**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**

**Lecturer: Jean P. Retzinger**

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**Office: FSS 5.51**

**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 availble 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 particpate 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 are 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, *The Frontier in America*, Chs. I and IX.

Link: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/22994/22994-h/22994-h.htm>

Film scenes: *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*

10 March\* Genre

Toby Reed & R.J. Thompson, "The Six-gun Simulacrum: New Metaphors for an Old

Genre"

Film scenes: *Red River, The Westerner, Unforgiven*

17 March Gender / Masculinity (Western Heroes)

William Indick, "The Civilized and the Savage" in *The Psychology of the Western*

*Recommended Reading:*

Douglas Brode, "Don't Fence Me In: Rugged Individualism and Open Range" in

*Dream West: Politics and Religion in Cowboy Movies*

Film scenes: *The Searchers, Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*

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.