



Robert C. Cumbow

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PAVL 50

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 6-8.05 pm

Overview:

The western is the defining genre of film. So many decisively influential films have been westerns that it can fairly be said: You can't know film if you don't know the western. Despite the fact that it has gone in and out of fashion since its inception at the beginning of the 20th century, the western has enjoyed more enduring popularity than all other film genres combined. In peak years, westerns accounted for as much as 40% of Hollywood's entire output. It's been estimated that more than one-fifth of all American films ever made are westerns. The straightforward shoot-'em-ups and high-action programmers of the cinema's first half century ... the more character-oriented "adult westerns" of 1946-68 ... the invasion of European-made "spaghetti westerns" of 1962-78 ... the iconoclastic "revisionist" westerns of 1968-90 ... the post-modern western revival of the 1990s and 2000s—all these reflect the changing attitudes of American society and politics, while still exemplifying the core images, themes, and values that uniquely identify a film as a western, regardless of the country or time period in which it is set.

What accounts for the commercial popularity and the artistic and cultural importance of the western? What does it tell us about ourselves, about our nation, about our society, and

about film art? This course will showcase four short westerns from the silent and early sound era, and 18 exemplary westerns spanning from 1939 to 2010. We'll discuss such acknowledged classics as *Stagecoach*, *Red River*, *Shane*, *High Noon*, *The Searchers*, *The Wild Bunch*, *Once upon a Time in the West*, and *Unforgiven*—examining the reasons for their lasting importance as well as the light each film sheds on the changing face of the western genre itself. We'll also take a comparative look at the Western “then and now” by looking at the original short story and two film versions of *3:10 to Yuma* (1957 and 2007); and the original novel and two film versions of *True Grit* (1969 and 2010). We'll also compare the 1949 film *I Shot Jesse James* with the elegiac 2007 epic *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford*. We'll conclude with Tommy Lee Jones's modern-day western—and dirge for the western genre—*Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada*.

The objective of the course will be to impart an understanding and appreciation of the western as a fundamental underlying text of film and as an enduring template for the understanding and critique of American culture.

Who I Am:

I'm a lawyer and a writer. I've been writing about film for more than 40 years. Some of my work, new and old, can be found on the Parallax View blog at <http://parallax-view.org/>. I've also written book-length studies of the films of Sergio Leone and the films of John Carpenter. My law practice with the Seattle firm of Graham & Dunn focuses on trademark, copyright, advertising, publishing, arts, and entertainment. I have been legal advisor on several locally-made independent films. I also teach Trademark Law at Seattle University School of Law. In addition to my law degree, I hold a BA and an MA in English from SU.

Contacting Me:

Because I have a full-time job in addition to teaching three nights a week, my time is limited; but I will always make time for a student who wishes to discuss something with me. The best way to reach me is by email at my office: rcumbow@grahamdunn.com. I also have an SU email address, cumbowr1@seattleu.edu; but I have that set up to automatically forward to the email address above. So **if you email me at my SU address, be sure you include your own email address in the text of the email, so I can reply to you**, because I won't be able to do so by simply hitting “Reply.” During weekday daytime hours you can reach me at 206.340.9619 ... and you can pretty much always reach me on my cell phone at 425.443.0990. I won't have an on-campus office or office hours, but will always be pleased to schedule a time and place to meet.

What I Expect:

- Come to each class session (except the first one) having watched that session's **assigned film(s)** at least once, and having thought about the provided study questions.
- Write eight short papers, **one each week**, weeks 2-9, on either or both of the films assigned for that week. You may use the provided study questions in choosing your specific topic, but you are not required to do so. By "short," I mean not more than two word-processed pages. Blaise Pascal famously wrote to a friend, "I'm sorry this letter is so long; I didn't have the time to make it short." **Please take the time to make your papers short.** Feel free to refer to other films you've seen, if relevant. An excellent resource on film analysis and vocabulary that you should know and use is at: <http://classes.yale.edu/film-analysis/>
NOTE: You are encouraged to use required and recommended books (including those listed below) as well as Web sources for information and inspiration, but your papers must be **your original work**. Quotes and paraphrased ideas of others must be properly attributed and documented. Plagiarism will be reported to the Dean and will result in a failing grade.
- Attend class faithfully, and contribute voluntarily and cogently to **class discussion**. If you must miss class owing to illness or unexpected obligations, let me know in advance. Failure to do so will result in that absence being considered unexcused. Three or more unexcused absences will reduce your grade.

With the exception of the films we'll look at in our first class, **you'll be responsible for obtaining and watching the required films on your own**. Most if not all of the films are available on DVD, new or used, from Amazon.com, Deep Discount DVD, Alibris, Powells, and other online resources. If you decide to purchase the films online, be sure to do so well in advance of the course, so that you will have each film available before the week for which it is assigned.

Most of these films are also available for instant download from Netflix or Amazon, or rental from any well-stocked video store, such as Scarecrow. Again, be sure to buy, rent, or download and watch each film far enough in advance that you will have seen it before our class on that film.

I strongly recommend that you **form viewing groups** of 4-6 people, so as to get maximum value and convenience out of a single purchased, borrowed, rented, or on-demand screening of a film. For those who absolutely cannot get access to an assigned film, I am willing to offer Saturday screenings on an as-needed basis, but you must notify me no later than Thursday's class if you need a Saturday screening.

Grades:

Grades will be based on (1) weekly papers, (2) contribution to class discussion, and (3) a final paper. Weighting will be as follows:

Class participation	20%
Weekly papers	40% (each of 8 papers = 5% of your course grade)
Final	20%

Three or more unexcused absences from class will result in a step-down of your overall course grade (e.g., from A- to B+).

My recommended source for the books in the Bibliography is:

Cinema Books
4753 Roosevelt Way Northeast
Seattle, WA 98105-4723
(206) 547-7667

Required Films:

The Great Train Robbery (Edwin S. Porter, 1903; apx. 10 min.)*
Stagecoach (John Ford, 1939; 97 min.)
Red River (Howard Hawks, 1948; 126 min.)
High Noon (Fred Zinneman, 1952; 84 min.)
Shane (George Stevens, 1952; 118 min.)
The Searchers (John Ford, 1956; 117 min.)
Ride Lonesome (Budd Boetticher, 1959; 73 min.)
Rio Bravo (Howard Hawks, 1959; 141 min.)
The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance (John Ford, 1962; 123 min.)
Once Upon a Time in the West (Sergio Leone, 1968; 165 min.)
The Wild Bunch (Sam Peckinpah, 1969; 148 min.)
3.10 to Yuma (Delmer Daves, 1957; 92 min.)
3.10 to Yuma (James Mangold, 2007; 122 min.)
True Grit (Henry Hathaway, 1969; 127 min.)
True Grit (The Coen Brothers, 2010; 110 min.)
I Shot Jesse James (Samuel Fuller, 1949; 81 min.)
The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford (Andrew Dominik, 2007; 160 min.)
Unforgiven (Clint Eastwood, 1992; 127 min.)
Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada (Tommy Lee Jones, 2005; 121 min.)

*=Film to be shown in class. You must obtain and watch all other films on your own.

Resources

Recommended Films: Important Westerns Worth Your Attention

Bold = required for this course

Italic = highly recommended

The Great Train Robbery (Edwin S. Porter, 1903)

The Ruse (1915)

An Arizona Wooing (1915)

The Iron Horse (John Ford, 1924)

The Virginian (Victor Fleming, 1929)

Cimarron (Wesley Ruggles, 1931)

Without Honor (William Nigh, 1932)

Stagecoach (John Ford, 1939)

Destry Rides Again (George Marshall, 1939)

The Ox-Bow Incident (William Wellman, 1943)

My Darling Clementine (John Ford, 1946)

Duel in the Sun (King Vidor, 1946)

Red River (Howard Hawks, 1948)

Treasure of Sierra Madre (John Huston, 1948)

Fort Apache (John Ford, 1948)

I Shot Jesse James (Samuel Fuller, 1949)

She Wore a Yellow Ribbon (John Ford, 1949)

The Furies (Anthony Mann, 1950)

Winchester 73 (Anthony Mann, 1950)

Rio Grande (John Ford, 1950)

Broken Arrow (Delmer Daves, 1950)

The Gunfighter (Henry King, 1950)

Rancho Notorious (Fritz Lang, 1952)

High Noon (Fred Zinneman, 1952)

Shane (George Stevens, 1952)

Bend of the River (Anthony Mann, 1952)

Hondo (John Farrow, 1953)

The Naked Spur (Anthony Mann, 1953)

Destry (George Marshall, 1954)

The Far Country (Anthony Mann, 1954)

Garden of Evil (Henry Hathaway, 1954)

Vera Cruz (Robert Aldrich, 1954)

Johnny Guitar (Nicholas Ray, 1954)

Apache (Robert Aldrich, 1954)

The Man from Laramie (Anthony Mann, 1955)

The Fastest Gun Alive (Russell Rouse, 1956)

Seven Men from Now (Budd Boetticher, 1956)

The Searchers (John Ford, 1956)

The Tall T (Budd Boetticher, 1957)

The Tin Star (Anthony Mann, 1957)
Run of the Arrow (Samuel Fuller, 1957)
Gunfight at the O.K. Corral (John Sturges, 1957)
3.10 to Yuma (Delmer Daves, 1957)
Decision at Sundown (Budd Boetticher, 1957)
Forty Guns (Samuel Fuller, 1957)
Man of the West (Anthony Mann, 1958)
Buchanan Rides Alone (Budd Boetticher, 1958)
The Left-Handed Gun (Arthur Penn, 1958)
The Big Country (William Wyler, 1958)
Cowboy (Delmer Daves, 1958)
Ride Lonesome (Budd Boetticher, 1959)
Last Train from Gun Hill (John Sturges, 1959)
Rio Bravo (Howard Hawks, 1959)
Comanche Station (Budd Boetticher, 1960)
The Unforgiven (John Huston, 1960)
The Magnificent Seven (John Sturges, 1960)
The Comancheros (Michael Curtiz, 1961)
One Eyed Jacks (Marlon Brando, 1961)
Ride the High Country (Sam Peckinpah, 1962)
The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance (John Ford, 1962)
Lonely Are the Brave (David Miller, 1962)
A Fistful of Dollars (Sergio Leone, 1964)
For a Few Dollars More (Sergio Leone, 1965)
Django (Sergio Corbucci, 1966)
Face to Face (Sergio Sollima, 1967)
The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly (Sergio Leone, 1967)
Hour of the Gun (John Sturges, 1967)
Ride in the Whirlwind (Monte Hellman, 1965)
The Shooting (Monte Hellman, 1967)
Django, Kill (Giulio Questi, 1967)
Once Upon a Time in the West (Sergio Leone, 1968)
The Wild Bunch (Sam Peckinpah, 1969)
True Grit (Henry Hathaway, 1969)
The Great Silence (Sergio Corbucci, 1969)
McCabe & Mrs. Miller (Robert Altman, 1970)
The Ballad of Cable Hogue (Sam Peckinpah, 1970)
Little Big Man (Arthur Penn, 1970)
Bad Company (Robert Benton, 1972)
The Great Northfield Minnesota Raid (Philip Kaufman, 1972)
My Name Is Nobody (Tonino Valerii, 1973)
Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid (Sam Peckinpah, 1973)
The Shootist (Donald Siegel, 1976)
The Missouri Breaks (Arthur Penn, 1976)
The Outlaw Josey Wales (Clint Eastwood, 1976)
The Long Riders (Walter Hill, 1980)

Silverado (Lawrence Kasdan, 1985)
Young Guns (Christopher Cain, 1988)
Dances with Wolves (Kevin Costner, 1990)
Unforgiven (Clint Eastwood, 1992)
Tombstone (George P. Cosmatos, 1993)
The Ballad of Little Jo (Maggie Greenwald, 1993)
Wyatt Earp (Kevin Costner, 1994)
The Quick and the Dead (Sam Raimi, 1995)
Dead Man (Jim Jarmusch, 1995)
Lone Star (John Sayles, 1996)
Open Range (Kevin Costner, 2003)
Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada (Tommy Lee Jones, 2005)
The Proposition (John Hillcoat, 2006)
3.10 to Yuma (James Mangold, 2007)
The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford (Andrew Dominik, 2007)
Appaloosa (Ed Harris, 2008)
True Grit (The Coen Brothers, 2010)
Meek's Cutoff (Kelly Reichardt, 2010)

Parodies of the Western:

Cat Ballou (Elliott Silverstein, 1965)
Blazing Saddles (Mel Brooks, 1974)

Horror Westerns:

Curse of the Undead (Edward Dein, 1959)
Ravenous (Antonia Bird, 1999)
The Burrowers (J. T. Petty, 2008)

Selected Bibliography:

[*=especially valuable resource]

The Western in American Culture Generally:

The American West: The Invention of a Myth, David Hamilton Murdoch, Welsh Academic Press, 2001.

Westerns: Making the Man in Fiction and Film, Lee Clark Mitchell, University of Chicago Press, 1996.

West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns, Jane Tompkins, Oxford University Press, 1992.

The Western Film:

Back in the Saddle Again: New Essays on the Western, Edward Buscombe and Roberta E. Pearson, eds., BFI Publishing, 1998.

From Shane to Kill Bill: Rethinking the Western, Patrick McGee, Blackwell Publishing, 2007.*

Hollywood's West, Peter C. Rollins and John E. O'Connor, University Press of Kentucky, 2005.

The Philosophy of the Western, ed. Jennifer L. McMahon and B. Steve Csaki, University Press of Kentucky, 2010.

Showdown: Confronting Modern America in the Western Film, John H. Lenihan, University of Illinois Press, 1980.

Sixguns and Society: A Structural Study of the Western, Will Wright, University of California Press, 1975.*

The Western Reader, ed. Jim Kitses, Greg Rickman, Limelight Editions, 1998.*

The Western: From Silents to Cinerama, George N. Fenin & William K. Everson, Orion Press, 1962.

Westerns, Philip French, Oxford University Press, 1977.

West of Everything, Jane Tompkins, University Press, 1992.*

Western Film Directors:

Horizons West: Directing the Western from John Ford to Clint Eastwood, Jim Kitses, BFI Publishing, 2004.*

Individual Directors:

Clint Eastwood:

Aim for the Heart: The Films of Clint Eastwood, Howard Hughes, I.B. Tauris, 2009.

Clint Eastwood: A Cultural Production, Paul Smith, University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

John Ford:

About John Ford, Lindsay Anderson, McGraw Hill, 1981.

John Ford, Peter Bogdanovich, University of California Press, 1978.

The John Ford Movie Mystery, Andrew Sarris, Indiana University Press, 1975.*

The Western Films of John Ford, J. A. Place, The Citadel Press, 1974.

Sergio Leone:

Directed by Sergio Leone, Gianni di Claudio, Libreria Universitaria Editrice, 1990.

The Films of Sergio Leone, Robert C. Cumbow, Scarecrow Press, 2008.

Once upon a Time in Italy: The Westerns of Sergio Leone, Christopher Frayling, Harry N. Abrams, 2005.

Sergio Leone, Michael Carlson, Pocket Essentials, 2001.

Sergio Leone: Something to Do with Death, Christopher Frayling, Faber & Faber, 2000.

Sergio Leone: The Great Italian Dream of Legendary America, Oreste di Fornari, Gremese International, 1997.

Sam Peckinpah:

The Films of Sam Peckinpah, Neil Fulwood, B. T. Batsford, 2002.

If They Move ... Kill 'Em: The Life and Times of Sam Peckinpah, David Weddle, Grove Press, 1994.

Peckinpah: The Western Films: A Reconsideration, Paul Seydor, University of Illinois Press, 1997 (revised edition).

Sam Peckinpah, Richard Luck, Pocket Essentials, 2000.

Individual Films:

The Art of Sergio Leone's Once upon a Time in the West: A Critical Appreciation, John Fawell, McFarland, 2005.

Doing It Right: The Best Criticism on Sam Peckinpah's The Wild Bunch, ed. Michael Bliss, Southern Illinois University Press, 1994.*

Robert Altman's McCabe & Mrs. Miller: Reframing the American West, Robert T. Self, University Press of Kansas, 2007.

The Searchers: Essays and Reflections on John Ford's Classic Western, ed. Arthur M. Eckstein and Peter Lehman, Wayne State University Press, 2004.*

Unforgiven, Edward Bascombe, BFI Modern Classics, 2004.

Sam Peckinpah's The Wild Bunch, ed. Stephen Prince, Cambridge Film Handbooks, 1999.

Spaghetti Westerns (Italian Westerns, Euro Westerns):

Dizionario del Western all'Italiana, Marco Giusti, Oscar Mondadori, 2007.

Italian Western: The Opera of Violence, Laurence Staig and Tony Williams, Odeon, 1975.

Once upon a Time in the Italian West: The Filmgoer's Guide to Spaghetti Westerns, Howard Hughes, I. B. Tauris, 2004.

The Spaghetti Western: A Thematic Analysis, Bert Fridlund, McFarland, 2006.*

Spaghetti Westerns, Howard Hughes, Pocket Essentials, 2001.

Spaghetti Westerns: Cowboys and Europeans from Karl May to Sergio Leone, Christopher Frayling, Routledge Kegan Paul, 1981.*

Spaghetti Westerns: The Good, the Bad and the Violent, Tom Weisser, McFarland, 1992.

10,000 Ways to Die: A Director's Take on the Spaghetti Western, Alex Cox, Kamera Books, 2009.*

Syllabus:

The Western

Class 1
9/22/11

The Western: Introductory Lecture and Discussion
Aspects of the Western

The Great Train Robbery (Edwin S. Porter, 1903; 10 min.)

► **Notice:** As soon as possible, begin reading the novel *True Grit* by Charles Portis. You will be responsible for having read it by November 10. ◀

Study Questions

1. What do you understand by the term “Western”?
2. What themes do Westerns commonly deal with?
3. What are the characteristic images you expect to encounter in a Western?
4. How important is history to the Western?
5. What kinds of characters do you normally expect to encounter in a Western?
6. How important are time period and geographic setting to the Western?



Class 2
9/27/11

Aspects of the Western (cont'd)
Aspects of John Ford

Required Viewing:

Stagecoach (John Ford, 1939; 97 min.)

Study Questions

1. Does this film strike you as a typical western? If not, in what ways is it untypical?
2. What is the film about?
3. What human issues and themes seem to interest Ford?
4. Do you observe any recurring techniques or stylistic traits in Ford's work? If so, identify them and try to characterize Ford as a director.
5. This is the film that elevated John Wayne from being just one of many western actors to being a star. What aspects of Wayne's performance and Ford's direction achieve this?
6. How does music advance the narrative movement and atmosphere of the film?
7. What is Ford trying to do with his cross-section of varying characters? Do you think he succeeds?

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Class 3
9/29/11

Aspects of the Western
Aspects of Howard Hawks

Required Viewing:

Red River (Howard Hawks, 1948; 126 min.)

Study Questions

1. What is the theme of this film?
2. How does the film relate to history?
3. The film centers on an epochal event in the history of the West and of the United States. What is this event? How does it change America, the West, and the film's own characters?
4. What subtexts do you see in the film regarding male relationships? How do these relate to the Western Myth?
5. What subtexts do you see in the film regarding male-female relationships? How do these relate to the Western Myth?
6. Based on this film (and any other films you may have seen by the same director), identify some key hallmarks of the style of Howard Hawks. What is he most interested in, and how does his style reflect that interest?
7. Compare and contrast Hawks and Ford in terms of theme, style, imagery, and emotion. Assign a social or political viewpoint to each.
8. How does Hawks use camera movement and montage to pace the film, and how does that pace serve his thematic purpose? How does pacing underscore (or create) meaning in the film?
9. How does music serve the film's purpose and vision?
10. How are cattle compared to people (or vice-versa) in *Red River*, and to what purpose?
11. Patrick McGee writes of *Red River* that "The movie that invented John Wayne as a signifier was also the first movie to call into question or critique what he signified." Discuss.
12. McGee says that the film's "ending holds in some kind of imaginary resolution the contradiction at the heart of American democracy between the tendency toward authoritarian political figures who would monopolize the use of violence and the democratic quest for communal solutions to social problems." Discuss.



Class 4
10/04/11

and

Class 5
10/06/11

The Western, Politics, and Law
Cinematic Style in the Western

Required Viewing:

High Noon (Fred Zinneman, 1952; 84 min.)

Shane (George Stevens, 1952; 118 min.)

Study Questions – *High Noon*

1. What is the central problem of *High Noon*? Is it solved?
2. How does music serve the film?
3. How do frame composition and camera movement serve the theme of the film?
4. John H. Lenihan sees *High Noon* as a significant turning point in the Western's treatment of the individual-societal relationship, and writes that "*High Noon* reversed the motif of alienated hero seeking redemption through commitment to the good society." What do you think he is getting at?
5. Is this a Western, or a film story that could as easily have been set in any time and place? In this regard, Lenihan has observed that, in the view of some critics (notably Robert Warshaw), "*High Noon* fails as a Western because a social problem and message remove the hero from the center of attention. ... Preoccupation with the failings of the townspeople lessens the marshal's heroic stature." Do you agree?
6. How do the character relationships reflect the theme of the film?

Study Questions – *Shane*

1. What is the central problem of *Shane*? Is it solved?
2. How does Stevens use frame composition to underscore theme and character?
3. Is this a Western, or a film story that could as easily have been set in any time and place?
4. How do the problems of the individual characters relate to the West? To America?
5. Why does Shane leave? Will he "come back"? Why or why not?
6. Compare the film's vision with that of *High Noon*. How are the films similar, and how different?
7. What attitude does the film express toward American capitalism?

8. In the world of *Shane*, what is the relationship of individualism to the rule of law and the enforcement of law?

9. With the presence of an identified peace officer, is there still a sense of justice? If so, what does it arise from, and how is it sustained?

10. Patrick McGee says that “what distinguishes *Shane* is the articulation of class struggle through the mediation of the family.” What do you think he is getting at, and does he have a point?

11. McGee writes: “Shane is a nomad not only because he is mobile and without a domestic center like Joe Starrett’s, but because he has no story that can explain his being. [He is] the nomad that questions every officially-sanctioned identity in the quest for a history that can resolve the contradictions inherent in his immediate social context.” Discuss.



Class 6
10/11/11

Aspects of John Ford

Required Viewing:

The Searchers (John Ford, 1956; 117 min.)

Study Questions

1. Based on *Stagecoach* and *The Searchers* (and any other Ford film you may have seen), characterize John Ford's style and his thematic concerns. Is there a continuity in his vision?
2. How does Ford use frame composition to express the film's main theme?
3. How does Ford handle the tensions between individual and society? Between settlers and natives?
4. Ethan Edwards is a loner who moves easily between two communal societies—the fixed society of the settlers and the nomadic society of the natives—yet he does not belong to either one. Why?
5. How does Ethan's story relate to the story of the West? Of America?
6. What concerns are shared by *The Searchers* and *Red River*? How are they treated differently?
7. How does the presence of John Wayne serve each film?
8. What concerns are shared by *The Searchers* and *Shane*? How are they similar and how different?
9. How does music advance the film's story?
10. What patterns of racial "purity" and racial intermixing do you observe in the film? Why are Ethan and Laurie so concerned about this? How does the film handle the issue? Why do you think it might have been a concern to a 1956 audience?
11. Patrick McGee writes that "Ethan is able to know and understand the Indians because they are a projection of his own identity." Discuss.



Class 7
10/13/11

Aspects of Budd Boetticher

Required Viewing:

Ride Lonesome (Budd Boetticher, 1959; 73 min.)

Study Questions

1. Characterize Budd Boetticher's style, referring to this film and to other of his films you may have seen.
2. Compare and contrast Brigade with Ringo, Dunson, Kane, Shane, and Ethan Edwards. What are the fundamental attributes of the Western hero? Is he a hero, an antihero, or merely a protagonist?
3. What is the relationship of landscape to story in *Ride Lonesome*? In the Western generally? How is the film's final shot significant in this regard?
4. *Ride Lonesome*, unlike *Stagecoach*, *Red River*, *The Searchers*, and *Shane*, does not seem tied to any specific historical event or period in the West or the American experience. Does that make it a more "pure" Western, or not a "true" Western at all?
5. If the film is a Western, is it the nature of the hero that makes it one? What other elements or combination of elements "define" the Western as a genre, and identify a particular film as a Western?



Class 8
10/18/11

Aspects of Howard Hawks

Required Viewing:

Rio Bravo (Howard Hawks, 1959; 141 min.)

Study Questions

1. What themes and devices link this film to *Red River*, and other Howard Hawks films you may have seen? Characterize Hawks's style and vision, referring to these films and to other of his films you may have seen.
2. Hawks said *Rio Bravo* was a reaction against *High Noon*. What do you think he meant? What concerns do these two films share and how are they differently resolved? What different view of society, law, law enforcement, and individual responsibility does Hawks present, and how does it contrast with Zinneman's?
3. How does music advance theme, character, and pace in the film?
4. How does Hawks's approach to composition advance his particular view of heroism and society?
5. Compare John Wayne's performance as John T. Chance with the other three Wayne performances you have now seen. Assess Wayne's significance as an actor and as a Western icon.
6. Patrick McGee writes that "*Rio Bravo* exhibits a utopian representation of friendship and social bonding that works because it leaves out a community to which anyone is accountable." Discuss.



Class 9
10/20/11

The Western, Politics, and Legend
Aspects of John Ford

Required Viewing:

The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance (John Ford, 1962; 123 min.)

Study Questions

1. How does this film continue and advance the vision of John Ford as expressed in the previous two Ford films we have seen (and any others you may have seen)?
2. It may be said that this film is not so much about the West as about the Western. What does the film say about the West? About America? About the Western film?
3. What images and characters does Ford use to deliver his vision of the tension between the myth and the reality of the West?
4. How does Tom Doniphon fit in with the previous John Wayne portrayals you have seen? How does Ford link this film and its characters to previous Westerns (both his own and those of other directors)?
5. Patrick McGee writes of that “Ranse and Tom represent the two sides of a social identity that, within the frame of the film, can never be unified.” Comment.
6. What does the film suggest about law? Law enforcement? Politics?
7. How does Ford use composition to tell his story and stress his theme?
8. Why are there so many funerals in Ford’s films?
9. John H. Lenihan observes that, in this film, “Ford seemed more concerned with what had been lost than with what had been won as a wild western town entered the modern era,” and found in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* “a sentimental attachment to individualism and a regret over the loss of and disregard for individualism in a changing America.” Discuss.



Class 10
10/25/11

The Spaghetti Western
The Meta-Western
Aspects of Sergio Leone

Required Viewing:

Once Upon a Time in the West (Sergio Leone, 1968; 165 min.)

Study Questions

1. How is this film stylistically different from the other Westerns we have seen?
2. Which film that we have previously seen does this film most resemble, and why? Cite examples.
3. How does Leone specifically relate this film to previous Westerns?
4. How does this film comment on the Western as well as on the West?
5. How does music advance the film's story?
6. How do Leone's compositions tell his story and reveal his thematic concerns? How do those concerns differ from those of the other directors whose visions we have analyzed?
7. How is the cultural viewpoint of this film different from that of the other films we've discussed?
8. What is the significance of Cheyenne's last speech to Jill, ending in the phrase, "They earned it"? Does it denigrate or uplift the importance of women in the Western? in the West?
9. Does the film's ending embody a victory of labor over capital?
10. Sergio Leone commented that "Ford was full of optimism whereas I on the contrary am full of pessimism." What evidence in the films of both directors supports this assessment?

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Class 11
10/27/11

The Spaghetti Western, the Meta-Western, and
Sergio Leone's *Once Upon a Time in the West* (cont'd)

Music in the Western Film

Class 12
11/01/11

Aspects of Sam Peckinpah
Mexico
Apocalypse
The Western and Foreign Policy

Required Viewing:

The Wild Bunch (Sam Peckinpah, 1969; 148 min.)

Study Questions

1. How does Peckinpah's style comment on the Western genre itself, and reveal what this film says about the genre?
2. How does Peckinpah specifically relate this film to previous Westerns?
3. How does music advance the film's story?
4. Devin McKinney writes that Peckinpah "had to kill the Hollywood Western that spawned him before he could create something entirely his own." Compare Peckinpah's vision with Ford's, Hawks's, and Leone's. What similar themes and concerns are present? What differences do you see?
5. Robert Culp comments, "*The Wild Bunch* is about the discovery by these witless, limited men (which means all of us) of the difference between Right and Wrong—in this case by a process of elimination." Comment.



Class 13
11/03/11

Aspects of Clint Eastwood
The Western and Morality

Required Viewing:

Unforgiven (Clint Eastwood, 1992; 127 min.)

Study Questions

1. Unlike the other directors whose Westerns we have seen, Clint Eastwood remained first and foremost an actor, and a box-office attraction. How does this affect his concerns and approach as a director?
2. Compare Eastwood the actor with other Western acting icons you have seen—particularly John Wayne, James Stewart, and Randolph Scott. In your analysis of Eastwood the actor, include any other Eastwood performances you have seen, particularly his Leone Westerns and his “Dirty Harry” films.
3. Eastwood became a Western icon as a result of his performances in three films of Sergio Leone. Does it show?
4. How does Eastwood specifically relate this film to previous Westerns?
5. How does this film comment on the Western as well as on the West?
6. What do you make of the final shot and end titles?
7. Compare and contrast the view and role of women in this film with those of the other westerns we have seen.
8. From *Once upon a Time in the West* forward, we have seen a frank acknowledgment of the abundance and importance of prostitutes in the West and the Western. Even the “dance hall girls” of many early westerns are crypto-prostitutes from eras in which the movies could not so openly acknowledge them as such. How does *Unforgiven* approach prostitution as a part of the western experience, as a “social problem,” and as an element of the Western?
9. What do the film’s three strong western hero figures—William Munny, Little Bill Daggett, and English Bob—have in common that sets them apart from Ned Logan, the Schofield Kid, and the film’s other characters? What do their names have in common? Does this suggest a theme of the film?
11. What does *Unforgiven* contribute to our continuing dialogue about law and law enforcement in society? In the West? In America? In the Western?



Class 14-15
11/08/11 + 11/10/11

The Western Then and Now:

Required Reading:

“Three-Ten to Yuma” (Elmore Leonard, 1953)

Required Viewing:

3.10 to Yuma (Delmer Daves, 1957; 92 min.)

3.10 to Yuma (James Mangold, 2007; 122 min.)

Paper Topic:

Pick one theme, idea, character, or event that is present in the story and both films, and analyze the similarities and differences in style and approach.

Study Questions

1. What is the theme of Elmore Leonard’s short story?
2. How does the 1957 film relate to the original story? What changes have been made, and why do you think they were made? What aspects of the story remain (if any)?
3. Discuss the 1957 film as a western film. Do you think it is a good one? Compare and contrast it with other westerns you have seen.
4. How does the 2007 film relate to the original story? What changes have been made, and why do you think they were made? What aspects of the story remain (if any)?
5. How does the 2007 film relate to the 1957 film? What things remain the same? What narrative and thematic changes have been made and why?
6. Which do you think is the better film, and why?



Class 16-17
11/15/11 + 11/17/11

Required Reading:

True Grit (Charles Portis, 1968)

Required Viewing:

True Grit (Henry Hathaway, 1969; 127 min.)

True Grit (The Coen Brothers, 2010; 110 min.)

Paper Topic:

Pick one scene that is present in the novel and both films, and analyze the similarities and differences in style and approach.

Study Questions

1. What is the theme of the novel? Why do you suppose Portis wrote it in the first-person voice of Mattie? Why do you suppose he chose the particular type of language that he did for his characters?
2. How does the 1969 film relate to the original novel? What changes have been made, and why do you think they were made?
3. Discuss the 1969 film as a western film. Compare and contrast it with other westerns you have seen.
4. How does the 2010 film relate to the original novel? What changes have been made, and why do you think they were made?
5. How does the 2010 film relate to the 1969 film? What things remain the same? What narrative and thematic changes have been made and why?
6. Which do you think is the better film, and why?



Class 18
11/22/11

and

Class 19
11/29/11

Required Viewing:

I Shot Jesse James (Samuel Fuller, 1949; 81 min.)

The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford (Andrew Dominik, 2007; 160 min.)

Paper Topic:

Pick one theme, idea, character, or event that is present in both films, and analyze the similarities and differences in style and approach.

Study Questions

1. What is *I Shot Jesse James* about?
2. What do you observe about Samuel Fuller's style? How does it serve the purposes of his film? What *are* those purposes?
3. What is *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford* about?
4. What do you observe about the style and atmosphere of the 2007 film?
5. Discuss the 1949 film as a western. Do you think it is a typical western? Compare and contrast it with other westerns you have seen.
6. How does the 2007 film relate to the 1949 film (if it does)? Analyze the key narrative and thematic similarities and differences.
7. Which do you think is the better film, and why?
8. How does each film treat Jesse James? Robert Ford? Their relationship?
9. What does each film say about western myth? About celebrity?
10. What does each film say about heroism and cowardice?
11. How does music advance the purpose of each film?

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No class on 11/24/11 – Thanksgiving Day
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Class 20

12/01/11

The Contemporary Western

Summing Up

Required Viewing:

Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada (Tommy Lee Jones, 2005; 121 min.)

Study Questions

1. With Tommy Lee Jones, we have another director who was first and foremost an actor. How does this affect his concerns and approach as a director?
2. Is this film a typical western? Is it a western at all? Why or why not? What *is* a western?
3. What is this film about?
4. How does music (both the original score and the country songs heard in the course of the film) advance the purposes of this film?
5. What do you observe about Jones's visual style?
6. What do you make of the sequence with the blind man?
7. What is the importance of Melquiades to Pete Perkins? Why does he need to get his body back to Jimenez?
8. Why is Mike Norton important to Pete? Why does Pete treat him as he does at the end of the film?
9. What does this film say about the west and the western?



