questions posted on webpage
- M 9/4 **LABOR DAY—NO CLASSES** Watch “*The Searchers*” by next Monday
- W 9/6 Lecture and discussion of Cooper and captivity narratives.
- F 9/8 Bring in typed answers to reader review questions posted on webpage.
- M 9/11 Lecture and discussion of “The Searchers”. Begin reading *Ceremony*.
- W 9/13 Bring in typed answers to reader review questions posted on webpage.
Last day to drop a course and receive a refund
- F 9/15 Lecture and discussion of Silko.
- M 9/18 Lecture and class discussion of Silko and captivity narratives. Watch “*The Missing*” by Friday.
- W 9/20 Bring in typed answers to reader review questions posted on webpage.
- F 9/22 Lecture and discussion of “The Missing”.
- M 9/25 Bring in typed answers to reader review questions posted on webpage
- W 9/27 Bring in thesis statement and outline of Essay One.
- F 9/29 **Unit One Essay due today.** For Monday, begin *Riders of the Purple Sage*.

UNIT TWO—Myth and Anti-myth: The White Men Speak

- M 10/2 Lecture and class discussion of Zane Grey.
- W 10/4 Lecture and class discussion of Grey.
- F 10/6 Bring in typed answers to reader review questions posted on webpage.
For Monday read Jane Tompkins.
- M 10/9 Lecture and class discussion of Grey and Tompkins. Watch “*Shane*” by Friday.
- W 10/11 Bring in typed answers to reader review questions posted on webpage.
- F 10/13 Lecture and class discussion Grey, Tompkins, and “Shane.” For Monday, begin reading *Blood Meridian*.

UNIT THREE: Gender and Nature in the West--Anglo Women Writers

- M 10/16 Lecture and class discussion of McCarthy.
- W 10/18 Lecture and class discussion of McCarthy.
- F 10/20 Lecture and class discussion of McCarthy. For Monday read Tompkins.
- M 10/23 Bring in typed answers to reader review questions posted on webpage.
Watch “*Unforgiven*” by Monday.
- W 10/25 **NO CLASS TODAY** – I’m at a conference
- F 10/27 **NO CLASS TODAY** – I’m at a conference

- M 10/30 Lecture and class discussion of Tompkins, “Unforgiven,” and McCarthy.
Last day to drop a course
- W 11/1 Bring in typed answers to reader review questions posted on webpage.
- F 11/3 Bring in thesis statement and outline of Essay Two.
- M 11/6 Writing day—no class, but I will be available to answer questions about
your essay
- W 11/8 ***Unit Two Essay due today*** For Monday, begin reading Maxine
Hong Kingston’s novel, *The Woman Warrior*.
- F 11/10 **Free day—you’ve worked hard!**

UNIT FOUR: Other Wests—Asian and African American Women Writers

- M 11/13 Lecture and class discussion of Hong Kingston.
- W 11/15 Lecture and class discussion of Hong Kingston.
- F 11/17 Lecture and class discussion of Hong Kingston.
- M 11/20 Bring in typed answers to reader review questions posted on webpage.
- W 11/22 **THANKSGIVING BREAK—NO CLASSES**
- F 11/24 **THANKSGIVING BREAK—NO CLASSES** For Monday read
selections from Octavia Butler’s collection of short fiction, *Bloodchild
and other stories*
- M 11/27 Lecture and class discussion of Butler.
- W 11/29 Lecture and class discussion of Butler.
- F 12/1 Bring in typed answers to reader review questions posted on webpage.
- M 12/4 Bring in thesis statement and outline of Essay Three.
- W 12/6 ***Unit Three Essay due today.*** Last day of classes.

W 12/13 FINAL EXAM 1:30-4:00 p.m.
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