

ZUR 393n: The American West and the Western Film

Spring 2016 / Masaryková Universita

Class meets Thursdays (each odd Thursday in Studio 527; each even Thursday in AVC) from 15:15-16:45

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Office Hours: Thursdays 16:45 – 17:30

This course follows a roughly historical approach to the Western as a distinctive film genre, exploring its roots in relationship to the frontier myth in American culture and tracing its development within the US and abroad. The class will examine the defining characteristics of the genre and key themes worked out in Westerns, from early films to more recent “revisionist” US Westerns. We will also investigate what happens to the Western when it is produced outside of the US in nations that don't share a similar history of frontier expansion fostered by an ideology of “manifest destiny.” Non-U.S. films will include Leone’s “spaghetti Westerns” of Italy, the Indian (“Bollywood”) “curry western” *Sholay* (1975), and Lipský’s Western parody *Limonádový Joe* (1964) from the Czech Republic.

Assigned readings will all be available as .PDFs on the course website. The syllabus contains a complete list of course readings. Students will be expected to come to class each week having already completed the readings assigned for that week and prepared to participate in class discussions. Students will also be required to view some films on their own in advance of class meetings. Writing assignments for the course include FIVE 1-2 page Reading Response papers during the semester. These response papers may be used to discuss and analyze either a key concept/argument from an assigned reading or a specific film scene. Please see separate assignment prompt detailing the expectations for the response papers. **The response papers are due at the start of class on those dates followed by an asterisk (*) on the syllabus.** Additionally there will be an in-class final exam on Thursday, May 19th.

Final grades for the course will be calculated as follows:

FIVE Reading Response papers @ 10 percent each	50
In-class Final Exam (Thursday, May 19)	30
Attendance and Participation	20

CLASS SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNED READINGS

DATE	TOPIC and Readings
25 February	Intro to the course
3 March	The Frontier Myth Frederick Jackson Turner, <i>The Frontier in America</i> , Chs. I and IX. Link: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/22994/22994-h/22994-h.htm Film scenes: <i>The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance</i>
10 March*	Genre Toby Reed & R.J. Thompson, "The Six-gun Simulacrum: New Metaphors for an Old Genre" Film scenes: <i>Red River</i> , <i>The Westerner</i> , <i>Unforgiven</i>
17 March	Gender / Masculinity (Western Heroes) William Indick, "The Civilized and the Savage" in <i>The Psychology of the Western</i> <i>Recommended Reading:</i> Douglas Brode, "Don't Fence Me In: Rugged Individualism and Open Range" in <i>Dream West: Politics and Religion in Cowboy Movies</i> Film scenes: <i>The Searchers</i> , <i>Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid</i>

- 24 March* Gender / Femininity
 Pam Cook, "Women and the Western" in Kitses and Rickman
 Blake Lucas, "Saloon Girls and Ranchers' Daughters" in Kitses and Rickman
Recommended Reading:
 Jane Tompkins, "Women and the Language of Men" from *West of Everything*
 Film scenes: *High Noon, Red River, 3:10 to Yuma*
- 31 March @ Landscape
 Jane Tompkins, "Landscape"
Recommended Reading:
 Thomas Klein, "Where the Wild West Can Be Staged" in Klein *et al.*
 Film scenes: *Stagecoach, True Grit*
- 7 April @ Cowboys & Indians / Cattle & Horses
 Tompkins, "Horses" and "Cattle"
 Film scenes: *Red River, Shane, Dances with Wolves*
- 14 April* Revisionist US Westerns I
 Janet Thumim, "'Maybe He's Tough...': Masculinity and In/competence in *Unforgiven*" in Kitses and Rickman
 Film: *Unforgiven*
- 21 April Revisionist US Westerns II
 Jim Kitses, "All That Brokeback Allows"
 Simon Dickson, "Industrial Change and Historical Revision in *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford*"
 Film: *Brokeback Mountain* or *No Country for Old Men* or *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford*
- 28 April* The Western Abroad I / The Spaghetti Westerns of Sergio Leone
 William McClain, "Western Go Home! Sergio Leone and the 'Death of the Western' in American Film Criticism"
Recommended Reading:
 Edward Buscombe, "Is the Western about American History?" in Klein *et al.*
 Film: *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*
- 5 May The Western Abroad II / Australia & Asia
 David Desser, "Kurosawa's Eastern 'Western': *Sanjuro* and the Influence of *Shane*"
 Film: *Sholay*
- 12 May* The Western Abroad III / Parody
 Matthew Turner, "Cowboys and Comedy"
 Film: *Limonadovy Joe*
- 19 May **In-Class FINAL EXAM**

@ Note: Class will end early on both of these dates.