English 247 - American Literature and Popular Culture
T 6-9, ECH 1220

Spring 2010

Instructor: Kevin McGuirk, HH 263, x32419
Office hours: Tuesdays 1-3 and by appointment
Preferred method of contact: office hours

Course Description:

The subject of this course is the vast, lively field defined by the relationship between literature (usually considered “high”) and popular culture (usually considered “low”), and by the history of their interaction in the United States. This offering of the course is focused on literature and “the movies,” or literature and film. We will consider literary fiction, popular fiction, art-film, popular film, and pastiche. We will be concerned with principles of adaptation especially as these bear on the question of narrative representation in two different media. The course is structured in two parts: the first follows a number of works of fiction and their film adaptations, concluding with a highly sophisticated pastiche. The second part takes a single genre—a key concept in the study of narrative—and traces it through several variations in literature and film.

Objectives:

Students should learn something about two key topics: i) narrative representation through the study of adaptation; and ii) the dynamic relation between literary and popular culture in the United States. Students should develop their ability to reflect analytically on these topics in discussion and writing.

Texts:

Novels (available at the bookstore):
Louisa May Alcott, Little Women, Signet
Russell Banks, The Sweet Hereafter, Vintage
Raymond Chandler, The Big Sleep, Vintage
Owen Wister, The Virginian, Dover
Jack Schaefer, Shane, Laurel-Leaf

Films: Little Women, The Sweet Hereafter, The Big Sleep, The Big Lebowski, Shane, Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, Dead Man

Schedule:  

May 4
introductions
folk/popular/literary
literature and the movies
poetry and film: montage

adaptation and narrative
May 11
discuss: Little Women, the novel, Part 1 only
screening: Little Women

May 18
discuss: Little Women, the film and novel
discuss: The Sweet Hereafter, the novel

May 25
screening: The Sweet Hereafter
discuss: The Sweet Hereafter, the film and novel

June 1
discuss: The Big Sleep, the novel
screening: The Big Sleep

June 8
discuss: The Big Sleep, the film and novel
screening: The Big Lebowski

June 15
discuss: The Big Lebowski
TBA

a genre: the Western

June 22
discuss: The Virginian
western narratives, early film

June 29
discuss: Shane, the novel
screening: Shane

July 6
discuss: Shane, the film and novel
screening: Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid

ESSAY #1 DUE

July 13
discuss: Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid
screening: Dead Man

July 20
discuss: Dead Man
TBA, review for the exam

ESSAY #2 DUE

*note: The University has determined that Tuesday, July 27 will follow a Thursday schedule*

Assignments and Values:

1. Two essays of 1200 words are required. Each will be worth 30% of your mark for the course. Essay #1 is due on June 8 in class. Essay #2 is due on July 6 in class. Topics will be assigned. See notes on Papers and on Citation and Formatting Basics below.

2. You are expected to attend every class and you are encouraged to participate with questions and comments. Over the course of the term you will write two or three brief unscheduled tests. At least
one of the tests will help prepare you for the exam. These activities will be worth 10% of your mark for the course.

3. The exam will take place during the exam period. You will be required to write essays on passages from novels read in the course and sequences from films viewed in the course. It will be worth 30% of your mark.

Class Policies:

**The class:**
We will use the full three hours of class every week. Since we are watching a number of films, lecture/discussion time will be at a premium. Please arrive in class before 6 p.m. It will be especially important for you to arrive on time when we are watching a film at the beginning of class so that you do not disturb others. During screenings please keep as quiet as you can.

**No laptops may be used in class.**
Do not text in class.

**Papers:**

**Submitting papers:** Hand in your work to me in class on the due date. See Citation and Formatting Basics at the end of this syllabus as you prepare your paper. Refer to the MLA stylesheet for more detailed guidance.

**Late papers:** Papers should be handed in in class on the due date. I can be flexible up to two days, when you ask for an extension before the due date by emailing me at kmcgurk@uwaterloo.ca. Late papers should be left in the English department drop box on the second floor of Hagey Hall.

**Plagiarism:** Outside of the university, plagiarism may be “actionable.” That is, legal action may be taken against you if you commit this offence. Plagiarism is also an ethical concern. See Notes from the Arts Faculty below.

**Contact:**
My office hours are for you. Please do not hesitate to see me as you prepare your essays or regarding any academic matter relating to the course. I am happy to see you outside of office hours, by appointment or if you happen to find me in my office and not too busy.

**Notes from the Arts Faculty:**

**Academic Integrity:** In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. (Check [http://www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity) for more information.)

**Discipline:** A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course instructor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 - Student Discipline. For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71, [http://adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm](http://adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm). For typical penalties check Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties, [http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/guidelines/penaltyguidelines.htm](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/guidelines/penaltyguidelines.htm).

**Grievance:** A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances,
Section 4, http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm. When in doubt, please be certain to contact the department’s administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

Appeals: A student may appeal the finding and/or the penalty in a decision made under Policy 70 (other than regarding a petition) or Policy 71, if a ground for appeal can be established. Read Policy 72 — Student Appeals, http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm.

Academic Integrity website (Arts): http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academicresponsibility.html.

Academic Integrity Office (UW): http://uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/

Notes for Students with Disabilities: The Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD), located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the OPD at the beginning of each academic term.

Citation and Formatting Basics

Underline or italicize titles of books.
Put things found in books in quotation marks (essays, articles, poems, short stories, etc.).

Indent longer quoted passages.
No quotation marks are need when a quoted passage is indented.

Quotation marks should be placed outside commas and periods (If nothing follows the quoted passage), and inside semi-colons and colons.

Cite page numbers etc. in parentheses following the quoted passage. Only include as much information as is needed to avoid uncertainty about the source. The parentheses should be inside the period, except when the quoted passage is indented, in which case, it should be placed after the period. The works you cite should appear in a list of Works Cited at the end of your essay.

Do not cite lines of short poems. cite the page number only the first time you quote from it.

Quoted passages must be introduced. Often the introductory statement or phrase will be followed by a colon.

The introduction plus quoted passage must work syntactically. The quoted passage is part of the sentence and the sentence as a whole must be structured according to correct grammar. By “correct” I mean an arrangement of words and phrases that guides the reader through the sentence without confusion.

Put your name, the course name and number, the instructor’s name, and the date in the top left corner of the first page of your paper. Staple the pages together. Do not use a duo-tang or other cover.

Number your pages starting with page 2.
Give your paper a title.
Use 12 point Times New Roman or similar font.
Double-space your entire paper.
Margins should be 1” all around.
Print the number of words at the end of the paper and sign your name.