

GENERAL STUDIES COURSE PROPOSAL COVER FORM

Course information:

Copy and paste **current** course information from [Class Search/Course Catalog](#).

| | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| College/School | College of Liberal Arts and Sciences | Department/School | School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies |
| Prefix: HST | Number: 306 | Title: Studies in United States History (History of the American West) | Units: 3 |

Course description:

Is this a cross-listed course? No If yes, please identify course(s): _____

Is this a shared course? No If so, list all academic units offering this course: _____

*Note- For courses that are crosslisted and/or shared, a letter of support from the chair/director of **each** department that offers the course is required for **each** designation requested. By submitting this letter of support, the chair/director agrees to ensure that all faculty teaching the course are aware of the General Studies designation(s) and will teach the course in a manner that meets the criteria for each approved designation.*

Is this a **permanent-numbered** course with topics? Yes

If **yes**, each topic requires **an individual submission**, separate from other topics.

Requested designation: *Social-Behavioral Sciences (SB)*

Mandatory Review: Yes

*Note- a **separate** proposal is required for each designation.*

Eligibility: Permanent numbered courses **must** have completed the university's review and approval process. For the rules governing approval of omnibus courses, contact Phyllis.Lucie@asu.edu.

Submission deadlines dates are as follow:

For Fall 2020 Effective Date: October 10, 2019

For Spring 2021 Effective Date: March 5, 2020

Area proposed course will serve:

A single course may be proposed for more than one core or awareness area. A course may satisfy a core area requirement and more than one awareness area requirements concurrently, but may not satisfy requirements in two core areas simultaneously, even if approved for those areas. With departmental consent, an approved General Studies course may be counted toward both the General Studies requirement and the major program of study. It is the responsibility of the chair/director to ensure that all faculty teaching the course are aware of the General Studies designation(s) and adhere to the above guidelines.

Checklists for general studies designations:

Complete and attach the appropriate checklist

- [Literacy and Critical Inquiry core courses \(L\)](#)
- [Mathematics core courses \(MA\)](#)
- [Computer/statistics/quantitative applications core courses \(CS\)](#)
- [Humanities, Arts and Design core courses \(HU\)](#)
- [Social-Behavioral Sciences core courses \(SB\)](#)
- [Natural Sciences core courses \(SQ/SG\)](#)
- [Cultural Diversity in the United States courses \(C\)](#)
- [Global Awareness courses \(G\)](#)
- [Historical Awareness courses \(H\)](#)

A complete proposal should include:

- Signed course proposal cover form
- [Criteria checklist](#) for General Studies designation being requested
- Course catalog description
- Sample syllabus for the course
- Copy of table of contents from the textbook and list of required readings/books

It is respectfully requested that proposals are submitted electronically with all files compiled into one PDF.

Contact information:

Name Marissa Timmerman E-mail Marissa.R.Timmerman@asu.edu Phone 480-727-4029

Department Chair/Director approval: (Required)

Chair/Director name (Typed): Richard Amesbury Date: 11/01/2019

Chair/Director (Signature): 

Arizona State University Criteria Checklist for
SOCIAL-BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES [SB]

Rationale and Objectives

Social-behavioral sciences use distinctive scientific methods of inquiry and generate empirical knowledge about human behavior, within society and across cultural groups. Courses in this area address the challenge of understanding the diverse natures of individuals and cultural groups who live together in a complex and evolving world.

In both private and public sectors, people rely on social scientific findings to consider and assess the social consequences of both large-scale and group economic, technological, scientific, political, ecological and cultural change. Social scientists' observations about human interactions with the broader society and their unique perspectives on human events make an important contribution to civic dialogue.

Courses proposed for a General Studies designation in the Social-Behavioral Sciences area must demonstrate emphases on: (1) social scientific theories, perspectives and principles, (2) the use of social-behavioral methods to acquire knowledge about cultural or social events and processes, and (3) the impact of social scientific understanding on the world.

Revised April 2014

Proposer: Please complete the following section and attach appropriate documentation.

| ASU--[SB] CRITERIA | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|----------|
| A SOCIAL-BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES [SB] course should meet all of the following criteria. If not, a rationale for exclusion should be provided. | | | | | |
| YES | NO | | Identify Documentation Submitted | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. Course is designed to advance basic understanding and knowledge about human interaction. | Syllabus | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. Course content emphasizes the study of social behavior such as that found in: <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 40%; vertical-align: top;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ANTHROPOLOGY • ECONOMICS • CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY • HISTORY </td> <td style="width: 60%; vertical-align: top; text-align: center;">History</td> </tr> </table> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ANTHROPOLOGY • ECONOMICS • CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY • HISTORY | History | Syllabus |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ANTHROPOLOGY • ECONOMICS • CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY • HISTORY | History | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. Course emphasizes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the distinct knowledge base of the social and behavioral sciences (e.g., sociological anthropological). <li style="text-align: center;">OR b. the distinct methods of inquiry of the social and behavioral sciences (e.g., ethnography, historical analysis). | Syllabus | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. Course illustrates use of social and behavioral science perspectives and data. | Syllabus | | |
| | | THE FOLLOWING TYPES OF COURSES ARE EXCLUDED FROM THE [SB] AREA EVEN THOUGH THEY MIGHT GIVE SOME CONSIDERATION TO SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE CONCERNS: | | | |
| | | • Courses with primarily arts, humanities, literary or philosophical content. | | | |
| | | • Courses with primarily natural or physical science content. | | | |
| | | • Courses with predominantly applied orientation for professional skills or training purposes. | | | |
| | | • Courses emphasizing primarily oral, quantitative, or written skills. | | | |

| Course Prefix | Number | Title | General Studies Designation |
|---------------|--------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| HST | 306 | The West in Myth, Movie, and American History | SB |

Explain in detail which student activities correspond to the **specific** designation criteria. Please use the following organizer to explain how the criteria are being met.

| Criteria (from checksheet) | How course meets spirit (contextualize specific examples in next column) | Please provide detailed evidence of how course meets criteria (i.e., where in syllabus) |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Course is designed to advance basic understanding and knowledge of human interaction. | Students watch Western films that portray the interactions of myriad racial and ethnic groups in the West wrestling with various social problems. Family and gendered behavior is also a focus. One common plot device in these films revolves around resolving tensions between class, racial and ethnic groups, and the genders. | These human interactions are visible on the syllabus notes for the films: Stagecoach, Module 2 (the stock characters in questions represent the social categories of race, class, and gender); Fort Apache, Module 3; The Searchers, Module 4; McCabe and Mrs. Miller, Module 6; Meek' Cutoff and Smoke Signals, Module 7 |
| Course content emphasizes the study of social behavior such as that found in: History and Anthropology | These films serve as ethnographies for various groups. For example, Indigenous Peoples are portrayed and these images are critiqued. We assess the perspectives of white directors with reference to the stereotypes of their milieu. Indigenous directors and scholars then provide a counter. Representations of gender and class also portray and critique social norms. The historical nature of the study of these behaviors is manifested in an analysis of changing notions of race, class and gender, which are the Holy Trinity of historical analysis. | See the syllabus notes for the social behavior represented in the films. Stagecoach, Module 2, examines moral complexity surrounding race, class and gender; Fort Apache and the Oxbow Incident, in Module 3, and The Searchers in Module 4, analyze social control and the fluid nature of truth imbedded in systems of law and order; The Magnificent Seven and High Noon in Module 4 explore violence and matters of heroism/anti-heroism; McCabe and Mrs. Miller, Module 6 portrays drug addition in the gold camps of Alaska; Meek's Cutoff and Smoke Signals, Module 7 analyze social constructions of gender and race respectively. |
| The course emphasizes the distinct methods of inquiry of the social and behavioral sciences of ethnography and historical analysis | See above for ethnography. As to historical analysis, students explore evolving notions of justice in our institutions of law and order and in our role as a global policeman. We trace a change from the notion of military force as an unquestioned good to criticism of the deployment of force against people of color. We also note changing gender roles and treatment of racial minorities, ending with films made by Indigenous and female directors. | For specifics as to the themes noted to the left, please see the text under the following headings: Town Tamers and Vigilantes, 1939-1941 Last Stands and Lost Patrols, 1940-48 The Killer Elite: The Cult of the Gunfighter, 1950-54 Imagining the Counterinsurgency Warrior, 1956-1960, Parts I and II Anti-Heroes: Massacres and Anarchy, 1960-1968 The "Anti-Establishment" Western, 1970-1992 |

| | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | <p>These last films are starkly different than the first films we viewed, and the students will clearly understand why. They must be able to explain these differences by reference to history. Moreover, each film is analyzed in its historical context. Perusal of the syllabus headings reveals how each historical era is conceptualized with respect to each film.</p> | <p>Tortured and Complex Heroes, 1970-1992 Native Americans Push Back, 2004 The Feminist (?) Eco Western, 2011</p> |
| <p>Course illustrates use of social and behavioral science perspectives and data.</p> | <p>Scholars debate whether history is a humanities or a social science. I argue that such distinctions are arbitrary and artificial and it is both. We explore change over time, and understand each film in its historical milieu, which are both historical perspectives. At the same time, we employ a structural analysis that considers social groups, racial, ethnic, and political formations, and ideologies, which reflects the perspectives of social science.</p> | <p>See the syllabus notes for the films. Stagecoach, Module 2, examines representative social groups of differing classes under stress; Fort Apache and the Oxbow Incident, in Module 3 and The Searchers in Module 4 analyze social control and the fluid nature of truth imbedded in systems of law and order; The Magnificent Seven and the Wild Bunch in Module 5 and High Noon in Module 4 explore how society deals with violence and defines cowardice and bravery; McCabe and Mrs. Miller, Module 6 portrays ambition and he ways in which industrialized capital curtailed opportunity for prospectors in Gold Rush Alaska; Meek's Cutoff and Smoke Signals, Module 7 analyze social constructions of gender and race respectively.</p> |

HST 306: THE WEST IN MYTH, MOVIE, AND AMERICAN HISTORY
Session A: January 12-March 3, 2020

Dr. Katherine M. B. Osburn
phone: 480-965-3766

[e-mail: Katherine.Osburn@asu.edu](mailto:Katherine.Osburn@asu.edu)
office: COOR 4574

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is a class about the American West, but it is not a linear history of events in the settlement of the West. Rather, is a class that considers the West as a significant part of American history and identity, and it approaches that topic through the medium of film. Film is a way of transmitting stories that tell us what *kind* of people we Americans are, and *why* our history has unfolded as it has. We are really interested in one particular story—the role of the frontier, a.k.a. the West—in the creation of an American national identity. The broad history of the United States is often framed as the story of conquering the continent one “western frontier” at a time. Therefore, western history is central to American history and identity. Our political leaders have framed this westward push as one of “civilization” conquering the “savage” wilderness, and our definitions of what these terms mean have shifted over time as marginalized people challenge that narrative.

Our study of these stories raises important philosophical questions: What is civilization? What is savagery? How are our ideas about these things gendered? How are they racialized? What is justice? What is the role of violence in our culture? We will address these questions through readings and movies about the West. We will discover that American’s understanding of the West changes with shifting social norms.

PEDAGOGICAL OBJECTIVES

1. To help students hone their analytical thinking and writing skills.
2. To encourage students to think about how cultures construct and use stories, and how these stories change over time.
3. To train students to think analytically about film representations of the American experience, especially the American West, and how these representations change over time.
4. To encourage critical thinking about the role of the West in the American imagination and in our national history.
5. To encourage critical thinking about the role of violence in American history and national identity.
6. To train students to think critically about the uses of myth and ideology in political discourse and film as a medium for transmitting those ideologies.

COURSE REQUIRMENTS

I have designed all course assignments to help you develop critical reading and writing skills. They also give me information on your writing and analysis skills so that I can help you improve. Students will be required to demonstrate their mastery of the assigned material by writing film reviews (you review one of the two films we view each week, and you can pick it), responding weekly to prompts found in Blackboard, and constructing a final synthesis paper that analyzes the course materials according to prompts.

1. **READING AND MOVIES.** We will read portions of Richard Slotkin’s *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth Century America* supplemented by online readings, videos, and film reviews. You must purchase *Gunfighter Nation*, but the other readings have been scanned into the course site.
 - We will watch **11 films** and some early twentieth century film clips. All of the films are available on the Blackboard site. There is a handout on how to write film reviews posted in Canvas.

2. **DISCUSSION.** You are expected to participate in the discussions on blackboard every week and post by the deadlines. Students will use this exercise to sharpen their analytical thinking and writing skills, and I will use it to monitor your intellectual growth and encourage you to be your absolute best.

- You are required to write one post responding to the prompt (20 points) and two replies to your peers (10 points each) for 40 TOTAL DISCUSSION BOARD POINTS PER WEEK.
- Your post should provide analysis from both films AND incorporate key points made in the readings. Please provide a page number for each point you make from Slotkin and the other readings.
- Please do not focus solely on cinematic aspects of these movies, but use history in your analysis.
- The writing on the discussion board can be informal, but it must conform to appropriate standards of grammar, punctuation, and spelling. I will count off for sloppy work so please proofread then proofread again.
- Each entry should run anywhere from 800 to 1200 words.

Weekly Discussion Posts:

1 original = 20
 2 replies = 20
 Weekly total: 40 points

GRADING YOUR DISCUSSION POSTS (Adapted from a handout by Pen Moon.)

Students are measured by their ability to analyze and make arguments orally and in writing.

Sustained and substantive discussion is absolutely crucial to your own learning. All students are expected to thoroughly read the responses on all threads as they may contain information useful for writing future papers and understanding the texts. You are required to answer one post but please limit your total number of posts/responses in each discussion forum to 4. Otherwise, the board gets unwieldy.

Guard against posting very lengthy responses. Remember, **the goal is to participate in a conversation, not write a dissertation.** If the prompt is complex, don't feel as if you have to address every aspect in a single post. This will allow others to build on your contribution and also make space for others to take the lead on certain aspects of the prompt. In addition, if you are among the first few students to post on one thread, please try to refrain from posting early on the other thread. Let's make space for those who cannot post early to really have an opportunity to shape the discussion.

THE RUBRIC FOR EVALUATING DISCUSSION IS SIMPLE. IT LOOKS LIKE THIS:

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| No discussion or discussion that completely misses the point | 0% |
| Simplistic* contributions that don't move beyond description OR contributions that merely parrot previous contributions; at least one mention of the reading *Note--there is a difference between simple and simplistic | 75% |
| Meaningful contributions, but no engagement of the contributions of others; doing the minimum; some mention of the reading; perhaps two or three | 85% |
| Meaningful contributions that advance the discussion, engage points made by others, and demonstrate knowledge of the readings by a minimum of four specific references. You cannot earn an A w/o engaging Slotkin. | 100% |

- Students must make the deadlines for posting. Please do not email me and ask me to open the thread again unless you have a documented emergency. That said, I understand that life can sometimes throw things at you that you cannot control, and I strive to work with students to everyone's best ends.

- See the schedule for specific times and dates for your assignments.

3. **WEEKLY FILM REVIEWS** With the exception of the first week, when we all post discussion board comments in reply to the prompt on the one movie shown-*Stagecoach*, you will write **one short movie review** (2-3 pages) over one of the two films we view every week. Film reviews are worth 50 points each.

- You may pick which movie you want to review. Please be sure your film reviews incorporate discussions of the readings and follow the instructions in the *Guidelines for Film Reviews* containing instructions for the technicalities of writing and the rubric for grading.

4. **SYNTHESIS PAPER.** You will write a formal final synthesis paper (8-10 pages) according to the instructions and prompts found in the folder titled: “Synthesis Paper,” which also contains the rubric for grading.

- The final synthesis paper prompts are posted at the beginning of the semester. Please print them out and gather your materials to answer them as you go along. If you wait until the course is over, you will only have one day to write it. Get your drafts done, and then polish is up on that last day.
- Your synthesis paper must reflect an understanding of change over time. This is, after all, a history class.
- Your final paper is due the day after classes end—there will not be an actual final exam, only the paper.

LATE OR MISSED ASSIGNMENTS

If at all possible, you must notify me before an assignment is due if an emergency arises and the assignment will not be submitted on time. Published assignment due dates are firm unless there is a documented emergency. Please follow the appropriate University policies to request an [accommodation for religious practices](#) or to accommodate a missed assignment [due to University-sanctioned activities](#). Late assignments drop one full letter grade for each 24 hours they are late beginning five minutes after the deadline. The student must complete all assignments to pass the class.

COMPUTER REQUIREMENTS

This course requires a computer with Internet access and the following:

- Web browsers ([Chrome](#), [Internet Explorer](#), [Mozilla Firefox](#), or [Safari](#))
- [Adobe Acrobat Reader](#) (free)
- [Adobe Flash Player](#) (free)
- Microphone (optional) and speaker
- Microsoft Word

GRADES

| | |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Discussions/replies 6 @ 40 | 240 points |
| Summary of Slotkin’s Introduction: | 50 Points |
| Movie Reviews: 5 @ 50 | 250 points |
| Final synthesis Paper | 200 points |
| TOTAL POINTS: | 740 points |

A= 740-666; B= 665-591; C= 590-516; D= 515-441; 440 and below is failing. Students must complete all assignments to pass this class.

CONTACTING ME

You are more than welcome to email me with your questions at any time, but please be advised that I teach Monday through Friday from 9:00 to 5:00 (AZ time). I generally do not check emails after 5:00, and I do not work on Sunday. All that said, I will try to respond as quickly as possible to your queries. If you have not heard from me within 48 hours, shoot me another email, as yours may have wandered off into cyberspace to join chapter four of my dissertation that vanished from my computer 20-something years ago.

ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT YOU AND I WANT THE SAME THING: WE BOTH WANT YOU TO SUCCEED!

COURSE SCHEDULE: SPRING, 2020

DISCUSSION POSTS for each week are always due by FRIDAY AT MIDNIGHT

- Your **REPLIES TO YOUR PEERS** are always due by **THE FOLLOWING SUNDAY AT MIDNIGHT**

FILM REVIEWS for each week are always due by TUESDAY OF THE WEEK AFTER THEY ARE SHOWN, AT MIDNIGHT, AZ TIME. This gives you time to work on them over the weekend.

**MODULE ONE: COURSE INTRODUCTION; HOWDY VIDEO; ONE CHAPTER PAPER, 50 POINTS
JAN. 13--18**

Howdy Video; Introduction to the Course Themes, and the First Western Film, 1903

Learning Objectives. Students will be able to:

1. Explain to someone outside of the class what the class is about in terms of its broad themes.
2. Discuss the analytical model of western history provided in *Gunfighter Nation* according to the four questions below.
3. Discuss the first western film ever made.

1. Watch the “Howdy!” video in the Welcome Folder. Please also read my post on the Meet Your Instructor link.

2. Watch the video, “The Great Train Robbery” 1903. Edward S. Porter’s silent movie “The Great Train Robbery” is the first western film. This classic 1903 silent film is the first western movie. It was a huge hit for director Edwin S. Porter and contained new methods of editing and shooting on location. It is based on the true story of a daring train robbery of Butch Cassidy and the Hole in the Wall gang. The film is corny by our standards, but it says a lot about the genre. It contains all of the themes we will be studying throughout the course. Look for evidence of the contrast between civil society and banditry and the larger lesson of the film. Why did Porter end the film by breaking the fourth wall with violence? What was he saying about the West? This film is an introduction to the genre. We will see how Westerns have evolved since this time.

3. Overview of our analytical model for the course. 50 points

Please read: Slotkin, “Introduction: The Significance of the Frontier Myth in American History,” pp. 1-28.

This reading will establish the analytical model that we will use over the next seven and a half weeks. This week’s assignment is about making certain you understand what *Gunfighter Nation* is about. Therefore, you will begin with a brief summary of Slotkin’s purposes, his notions of

ideology, myth, and genre, and what he means by the Frontier Myth. Please write a short (6 or 7 paragraphs) summation of the introduction in which you explain:

1. What is the purpose of *Gunfighter Nation*?
2. What does Slotkin mean by ideology, myth, and genre?
3. Regarding the Frontier Myth, what are its components, what is its structure, and how does the myth function?
4. What are the stages of national development that Slotkin outlines in the mythology of the Frontier?

As this is not a discussion but rather is an exercise to make sure you grasp Slotkin's analytical framework, you will not post this to the discussion board. Rather, you will submit it on the link provided.

- **YOUR SYNTHESIS OF SLOTKIN'S THESIS IS DUE BY THURSDAY, JAN. 16 MIDNIGHT, AZ TIME**

AND NOW ON TO THE MOVIES!

MODULE TWO: THE MYTHIC LANDSCAPE IN FILM; ONE DISCUSSION; 40 POINTS JAN 19-25

The West IS American History, Depression Era Imaginings, 1939-1941

This week we watch what some film historians regard as the quintessential "B" Western, John Ford's classic *Stagecoach*, which introduces to us virtually every stock character and trope of Western history and film. Nonetheless, Slotkin calls this movie, "an exceptional work marked by moral complexity, formal elegance, narrative and verbal economy, and evocative imagery" (p. 303). Hmmm. We shall see!

Read, Slotkin, Chapter Eight: read "Meanwhile, Back at the Ranch...B Westerns, 1931-39," pp. 271-77 and Chapter Nine: read the intro to the chapter, pp. 278-279, and "The Apotheosis of the 'B' Western: John Ford's *Stagecoach* (1939)" pp. 303-312, Watch, *Stagecoach* (1939)

Learning Objectives. Students will be able to:

1. Explain why *Stagecoach* is the quintessential "B" western.
2. Discuss the tropes about the west contained in the film
3. Debate the alleged moral complexity of the film.

PROMPT:

Do you agree with Slotkin that this is a morally complex film? Please pick one example of something in the film that Slotkin believes represents moral complexity and assess his argument. You do not have to agree with him, but do not just say "I do not agree." Rather, explain *why* you believe your example represents something that is or is not morally complex. Think about what the term "morally complex" might mean.

- **YOUR REPLY TO THIS PROMPT IS DUE BY FRIDAY, JAN, 17 AT MIDNIGHT AZ TIME**
- **REPLIES TO YOUR PEERS ARE DUE BY SUNDAY, JAN 19 AT MIDNIGHT AZ TIME**
- **THERE IS NO FILM REVIEW THIS WEEK; GET STARTED ON THE FILMS FOR NEXT WEEK SO THAT YOU CAN STAY ON TOP OF THEM**

MODULE THREE: "THIS TOWN AIN'T BIG ENOUGH FOR THE TWO OF US"; ONE DISCUSSION 40 POINTS; ONE FILM REVIEW 50 POINTS JAN 26-FEB 1

The "Wide Open" West of WWII, 1941-1948

This week we explore issues of social control ranging from the standard cliché of westerns—the “wide-open lawless town”—to our role as world policeman following World War II. The *Oxbow Incident* posits questions of justice in the West by asking “what is the relationship between justice and the rule of law?” John Ford’s classic movie of the cavalry trilogy, *Fort Apache*, examines social norms involving hierarchies of race, class, and gender in an uncertain Cold War world.

Slotkin chooses the movie *Dodge City* (Chapter Nine—don’t worry we are not watching it) as the quintessential example of how westerns of this period portrayed the trope of “cleaning up” the “wide open lawless town.” Our film this week, *The Oxbow Incident* (1943), takes a different approach to the questions of “civilization” and law and order than *Dodge City*, but it is important to understand how it deviated from the “town tamer” norm that Slotkin describes.

Slotkin’s analysis of *Fort Apache* differs from most criticism of the film, which place it in discussion of the Cavalry Trilogy (alongside *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* [1949] and *Rio Grande* [1950]). Rather, Slotkin locates this movie in a genre of post-war westerns that critique the old “Law and Order” themes of cavalry westerns and question social relations in the United States.

Learning Objectives. Students will be able to:

1. Discuss how these films use the trope of “civilizing” a “savage” wilderness. How is the idea expressed in verbal and nonverbal (visual) ways?
2. Debate the notion of the “Last Stand” as a cinematic device to critique the post-war world.
3. Identify how the films use class and gender as critiques of the post-war world.

Town Tamers and Vigilantes, 1939-1941

Slotkin, Chapter Nine, read “The Renaissance of the Feature Western,” pp. 286-292. Watch, *The Oxbow Incident* (1943)

Last Stands and Lost Patrols, 1940-48

Slotkin, Chapter Ten, read the intro to the chapter, pp. 313-315, **and** “The Problem of Memory: Fort Apache,” pp. 328-243. Watch, *Fort Apache* (1948)

PROMPT: Pick one example for each film (an incident or a character) and compare and contrast how the two films present notions of justice in the “untamed west.” You may define justice any way you want, but please be clear and precise on your definitions.

- **YOUR REPLY TO THIS PROMPT IS DUE BY FRIDAY, JAN 31, AT MIDNIGHT AZ TIME;**
- **REPLIES TO YOUR PEERS ARE DUE BY SUNDAY, FEB 2, AT MIDNIGHT AZ TIME**
- **YOUR MOVIE REVIEW IS DUE BY WEDNESDAY, FEB 5, AT MIDNIGHT AZ TIME**

MODULE FOUR: HEROES AND OUTLAWS, ONE DISCUSSION 40 POINTS; ONE FILM REVIEW 50 POINTS FEB 2-8

The Cold War Western, 1950-1960

In these chapters, Slotkin discusses how Cold War era Westerns constructed morality narratives to ask questions that troubled Americans in the early 1950s. *He does not, however, make the popular argument that High Noon is about Hollywood's failure to stand up to McCarthyism.* (The screen writer, former communist Carl Foreman, had been blacklisted in Hollywood for his refusal to name his friends in the Communist Party to the House Un-American Activities Committee.)

Rather, Slotkin regards *High Noon* as much more politically ambiguous, not slotting neatly into either Liberal or Conservative ideologies. Indeed, his title for the discussion of *High Noon* is "The Hero in Spite of Democracy"--an equivocal claim at best. Similarly, Slotkin likens John Wayne's Ethan Edwards of *The Searchers* to a guerilla fighter in a counterinsurgency war (much like the one we fought in Viet Nam); be sure you know why he thinks this. The movies are stylistically very different and focus on different aspects of the problems of the morally ambiguous post WWII social order.

Learning objectives. Students will be able to:

1. Discuss the changing role of the gunfighter in Western movies, especially how this transformation reflected societal changes which privileged raw power over ideology as a means for dealing with post WWII challenges.
2. Explain how John Ford sets up the character of Ethan Edwards to critique the Western Hero.
3. Analyze the role of race in these movies.

The Killer Elite: The Cult of the Gunfighter, 1950-54

Slotkin, Chapter Eleven, read the intro to the chapter and the first section, "Real World Problems in Mythic Spaces: Dramatizing the Problem of Force," pp. 347-353, **and** Slotkin, Chapter Twelve, read the intro **and** first section, "The Revised Outlaw: From Rebel to Psychopath," pp. 379-382; "*High Noon (1952): The Hero in Spite of Democracy*," pp. 391-396; **and** "*The Gunfighter Mystique*," pp. 401-04. Watch, *High Noon* (1952)

Imagining the Counterinsurgency Warrior, 1956-1960, Part I

Slotkin, Chapter Fourteen, read the introductory paragraph on page 441, (Stop before you read the first section on *American Guerrillas in the Philippines*) and "Search and Rescue/Search and Destroy: The Indian Hater as Counter guerilla," 461-473. Watch, *The Searchers* (1956)

PROMPT: This weeks' movies each focus on a single "hero"—Ethan Edwards and Will Kane—but the two are starkly different men on very different missions. Compare and contrast how these two men reflect divergent notions of honor.

- **YOUR REPLY TO THIS PROMPT IS DUE BY FRIDAY, FEB 7, AT MIDNIGHT AZ TIME**
- **REPLIES TO YOUR PEERS ARE DUE BY SUNDAY, FEB 9, AT MIDNIGHT AZ TIME**
- **YOUR FILM REVIEW IS DUE BY WEDNESDAY, FEB 12, AT MIDNIGHT, AZ TIME**

**MODULE FIVE: DISILLUSIONED ANTI-HEROES; ONE DISCUSSION 40 POINTS; ONE FILM REVIEW 50 POINTS
FEB 9-15**

The Western and Vietnam, 1960-1968

Slotkin argues that the plotline of *The Magnificent Seven* reflects aspects of the American experience in Viet Nam. He notes that the movie "follows a logic of escalating violence" that marks counterinsurgency warfare (p. 474). You need to understand why he makes that comparison and what he means by "a logic of escalating violence." In *The Magnificent Seven*, the heroes are flawed but basically decent men.

In *The Wild Bunch*, however, the heroes appear completely a-moral, and the movie was (for its time) extraordinarily violent. (Movie critics reacted strongly to the scenes of violence in the movie. You have two examples these reviews.) *Slotkin argues that this violence represented the*

demoralization of the Western—a cynical turn in the time of bitter disillusionment with American institutions and foreign policy.

Learning Objectives. Students will be able to:

1. Identify the ways in which these films use violence to critique American society or to provide a larger lesson about the morality of violence.
2. Explain how both films reflect aspects of American involvement in Viet Nam and of the New Frontier of John F. Kennedy.
3. Skillfully compare and contrast the way the two groups of heroes, or anti-heroes, function in the films.

Imagining the Counterinsurgency Warrior, 1956-1960, Part II

Slotkin, Chapter Fourteen, read “*The Magnificent Seven* and the Counterinsurgency Paradox,” pp. 474-486. Watch, *The Magnificent Seven* (1960)

Anti-Heroes: Massacres and Anarchy, 1960-1968

Slotkin, Chapter Seventeen, read pp. 578-613; Film reviews: “Violence and Beauty Mesh in ‘*Wild Bunch*,’” Vincent Canby, *The New York Times*; “Wasn’t that Just Lovely the Way His head Exploded?” William Wolf, *Cue*. Watch, *The Wild Bunch* (1968)

PROMPT: Compare and contrast one aspect or example of violence in these two movies. What purpose does this violence serve for the film? Which film uses violence more powerfully and why do you say that?

- **YOUR REPLY TO THIS PROMPT IS DUE BY FRIDAY, FEB 14, AT MIDNIGHT AZ TIME**
- **REPLIES TO YOUR PEERS ARE DUE BY SUNDAY, FEB 16, AT MIDNIGHT AZ TIME**
- **YOUR FILM REVIEW IS DUE BY WEDNESDAY, FEB 19, AT MIDNIGHT AZ TIME**

**MODULE SIX: CHALLENGING THE MYTHIC LANDSCAPE IN FILM; ONE DISCUSSION 40 POINTS; ONE FILM REVIEW 50 POINTS
FEB 16-22**

The “Realistic” Western and American “Malaise,” 1970-1992

Slotkin concludes his study of the Frontier Myth in popular culture by discussing the 1970s, as a period of disillusionment and malaise in which the "alternative western" failed to revive the genre, and the 1980s as a period in which the Reagan administration attempted without success to revitalize the Frontier Myth as a means of political mobilization. Our films reflect these interpretations.

Renowned film critic Roger Ebert (rest his soul) called Robert Altman’s classic *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* “a perfect film.” As to our other film, Clint Eastwood directed this “neo-western” in 1992 as an homage to the directors he most enjoyed working with—Sergio Leone (*The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*; *A Fistful of Dollars*; *For a Few Dollars More*, among others) and Don Siegel (*Dirty Harry* and *Two Mules for Sister Sarah*, among others). In so doing, he framed this movie as a commentary on westerns, which our critics interpret as a new way to understand the genre—one could argue, cynically.

Learning Objectives. Students will be able to:

1. Outline the decline of the genre of Western films in light of the events of the years following Viet Nam and Watergate.
2. Explain what Slotkin means by the “Crisis of the Public Myth.”

3. Analyze how these films are an example of a “neo-realist” critique of the classic western.

The “Anti-Establishment” Western, 1970-1992

Slotkin, “Conclusion: The Crisis of Public Myth,” pp. 624-662; Watch, *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* (1971)

Tortured and Complex Heroes, 1970-1992

Read Reviews: “Clint Is Back with a Vengeance,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 7, 1992, Kenneth Turan; http://articles.latimes.com/1992-08-07/entertainment/ca-4625_1_director-clint-eastwood; “Unforgiven,” Harvey R. Greenberg, *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 46, No. 3 (Spring, 1993), pp. 52-56. Watch, *Unforgiven* (1992)

PROMPT: Pick any one of the themes or characters in both of these movies and discuss how they are like and not like the stock western themes or characters we have encountered.

- **YOUR REPLY TO THIS PROMPT IS DUE BY FRIDAY, FEB 21, AT MIDNIGHT AZ TIME**
- **REPLIES TO YOUR PEERS ARE DUE BY SUNDAY, FEB 23, AT MIDNIGHT AZ TIME**
- **YOUR FILM REVIEW IS DUE BY WEDNESDAY, FEB 26, AT MIDNIGHT AZ TIME**

MODULE SEVEN: DECONSTRUCTING THE SAGEBRUSH SHIBBOLETH; ONE DISCUSSION 40 POINTS; ONE FILM REVIEW 50 POINTS FEB 23-29

The Multicultural Twenty-first Century Western, 2014-2011

This week we break from the classic Westerns directed by white men to consider Westerns directed by Indigenous Americans and woman. Deloria’s chapter “Representation,” from his book *Indians in Unexpected Places*, provides a unique overview of how Indigenous peoples “performed Indianness” in various mediums from Buffalo Bill’s “Wild West Show” to films. *Smoke Signals* represents an Indian-made film in which Indigenous actors and an Indigenous director represent Indianness to a modern audience. As you watch it, consider whether the film reflects some of the earlier themes, characters, and issues regarding First Americans that Deloria outlines or if it is a completely different take on Indianness.

Although it is an enigmatic movie, *Meek’s Cutoff* delivers a stern message about Manifest Destiny, pitting the hubris of Anglo-Americans “conquering” a “savage wilderness” against the actual wilderness. It is also a movie that put’s women’s Westering experiences at the center of the story (such as it is). As you view the film consider how director Kelly Reichardt portrays gender roles on the trail. Is this a “feminist” western in the sense of the term defined below?

Feminism

- : the belief that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities.
- : organized activity in support of women's rights and interests
- : the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes

Source: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/feminism>

Learning Objectives. Students will be able to:

1. Discuss Deloria’s ideas about “performing Indianness”—how and why this practice seems to be a constant in American life.
2. Analyze the performance of Indianness in *Smoke Signals* using their knowledge from Deloria.

3. Explain how *Meek's Cut Off* challenges and/or upholds stereotypes of women in the West.

Native Americans Push Back, 2004

[White Fawn's Devotion](#) (1910) This little clip of this Progressive Era movie is included for your enjoyment only because Deloria talks about it. You do not need to write on this.

Read: Phil Deloria, "Representation," in *Indians in Unexpected Places*. Watch *Smoke Signals* (2004)

The Feminist (?) Eco Western, 2011

Read Reviews: "Out on the Frontier, Bringing All That Baggage with Them," By A. O. Scott, *New York Times*, April 7, 2011; "A Stripped-Down Feminist Western From Director Kelly Reichardt," By Dana Stevens, *Slate*, April 8, 2011. Watch, *Meek's Cutoff* (2011)

PROMPT: Choosing ONE example from *Smoke Signals* OR ONE from *Meek's Cutoff*, please analyze how these films portray women OR Native Americans in ways that challenge Western stereotypes of these two groups.

- YOUR REPLY TO THIS PROMPT IS DUE BY FRIDAY, FEB 28, AT MIDNIGHT AZ TIME;
- REPLIES TO YOUR PEERS ARE DUE BY SUNDAY, MARCH 1, AT MIDNIGHT AZ TIME
- YOUR FILM REVIEW IS DUE BY WEDNESDAY, MARCH 3, AT MIDNIGHT AZ TIME
- YOUR FINAL SYNTHESIS PAPER IS DUE BY THURSDAY, MARCH 4, AT MIDNIGHT AZ TIME.

This syllabus is subject to change if necessary to ensure the best learning experience for all of us. That said, I will never arbitrarily change it without informing you and explaining why the change is necessary.

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Remember: we both want the same thing: we both want you to succeed. I will do everything within my power to help you so please feel free to contact me with any questions you might have.


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