

HIST/ENGL 4640: Culture of the Modern West
Professor Victoria Grieve
Spring 2011, T/TR 3pm-4:15pm

Classroom: Merrill-Cazier Library, Room 421

Office Location: Main 321-M

Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday, 10am-11am, and by appt.

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NOTE: This syllabus is subject to changes and/or additions at the discretion of the professor.

Course Description

In this writing-intensive course, we will examine the main cultural and intellectual currents in and about the late 19th and 20th century American West. We will focus on fiction, history, and painting, but will also consider music and film. We will consider how these cultural forms have changed and been changed by the West through its stages as a frontier, a region, and a “post-region.” Some questions we will consider include: Does “the West” exist as a distinct region in terms of its art and culture? How has and how does the West function as a national idea and ideal? How have and how do Americans think about the West, and how have these ideas shaped, and been shaped by, the culture of the West?

Assignments and Grading

1. Tests and Quizzes: There will be periodic pop quizzes, especially if it becomes clear that students are not completing the assigned readings. If you miss a quiz, you may not make it up, but your lowest quiz grade will be dropped. There will be a midterm and a final exam consisting of short answer and essay questions in which you will be asked to address some of the major themes and questions discussed in class. If you have a valid reason (see me to define “valid”) for inability to take either exam at the scheduled time, you must let me know immediately. You must have a documented and significant reason. The midterm is scheduled for and your final exam for.

2. Attendance counts! More than two unexcused (undocumented) absences will result in a third of a letter deduction from your course grade for each additional absence.

3. Assignments

- A critical review/analysis paper (5 pgs) of each of the two required books.
Due: Feb. 8 (Grey) and March 17 (Austin)
- A short (3 pgs) review of photographs in the course exhibit at the Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art. Choose a set of images (2-3) in the drawers dedicated to our class in the Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art. Discuss the ways in which the images depict the West. Do they fit into one of the categories we’ve discussed in class? Guidelines will be posted electronic reserve. **Due: April 26**
- “Images of the American West” paper (5-7 pgs) in which you will compare a movie from the list below with either the Zane Grey or Mary Austin novel. Each of these represents a different interpretation of the American West. In your paper, compare the images and symbols, characters, physical settings, and/or themes of the two works you choose. What do these two works say about the changes in American culture and the

contexts in which they were created? The content should represent your own ideas and thoughts. In other words, this is not a research paper, but you may draw on course readings and discussions in your paper. **Due: March 31**

- “Culture in the News” assignments. We will set aside time each week to discuss current events in the art and culture of the West. You are expected to make **two** contributions to these discussions throughout the course of the semester. This means reading/skimming the art and culture pages of newspapers, magazines, and websites, cutting out or printing out relevant articles, and bringing them to class for discussion. Your articles **must** be handed in to receive credit. Some sources to consider: *The Oregonian*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Seattle Times*, *Salt Lake Tribune*, *High Country News*, *Las Vegas Sun*, *salon.com*, *npr.org*, etc.

Rhetoric Associates Program

This class has been selected to participate in a special College of Humanities and Social Sciences program designed to help students develop their writing skills with the help of specially trained fellow students.

Here's how the program works. Three of the papers listed on our syllabus will be submitted to your Rhetoric Associate (RA). She will write comments on the paper, which will then be discussed during a conference between you and the RA. These comments will raise questions, suggest changes, and provide you with a valuable resource for revising your paper. You will then submit both the original draft (with the RA's comments) and the final paper to me.

The RA will not grade your papers. Her responsibility is to act as a reader---to make suggestions; you are ultimately responsible for evaluating these suggestions, revising the draft, and putting the paper in its final form.

Students working in the RA program were nominated by faculty and come from a variety of majors. They have in common excellent writing skills and a willingness to work closely with other students. In addition, they enroll in a special seminar that focuses on the theory, practice, and teaching of writing. These RAs can help you improve the clarity and precision of your writing. They do not evaluate the content of the paper.

As assignment deadlines near, you will be given a sign-up sheet for arranging your individual conference with an RA. Keeping in mind the following guidelines will be helpful:

1. Think of the first submission of an assignment as the final product. Papers should be typed (preferably word-processed), doubled-spaced, and complete. They should not be rough drafts but the best work that you can do. It is at this point that real revision can begin.
2. Assignments must be submitted on time because no extensions can be granted. I will collect the papers and distribute them to the RAs.
3. Final papers will not be accepted unless accompanied by the original draft and the RA's comments.
4. Please note the time and place of your conference; remember that your RA is a student like yourself with a busy schedule.

NOTE: All assignments should be typed, double-spaced, with one-inch margins and 10 or 12 point font with no extra spaces between paragraphs. Please include a separate title page with your name, and cite all sources with footnotes, not in the body of the text.

Film Options: View and analyze one of the following films for your “Images of the American West” paper.

Stagecoach
The Grapes of Wrath
High Noon
Rio Bravo
The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance

The Searchers
Little Big Man (PG-13)
Dances With Wolves (PG-13)
Thelma and Louise (R)
Lone Star (R)

Grading:

Zane Grey paper (5 pages): 15%
Mary Austin paper (5 pages): 15%
Museum exhibit review paper (3 pages): 15%
Film/Novel analysis paper (5-7 pages): 15%
Culture in the news assignments: 10%
Midterm Exam: 15%
Final Exam: 15%

ATTN: Papers are due in class on the assigned date. Late papers will have a third of a letter grade deducted for each day late.

Academic Honesty

Academic misconduct will not be tolerated in this course, and in extreme cases will be grounds for a failing grade. Academic misconduct includes plagiarism, which includes knowingly “representing, by paraphrase or direct quotation, the published or unpublished work of another person as one’s own in any academic exercise or activity without full and clear acknowledgement. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.” (*Code of Policies and Procedures for Students*, Article V, Section 3A.1) The penalties for plagiarism are severe. They include “#1) warning or reprimand and #2) grade adjustment” (see: Article VI, Section 1A): Other penalties may also be imposed at the Dean’s discretion. These include probation, suspension, expulsion, withholding of transcripts, denial or revocation of degrees, referral to psychological counseling, and other appropriate disciplinary actions. Please review “The Code of Policies and Procedures for Students at Utah State University” for more information.

Disability Resource Center

Students requesting academic accommodations based on a disability must register with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) who will issue a verification letter. DRC is located in University Inn 101, and is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Mon-Fri; 797-2444.

Required Texts:

Austin, Mary. *Land of Little Rain*.
Deverell, William, Ed. A Companion to the American West [electronic resource], 2004. Available as an E-book through USU Library catalog.
Etulain, Richard. *Re-imagining the Modern West: A Century of Fiction, History and Art*.
Grey, Zane. *Riders of the Purple Sage*.

The Etulain book is available in the bookstore. Please order the Grey and Austin books online as soon as possible. Other course readings will be available on electronic course reserve or will be distributed in class.

Course Schedule

SECTION I: The West as Frontier

Begin reading Zane Grey, *Riders of the Purple Sage*.

Jan. 11 – The West in the American Imagination and the Problem of the Frontier

Reading: Etulain, Prologue; “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” Frederick Jackson Turner (on electronic reserve); “The Legacy of Conquest” and “What On Earth is the New Western History” by Patricia Nelson Limerick (on electronic reserve)

Jan. 13 – The Frontier in Fiction and Popular Culture

Reading: Etulain, Chapter 1

Jan. 18 – Historians and the American Frontier

Reading: Etulain, Chapter 2; Dykstra, “The Cattle Towns Adjust to Violence (with a Postscript) (on electronic reserve)

Jan. 20 – Interpreting the Frontier

Quiz on Grey, Chapters

In-class film clip

Jan. 25 – Visual Culture: Taming the West

Reading: Etulain, Chapter 3

Jan. 27 – Cowboys and Indians in Western Art: Remington and Russell

Reading: Etulain, Chapter 3

Good website on Remington and Russell: <http://www.sidrmuseum.org/wfc.html>

Feb. 1 - Early Photography on the Frontier

In-class film clip

***Draft of Grey paper due to RA**

Feb. 3 – The Frontier West in Early Film

In-class film clips: *The Great Train Robbery* (1903)

Feb. 8 - Class Discussion of Grey; Paper Due to Prof Grieve. Bring one discussion question to class.

SECTION II: The West as Region

Begin reading Mary Austin, *Land of Little Rain*

Feb. 10 – The Meaning of Regionalism; Regional Fiction

Reading: Etulain, Chapter 4

Feb. 15 – The West as Region(s)/Place(s)

Reading: Etulain, Chapter 5

Feb. 17 – Quiz on Austin (pgs TBA) and discussion/review for midterm exam

Feb. 22 – No Class – Follow Monday schedule

Feb. 24 – Midterm Exam

March 1 – Regionalist Painters: Benton, Wood, and Curry and The Noble Savage

Reading: Etulain, Chapter 6

March 3 – Photography and the Great Depression in the West

Reading: Etulain, Chapter 6

March 8 – No Class – Spring Break

March 10 – No Class – Spring Break

March 15 – The West/ern in Film: The 1920s and 1930s

In-class film clips, “The Covered Wagon” or “The Iron Horse”; “The Plow that Broke the Plains”

Austin paper due to RA

SECTION III: The West as Post-Region

***Out of Class Assignment:** Visit exhibit at Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art

March 17 – The Okies and Cultural Migrations

Reading: James Gregory, “Dust Bowl Legacies: The Okie Impact on California,” on electronic reserve.

March 22 – Class Discussion of Austin and Paper due to Prof Grieve. Bring one discussion question to class.

March 24 – African American Migrations and West Coast Jazz

March 29 - The Beats and the San Francisco Renaissance

Reading: Allen Ginsberg, “Howl” (1955) or “A Supermarket in California,” (1955) on electronic reserve. Some students may find “Howl” to be offensive; those students can choose to read “A Supermarket in California” instead. Be prepared to discuss the poem you read in class.

March 31 – 1960s Counterculture in the West

In-class film, “Easy Rider” or “Weather Underground”

Reading:

Images of the American West paper due to RA

April 5 – Postmodern Western Fiction

Reading: Etulain, Chapter 7 and excerpt from Joan Didion, on electronic reserve.

April 7 – Postregional Histories

Reading: Etulain, Chapter 8

Images of the West paper due to Prof. Grieve

April 12 – Postmodern Art in the West

Reading: Etulain, Chapter 9.

April 14 - Questioning Our Categories

Reading: E Douglas R. Nickel, "Art, Ideology, and the West," in Deverell e-book, and on course reserves.

April 19 – Religion in the American West

Reading: Goff, "Religion in the American West" in Deverell e-book and on course reserves.

April 21 – No Class -- Visit Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art and work on analysis paper.

April 26 – Class discussion of museum visit; Exhibit reaction/analysis paper due.

Reading: Shaffer, "The West Plays West" in Deverell e-book and on course reserves.

April 28 – Course wrap-up and evaluations

FINAL EXAMINATION:

Tuesday, May 3; 1:30pm-3:20pm

Grades will be posted 96 hours after the final exam. Due to FERPA restrictions, I cannot email exam results or course grades. Thank you for not asking!