**West, Cowboys, Nature, Myth**

**Integrated Perspectives UNIV 200-04**

*A study of western landscapes as historical and cultural elements*

*of Canada and the United States, and the environmental implications.*

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Office Hours: Fridays, 11am-1pm, and by appointment

Course meetings: Thursdays 1-3:52 pm. Plus evening screenings as indicated (W Sept 2; T Sept 8; T Sept 15; W Sept 23; W Sept 30; W Oct 7; W Oct 28; W Nov11).

**Course Description**

This course is a transnational comparison of western landscapes in Canada and the United States, focusing on the relationship between humans and the natural environment. How has this relationship changed over time? How has it become central to our national mythologies? How has it been represented in visual form? And what are the implications for environmental sustainability?

Each class will be shared between lectures and discussions: lectures to frame the historical and filmic background for the issue at hand, a class discussion of the assigned readings, and then an analysis of an artifact (moving or still images or primary source text) related to that week’s theme. The goal is to develop an historical and critical view of the environmental and national ideologies, and their visual expression, that underlie much of modern North America.

Please note that this course requires you to view films outside of class time. Film screenings

are mandatory. You will be required to attend screenings eight weeks over the course of the semester (dates listed above and details below). We strongly suggest that, *after* the

film is over, you take 5-10 minutes to jot down any questions or thoughts you have about the film(s) and any theme(s) they bring up. You may find it helpful when doing this to consider questions brought up by the readings and/or topic specified for that week. Please make note taking and immediate reflection a routine practice since you’ll discover that details quickly fade from your mind after you watch a film.

Readings should be prepared for the day on which they are listed on the course schedule. If you see a ✬ next to a film-related reading it is because we strongly recommend that you read that article *after* you see the film, rather than before. Please bring the reading(s) to class. Read with a pencil or pen and annotate your text: indicate points that seem important, cross-reference examples from screenings, and pose questions. Come to class ready to discuss and ask questions. Your ideas matter, so please bring them with you to class.

**Course Outline**

*Readings are subject to change.*

**Film 0** John Ford, *Stagecoach*, 1939, 96 min. Watch before September 2, **Moodle/DVD.**

**August 27 Where and what is the West?**

**September 3 Acquiring the West: American Destiny?**

Donald Worster, “Cowboy Ecology,” *Under Western Skies: Nature and History in the American West* (1992) 34-52

Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth Century America* (1992), 10-21; 231-237

“The Way West: A Feminist Perspective: An Interview with Kelly Reichardt,” *Cineaste* (2011): 40-42

**FILM 1** Kelly Reichardt, *Meek's Cutoff*, 2010, Blu-Ray, 104 minutes. Wednesday September 2 7pm, **Gallery Theatre.**

**September 10 Ranching and Ranchlands**

“Does the border matter? Cattle ranching and the forty-ninth parallel.” Terry Jordan-Bychkow, 107-117 in *Cowboys, Ranchers, and the Cattle Business* (2003) and *The Borderlands of the Canadian and American Wests* (2006)

Excerpt from Richmond P. Hobson, *Nothing Too Good for a Cowboy* (1955),p. 71-94 (Chapter 8, “Ordeal at the Blackwater,” Chapter 9, “The Great Spirit Rides Herd”)

“Cattle.” Jane Tompkins, 111-123 in *West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns* (1992)

✬“The Genre Epic: *Red River.*” Gerald Mast, 297-337 in *Howard Hawks Storyteller* (1982)

**FILM 2** Howard Hawks, *Red River*, 1948, 35MM, 133 minutes. Tuesday September 8 7pm, **The Campus Theatre.**

**September 17 The Western Genre**

Excerpt from William Wyckoff, *Reading the American West: A Field Guide* (2014), p. 5-15.

Robert B. Pippin, *Hollywood Westerns and American Myth* (2010), p. 18-25

“Cultural Origins of the Western.” Richard W. Etulain, 19-24 in *Focus on the Western* (1974).

“Savagery, Civilization and the Western Hero.” John G. Cawelti, 57-63 in *Focus on the Western* (1974).

“The Western: Ideology and Archetype.” Jim Kitses, 64-72 in *Focus on the Western* (1974).

“How the Western was Lost.” J. Hoberman, 85-92 in *The Western Reader* (1998).

**Film 3** Bill and Turner Ross*, Western*, 2015, DCP, 93 minutes. Tuesday September 15 7pm, **The Campus Theatre.**

**September 24 Landscape and Identity: Gender and Masculinity**

Ralph Connor, *The Sky Pilot: A Tale of the Foothills* (1899), Chapters 1-4 (pp. 11-54) <https://archive.org/details/skypilottaleoffo00connuoft>

Lyndsie Bourgon, “Herd Mentality,” *Maissoneuve* (June 30, 2015) [*http://maisonneuve.org/article/2015/06/30/herd-mentality/*](http://maisonneuve.org/article/2015/06/30/herd-mentality/)

“Masculinities and the Western.” Elisa Bordin, 23-32 in *Masculinity & Westerns: Regenerations at the Turn of the Millennium* (2014).

Michael Kimmelman, “The Importance of Matthew Barney,” *The New York Times* (October 10, 1999), 11 pages.

Richard Dorment, “The Making of a Man,” *Telegraph* (January 26, 2000), 2 pages.

Jonathon Jones, “Lonesome Cowboys-Matthew Barney Interviewed by Jonathon Jones,” *Untitled: A Review of Contemporary Art* (Spring 2000), p 4-6.

**FILM 4** Matthew Barney, *Cremaster 2*, 1999, 35MM, 79 minutes. Wednesday September 23rd. **The Campus Theatre.**

**October 1 Landscape and Identity: Race**

\*Proposal/Treatment Due

Shelton Johnson, *Invisible Men: Buffalo Soldiers of the Sierra Nevada*. Sequoia NP (and Kings Canyon NP), National Park Service, 2012 (25 p).

“Photographing the Indian.” Edward Buscombe, 29-45 in *Back in the Saddle Again: New Essays on the Western* (1998).

“Myth and Literature in a New World.” Richard Slotkin, 5-8 in *The Pretend Indians: Images of the Native Americans in the Movies* (1980).

✬Scott MacDonald, “The Filmmaker as Lone Rider: James Benning's ‘Westerns,’” *Western American Literature* (Fall, 2000), p. 298-300; 304-315

**FILM 5** James Benning, *Four Corners*, 1997, 76 minutes. Wednesday September 30th. **Rooke Chemistry Building Room 116**

**October 8 Nature and Nation: Western Landscapes in Politics**

 \*Archival Research Item due

Donald Worster, “The Lord’s Beavers,” “Ideology of democratic conquest,” “A Place named Imperial,” *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the growth of the American West* (Oxford University Press, 1985), 74-83, 111-125, 191-212.

✬Rosenbaum, Jonathan, “Deseret, Review,” *The Chicago Reader* (March 14, 1996), p. 1-4.

✬Scott MacDonald, “Exploring the New West: An Interview with James Benning,” *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 58, No. 3 (Spring 2005), pp. 2-15

**FILM 6** James Benning, *Deseret*, 1995, 82 minutes. Wednesday October 7, **Gallery Theatre.**

**October 15 Class video pitches and extraction demo**

**October 22 Environment I: Resource Conflicts**

*\*Research Report due*

Percy, Kevin E. 2012. Alberta oil sands: energy, industry and the environment. pp21-24, “Early Days” <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=1047937>

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/alberta/meet-the-real-fort-mcmurray/article24915022/>

“Scraping Bottom: The Canadian Oil Boom,” *National Geographic* (2009)

<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2009/03/canadian-oil-sands/kunzig-text>

“Interview: Peter Mettler, Part One,” *Documentary Culture POV Magazine* Fall 2009 Issue 75, 7 pages.

### ✬Jerry White, “Petropolis Aerial Perspectives on the Alberta Tar-Sands,” *Cinema Scope* Winter 2010 Issue 41, p52-53.

### FILM 7 *Petropolis: Aerial Perspectives of the Alberta Tar Sands* Peter Mettler 2009 43 min. Moodle/DVD.

**October 29 Food Production and Land Use/Agriculture**

John Ryan Fischer, “Cattle in Hawai'i: Biological and Cultural Exchange,” *Pacific Historical Review* Aug 2007, Vol. 76 Issue 3, p347-372.

“Inconclusion.” Joshua Siegel, 11-16 in *Frederick Wiseman* (2010)

Frederick Wiseman, “Editing as a Four-Way Conversation,” *Dox: A Documentary Film Quarterly* Spring 1994, p4-6.

✬Barry Keith Grant, “Blood of the Beasts,” *Voyages of Discovery: The Cinema of Frederick Wiseman* (University of Illinois Press, 1992), 119-130.

**FILM 8** Frederick Wiseman, *Meat*, 1976, 113 minutes. Wednesday October 28th. **Rooke Chemistry Building Room 116**

**November 5 Water in the West**

Martin Melosi, “The environmental impact of the big dam era,” *Precious Commodity: Providing Water for America’s Cities* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011), 78-109.

Victoria Grieve, “Celebrating ‘Progress’?: Art, Ambivalence, and Vanessa Helder's Grand Coulee Suite, ” *The Western Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (Autumn 2013), pp. 245-270

Robert A. Rosenstone, “Can History Really be Put Onto Film?” *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History* (Harvard University Press, 1995), 25-37

**FILM 9: Watch on Moodle/DVD**

*Grand Coulee Dam*, Steven Ives, 2012, 60 min.

*The Columbia: America's Greatest Power Stream*, U.S. Department of the Interior/Bonneville Power Administration, 1949, 21 min.

**November 12 Consuming Landscapes**

C.J. Taylor, “Banff in the 1960s: Divergent Views of the National Park Ideal,” *A Century of Parks Canada, 1911-2011* (University of Calgary Press, 2011).

<http://dspace.ucalgary.ca/bitstream/1880/48466/11/UofCPress_ParksCanada_2011_Chapter06.pdf>

“Landscape.” Jane Tompkins, 69-87 in *West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns* (1992).

✬Scott MacDonald, “Re-Envisioning the American West: Babette Mangolte's *The Sky on Location*, James Benning's *North on Evers*, Oliver Stone's *Natural Born Killers*, and Ellen Spiro's *Roam Sweet Home*,” *American Studies* Spring, 1998, Vol. 39, No. 1, p115-121

**FILM 10:** *The Sky on Location* Babette Mangolte, 1982, 16mm 78 min. Wednesday November 11th. **Rooke Chemistry Building Room 116**

**November 19 “Nature’s Gentlemen”? Use, Conservation, and Future**

*\*Rough Cut due*

Warren Elofson, “Grasslands Management in Southern Alberta: The Frontier Legacy,” *Agricultural History*. Fall 2012, Vol. 86 Issue 4, p. 143-168.

Robert Koehler, “*Sweetgrass* and the Future of Nonfiction Cinema,” [adapted from] *Cinema Scope* (Fall 2009, Issue 40), 8 pages.

✬Megan Ratner, “Once Grazing, Now Gone: Sweetgrass,” *Film Quarterly* Vol. 63, No. 3 (Spring 2010), p. 23-27

✬Peter, Orner, “Interview: Ilisa Barbash and Lucien Castaing-Taylor,” *Believer* Vol 8, Issue 3 (March/April 2010), p. 73-78.

**FILM 11:** Lucien Castaing-Taylor & Ilisa Barbash, *Sweetgrass*, 2010, 107 min. **Moodle/DVD OR November 18 7pm, Gallery Theatre.**

**November 26 Thanksgiving**

**December 3 Video essay screenings**

**Evaluation**

There are three components to your final grade:

1. Discussion and Participation 20 %

“Learning how to talk intelligently and enthusiastically about significant subjects is actually one of the most important skills you can learn in college.”

~ William Cronon

This is a collaborative environment in which we are learning together. Please see the note on professionalism, below. Come prepared to discuss the readings and films in considered, thoughtful, informed, and on-topic ways.

Any more than three absences will result in a failure of the course. Attendance at scheduled Tuesday and Wednesday evening film screenings is required (students enrolled in a conflicting Wednesday evening class should speak with an instructor to arrange alternative screenings).

2. Video Essay 60%

10% Proposal/Treatment Due October 1

10% Archival selection Due October 8

20% Research report Due October 22

20% Video Rough cut due November 19

 Final cut due December 3

In pairs, you will research and create a 3 to 5 minute found-footage video essay that explores an aspect of the relationship between the history and representation of the North American west. The video essay should be both creative and convincing: it should have a thesis informed by scholarly research, evidence drawn from source films (although original footage is possible) and an aesthetic voice that utilizes style as expression – a considered integration of form and content. And it should tie into at least two of the themes from the class. We will be using Adobe Premiere for editing.

1. Treatment: This is a 2-page proposal that is essentially the pitch for your film. It should explain, concisely and persuasively, what the film will ask and do, and how. It should address both the concept or subject and the approach (what images and sound you envision, how they will be woven together, etc.) You will choose your partner and decide on the film’s topic; then imagine *separately* what the film will do, and submit these treatments together.
2. Archival Selection: This assignment asks you to individually locate an historical source from one of the archives specified on Moodle and, in a 2-page report, explain how it illustrates a theme of interest to you and relevant to your video essay proposal. You may choose a film, painting, map, song, letter, newspaper article, or any other type of evidence.

In your report, you need not describe the item, but instead explain:

1. Why you chose it (ie. your research process);
2. How it fits in with your video essay proposal;
3. What you find intriguing about it and why it might be significant.
4. Research report: Each member of the pair will write, separately, a 4-5 page report that:
	1. Provides historical background to the chosen theme;
	2. Explains how history informs your choices of visual/aural evidence in the video essay;
	3. Uses at leastone scholarly source that deals with western history. This should be taken from the database *America: History and Life* (if using an article) OR the library database (if using a book);
	4. Uses at least onescholarly source that speaks to its representation in film or media;
	5. Identifiesone textual primary source *and* one visual artifact (moving or still).
5. Video essay: Working together, pairs will identify, gather and edit audiovisual material into a 3-5 minute video essay that:
6. Uses a minimum of 10 different moving or still image sources;
7. Uses material from at least 3 different decades (at least one of which must be before 1930);
8. Uses a minimum of three audio tracks (these can be comprised of source audio, spoken narration, sound effects, etc.);
9. Incorporates at least 5 facts or statements obtained from research (these can be conveyed on screen or on the soundtrack);
10. Restricts music to found material and limits its use so as to plumb audio’s creative potential;
11. Establishes a compelling, elegant and dynamic structure via carefully considered editing (duration and pacing, juxtaposition and other means of rhythmic, graphic and intellectual montage).

3. Final Test 20%

There will be a final test during the exam period that asks you to draw from the lectures, readings, and class discussion.

Note: all assignments are due in class as printed documents unless otherwise specified.

Style matters. Part of this is academic credibility (appropriate referencing, the depth of research); but part too is the clarity of argument, the lyricism of the phrasing. Yes, this is where grammar and spelling help. There’s a science to research, but writing is an art.

Late assignments will be penalized 5% per day.

Please keep an electronic copy of any assignment you submit.

We do not assign extra work in lieu of the assignments outlined in this syllabus. It is incumbent upon you to fulfill these responsibilities.

**Style Guide**

We prefer the Chicago Manual of Style. We’ll review citation practices in class, but please follow this guide: <https://my.bucknell.edu/x53459.html>.

**Learning Goal**

Integrated Perspectives courses: Students will recognize, construct, and evaluate connections among different intellectual methods, ways of learning, and bodies of knowledge.

**Expectations and Professionalism in the Classroom**

The university and the classroom can be spaces for wonderful freedoms – freedom of thought, of discussion, of exploration – but are also places that (like workplaces and the public sphere hereafter) require mutually respectful and professional behaviour. This means arriving on time and prepared, and treating each other civilly and generously in listening and conversation. (It also means refraining from using all electronic devices unless specified by the instructors.) We are very privileged to be here, and should treat these opportunities for learning with the utmost respect.

**Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity and honesty are at the core of the community of scholarship of which we are a part. We will follow University policies for academic honesty and plagiarism, which can be found at <http://www.bucknell.edu/x1324.xml>.

Please note the University Honor Code:

*As a student and citizen of the Bucknell University community:*

*1. I will not lie, cheat, or steal in my academic endeavors.*

*2. I will forthrightly oppose each and every instance of academic dishonesty.*

*3. I will let my conscience guide my decision to communicate directly with any person or persons I believe to have been dishonest in academic work.*

*4. I will let my conscience guide my decision on reporting breaches of academic integrity to the appropriate faculty or deans.*

**Bucknell University expectations for academic engagement**

Courses at Bucknell that receive one unit of academic credit have a minimum expectation of 12 hours per week of student academic engagement. Student academic engagement includes both the hours of direct faculty instruction (or its equivalent) and the hours spent on out of class student work.

**Student Needs and Accommodation**

If you have anything you would like to talk about that would help us work with you, please contact us. Any student who may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact Heather Fowler, Director of the Office of Accessibility Resources at 570-577-1188 or hf007@bucknell.edu who will help coordinate reasonable accommodations for those students with documented disabilities.