TFM 530 Genre Studies: Western  
Spring 2015  
Instructor: Michael Slowik

Website: blackboard.sdsu.edu  
Class: Thurs 4:00-6:40 p.m.  
Office Hours: Thursdays 1:30-3:30 p.m.  
Email: mslowik@mail.sdsu.edu  
Class: COM-108  
Office Hours: LT-171A

Course Description  
Film and television genres (noir, western, comedy, musical, science fiction, soap opera, etc.)  
including key media texts, aesthetics, themes, history, and social context. May be repeated with  
new course content. See Class Schedule for specific content. Maximum credit six units.

Additional Description  
This course is devoted to cultural, ideological, and aesthetic analyses of specific films belonging  
to the Western genre. Our cultural and ideological analyses will place particular emphasis on the  
myth of the frontier; the relationship between the Western and political rhetoric; and the genre’s  
treatment of race, ethnicity, and gender. Aesthetic approaches will include typical components  
of the Western, authorship, narrative structure, and the construction of the West via visual space  
and sound. We will also cover the historical trajectory of the Western from its early silent days  
through its decline beginning in the mid 1970s.

In addition to course readings and weekly screenings, course requirements include regular class  
attendance and participation, a paper (roughly 7-8 pages) on a Western not listed in the course  
schedule, a group presentation that involves the analysis of Western films, and a final exam in  
which a surprise film will be shown in class on Thursday and a paper (roughly 3-5 pages) on that  
film will be due by noon on the following Monday.

Student Learning Outcomes  
• Demonstrate in writing and orally your understanding of key features of Western films.  
• Demonstrate in writing and orally your understanding of how Western films resonate  
  with a period’s political and cultural concerns, including the “myth of the frontier” and  
  rhetoric surrounding race, class, and gender.  
• Demonstrate in writing and orally your ability to analyze the formal components of the  
  Western, including narrative structure, visual space, and sound.  
• Demonstrate in writing your ability to craft an effective piece of written film analysis,  
  with clear writing, original argumentation, and strong organization.
Required Purchases

1 book, available at the SDSU Bookstore


Symbol in syllabus
GN = *Gunfighter Nation*
All other readings are required and can be obtained on Blackboard.

Grading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>% of Final Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation &amp; Attendance</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper (7-8 pgs.)</td>
<td>March 11</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group Presentation</td>
<td>April 9 &amp; 16</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam (3-5 pgs.)</td>
<td>May 11 at NOON</td>
<td>25</td>
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Course Assignments and Requirements

Participation & Attendance
Two factors will determine your participation grade: 1) your attendance at all class meetings and screenings and 2) your vocal participation in classroom discussions. In terms of attendance, you are expected to attend all class sessions and all screenings. In addition to attending class, I expect you to be attentive in class. Repeatedly playing with your cell phone during class, for instance, will lower your attendance/participation grade. Your contributions during class discussion will be evaluated based on your engagement with the week’s film, with the weekly readings, and with the concepts and ideas advanced by your instructor and other students.

Paper
Your paper must be submitted in *Microsoft Word format* (this enables me to leave detailed margin comments) via the Blackboard website. The paper is due by 11:59pm on Wednesday, March 11. *I do not accept papers via email; you must submit the paper on the Blackboard website.* Late papers will be downgraded a third of a letter grade for every day, including weekend days, that they are late. Barring a serious catastrophe (death in the family, major accident, etc.), *I do not give extensions on papers.* You will have more than enough time to complete your paper, so please do yourself a favor and submit your paper on time.

Presentation
Class sessions on April 9 and April 16 will be devoted to group presentations. Each group will perform an analysis of a film of my choosing. Each group will consist of approximately four students, though this will of course depend on how many students are enrolled in the course. Each group presentation will last approximately 40 minutes, followed by a question and answer session. As an audience member, you will be expected to vocally participate in this
session, and it will have an impact on your participation grade. Due to the nature of this assignment, I cannot offer make-up sessions for presentations. If you do not attend class on the day of your presentation, you will receive a zero on the assignment.

Final Examination
The final examination will consist of a “weekend surprise.” In class on Thursday, May 7, I will screen a surprise film and give you an essay assignment that will involve analyzing the film in relation to key course topics. The essay (roughly 3-5 pages) will be due no later than noon on Monday, May 11. Please note that this short time frame for the essay is meant to enable me to assess how well you can analyze a film on relatively short notice; it essentially functions as a substitute for a blue book in-class examination. No outside research is expected for this final exam.

Other Notes
Electronic Devices. I expect all electronic devices to be turned off and put away unless they are being used for class. If I see a student abusing this policy by using electronics for personal reasons, the student will be singled out and all students will lose the privilege to use electronics. It is often obvious when a student is using electronic devices for personal reasons. Please use electronic devices considerately and responsibly.

Extra Credit. No extra credit work will be accepted in this course. There are no exceptions to this policy.

Class behavior. Please do not talk while a film is being screened. If you do so, you will be asked to leave.

Academic Dishonesty
Cheating or any other form of dishonesty will result in an automatic “F” for the course and a report to Student Rights and Responsibilities. Every student who cheats will fail the course and be turned in. There are no exceptions. For more on what constitutes academic dishonesty, please see http://csrr.sdsu.edu/conduct1.html.

Statement for Students with Disabilities
If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services at (619) 594-6473. To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that accommodations based upon disability cannot be provided until you have presented your instructor with an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services. Your cooperation is appreciated.
Course Syllabus

January 22: Introduction; The Silent Western
In-class film: *The Great Train Robbery* (Edwin S. Porter, 1903, 11 min.)
*Hell’s Hinges* (Charles Swickard, 1916, 64 min.)
Readings: GN Introduction and Ch. 7

January 29: The Sound Western
In-class film: *Stagecoach* (John Ford, 1939, 96 min.)
Readings: GN Ch. 9

February 5: Representing Native Americans in the Western
In-class film: *Broken Arrow* (Delmer Daves, 1950, 93 min.)
Readings: GN Ch. 11
Buscombe “The Liberal Western,” pp. 101-132

February 12: The Western, Anthony Mann, and Authorship
In-class film: *Winchester ’73* (Anthony Mann, 1950, 92 min.)
Basinger, “Mann of the West” pp. 67-71; 79-83
Kitses “Anthony Mann: The Overreacher,” pp. 139-164

February 19: Politics and Gunfighters in the Western
In-class film: *High Noon* (Fred Zinnemann, 1952, 85 min.)
Readings: GN Ch. 12
Warshow, “Movie Chronicle: The Westerner”
Tompkins, “Women and the Language of Men”

February 26: The South-of-the-Border Western
In-class film: *Vera Cruz* (Robert Aldrich, 1954, 94 min.)
Readings: GN Ch. 13

March 5: Revising the Western
In-class film *The Searchers* (John Ford, 1956, 119 min.)
Readings: GN Ch. 14

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11 – PAPER DUE BY 11:59 P.M.

March 12: The European Western
In-class film: *A Fistful of Dollars* (Sergio Leone, 1964, 99 min.)
Readings: Buscombe, “Indians in the European Western”
Mitchell, “Violence Begets” pp. 223-238
March 19: New Depictions of Violence in the Western
In-class film: Clips from *The Wild Bunch* (Sam Peckinpah, 1969, 134 min.)
Readings: GN Ch. 17

March 26: Group work
In-class film: None
Readings: None

APRIL 2: NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK

April 9: Group presentations

April 16: Group presentations

April 23: The Western Parody
In-class film: *Blazing Saddles* (Mel Brooks, 1974, 93 min.)
Readings: GN Conclusion

April 30: The Western Today
In-class film: Clips from *Django Unchained* (Quentin Tarantino, 2012, 165 min.)

May 7: Final exam screening (aka “weekend surprise”)
In-class film: Surprise film screened in class
Readings: None

FINAL EXAM DUE MONDAY, MAY 11 BY NOON