COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course will examine the intersections of American literature and popular culture through a selection of novels, films, and television shows about the American West. The American Western is one of the most influential and enduring genres in American culture. Often, the Western has been pronounced “dead,” only to be revived and recreated, recent examples including the Coen Brothers remake of *True Grit* and the acclaimed cable series *Deadwood*. In this course we will explore the reoccurring themes and tropes in Westerns, which may include the cowboy hero, gender in the west, representations of indigenous people and examples of indigenous voices, violence and gun culture, and whatever other topics that come up in our discussions.

TEXTS
Except where indicated, books are available in the bookstore. I prefer that you use the assigned edition so that you can follow along in class. Films and television programs are all available for rent or purchase from iTunes or Amazon.ca. If ordering from Amazon be sure to do so as soon as possible so you have the films when you need them.

Required:

Owen Wister, *The Virginian* (Penguin, 1902)
B.M. Bower, *Lonesome Land* (University of Nebraska Press, 1912)
*Deadwood*, season 1, episodes 1-4. (HBO, 2004)

Highly Recommended:

*The Little Brown Compact Handbook*. Everything you need to know about writing, formatting, and citing English essays. (Note: all proceeds from the sale of the LB Compact Handbook are donated to the English scholarship fund).

Acheson, Katherine. *Writing Essays About Literature*. A concise and straightforward guide to analyzing and researching texts, and drafting English essays. Recommended for students who have not taken senior English courses.
**SCHEDULE OF CLASSES**  
Please bring your texts to class.

| Week 1 | Jan 8/10 | Tues: Introduction to course  
Thurs: Introduction to the American West in lit and pop culture |
|--------|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Week 2: *The Virginian* (including preface, to end of chapter XX1) Jan 15/17 | Tues: Introduction to *The Virginian*; deadline for seminar sign-up on Learn.  
Thurs: Quiz; meet your group. |
| Week 3: *The Virginian* to end Jan 22/24 | Tues: Quiz  
Thurs: Group Time |
| Week 4: *Lonesome Land* to end of chapter X) Jan 29/31 | Tues: Quiz  
Thurs: Group Time |
| Week 5: *Lonesome Land* to end. Feb 5/7 | Tues: Quiz  
Thurs: Research Seminar |
Thurs: Mid Term Exam |
| Reading Week | | |
| Week 7: *Grass Dancer* to end of part 5. Feb 26/28 | Tues: Quiz, *Grass Dancer*  
Thurs: Research Seminar A |
| Week 8: *Grass Dancer* to end. March 5/7 | Tues: No Class  
Thurs: Quiz |
Thurs: Quiz, “Brokeback” |
Thurs: Quiz, *Deadwood* |
| Week 11: *Deadwood* Episodes 2-3 March 26/28 | Tues: Quiz  
Thurs: Research Seminar A |
| Week 12: *Deadwood* Episode 4 April 2/4 | Tues: Quiz, Research Seminar B  
Thurs: TBA |

**ASSIGNMENTS**  
Exams (mid-term and final): 30%  
Research Seminar: 20%  
Essay: 30%  
Quizzes: 20%
1. **Exams**: Questions (Essay, short answer, or a combination) will be based on class lectures and research seminars. The mid-term will cover material studied in the first six weeks; the final exam will cover material studied since the mid-term.

2. **Group Research Seminars** (Groups of 4-5, 45-60 minutes): Your group will lead a class discussion using your seminar topic as a starting point (see below for topics). In preparing your seminar, you should, unless the topic specifies otherwise, consult 4-6 relevant scholarly books and/or peer-reviewed articles (this number does not include general reference works, biographical works, or encyclopedia entries). Make sure you orally cite borrowed material (e.g. “Joe Professor says that…”) in your presentation. In addition to looking for articles that deal directly with the text you are working on, use Primo to find scholarly books related more generally to your topic (e.g. if you are working on *Grass Dancer*, look for books on tribal literature more generally. Even if they don’t mention your specific text, these books will address themes and issues that apply to your target text). You should spend about 20-30 minutes presenting your material, and the rest of the time facilitating discussion.

Scholarly books mean those published by academic or university presses and written by recognized experts in the relevant field; most books in the UW library system are scholarly books.

Scholarly journal articles mean articles that have been peer-reviewed by experts in the relevant field. To find scholarly articles, use the MLA International Bibliography database, available via the UW library website (click on Research Databases). See also the UW library’s research databases for film studies. A **general google search is not adequate and will not yield the up-to-date, scholarly sources I am looking for.**

Seminar topics are listed below. The seminar topic is meant to as a starting point for your seminar; please feel free to direct discussion in any way you wish, so long as you remain focused on the text. You may divide tasks any way you wish, but all group members should contribute equally to the project. Any difficulties within the group should be brought to my attention early in the process.

After your seminar, please hand in the following:

1. An annotated works cited using correct MLA citation format: After each entry, include an annotation that briefly summarizes the source and explains how you integrated it into your seminar. Information about MLA format can be found in the Little Brown handbook.

2. Written notes and/or powerpoint presentations you used during your presentation. This will be used for reference purposes only and will not be evaluated.

3. A peer evaluation: Write a brief, constructive critique of each of your peers’ contributions to the project. Email it to me after your seminar. This will help me arrive at a group participation mark.
Evaluation:
Group Mark (50% of seminar mark): Quality and intellectual ambition of the content, research preparation and integration into seminar, clarity of delivery, facilitation of discussion, citation of sources orally and in Works Cited using correct MLA format.
Group Participation Mark (50% of seminar mark): Intellectual contribution, contribution to workload, cooperation with others, leadership abilities, availability for group meetings and/or by email.

Seminar Topics
Once you have chosen a topic, and no later than Tuesday of the second week of class, you must enroll in the group working on that topic. You can do so via the “groups” tab on the Learn page for this course: simply enroll in the group # that corresponds to the topic. Please note each group is restricted to five members. Students who haven’t enrolled in a group by the deadline will be assigned to a group.

Please see the schedule of classes for the date of the seminar for each topic. Once you sign up for a topic you are committed to present on that date. Seminars cannot be rescheduled.

1. *Lonesome Land.* Examine B.M. Bower’s correspondence (I will supply this to you on a CD.) How does it enlighten our understanding of her novel, *Lonesome Land,* and of her practice as a popular western author? Note: for this topic only, you will be doing archival research and do not have to consult secondary sources although I recommend that you consult reference works where doing so would help illuminate the archival material. You are still required to hand in an annotated Works Cited. See the Little Brown Handbook for information on citing archival documents such as personal letters.

2. *The Searchers.* Miscegenation, or interracial mixing, usually between whites and Indians, is a prevalent theme in westerns. Critically analyze the representation of miscegenation in *The Searchers:* why is it depicted as threatening? Who or what is threatened and why?

3. *The Grass Dancer* A. What is a pow-wow? What is its significance in North-American indigenous culture and in *Grass Dancer* more specifically?

4. *The Grass Dancer* B. What role does Sioux tribal spirituality and magic play in the novel?

5. “Brokeback Mountain.” How does the text represent queer masculinity? How does the image of the cowboy influence masculinity in the text?

7. Deadwood B Episodes 1-4. Who was Calamity Jane and how has she been represented in popular culture of the past? Compare Milch’s version to one or more past versions.


Choose one of the following topics:

1. Compare and contrast two texts studied in this course. Your essay topic should address a concept and/or problem discussed in class lectures and presentations, in considerably more depth than covered in class. You should consult 4-6 appropriate, peer-reviewed secondary sources. You are responsible for developing your own topic and having it approved by me. One of your texts can be the same as the one studied for your seminar, provided you do not recycle substantial material from the seminar.

2. Write an essay on a film, television episode or series, or novel set in the American West, published or broadcast within the last five years. Your essay should situate your target text in the context of the course by connecting in depth to a concept and/or problem emphasized in the course. You should consult 4-6 appropriate scholarly sources on western fiction, film, or cultural history to contextualize and support your argument.

3. Develop an alternative topic in consultation with me. It must include the same research component as the other topics.

You must meet with me in person at least once to discuss your topic and research strategies. I will not accept essays on topics not approved by me in a one-on-one meeting.

Evaluation: Quality and intellectual ambition of the argument; relevance to course content; clarity of expression; use and citation of supporting evidence (must follow MLA format); essay structure; grammar, spelling, and usage; format (as per Little Brown Handbook). A 5% bonus will be awarded to essays with less than three spelling or grammatical errors and correct MLA format.

4. Quizzes
You will be quizzed regularly on the assigned reading for the week. You can miss two quizzes without penalty. Quiz days are indicated on the schedule of classes.

Policies

Devices: Laptops for taking notes only; other uses can be distracting to the people around you. Please put cell phones away, set on silent. Anyone whose cell phone rings in class must bring donuts for everyone to the next class.
Exams: Rescheduled only in the case of emergencies documented by a medical or mental health professional. For information on appropriate action and documentation in the case of illness see [http://www.registrar.uwaterloo.ca/students/accom_illness.html](http://www.registrar.uwaterloo.ca/students/accom_illness.html). Student travel plans do not constitute a basis for accommodation.

Essays: Extensions will be granted if you approach me at least one week before the deadline and propose a reasonable alternative date. Otherwise, late essays will be penalized 3%/day.

Seminars: If an emergency arises, contact me and your group members as soon as possible so we can make alternate arrangements for the seminar. Appropriate documentation will be required.

I do not grant rewrites or extra assignments to boost marks. Absolutely no assignments accepted after the term has ended. No exceptions.

**IMPORTANT NOTICES**

**Cross-listed course:**

Please note that a cross-listed course will count in all respective averages no matter under which rubric it has been taken. For example, a PHIL/PSCI cross-list will count in a Philosophy major average, even if the course was taken under the Political Science rubric.

**Academic Integrity:**

*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.  
*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 professor, 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 offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline, [http://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-71](http://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-71).

*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://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-70](http://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-70). In addition, consult [http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/student-grievances-faculty-arts-processes](http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/student-grievances-faculty-arts-processes) for the Faculty of Arts’ grievance processes.

*Appeals:* A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or
Policy 71 - Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read Policy 72 - Student Appeals, http://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-72.

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

Academic Integrity Office (uWaterloo): http://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:

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

Turnitin.com: Plagiarism detection software (Turnitin) will be used to screen assignments in this course. This is being done to verify that use of all material and sources in assignments is documented. In the first week of the term, details will be provided about the arrangements for the use of Turnitin in this course.

You do not have to submit your paper through Turnitin if you don’t want to. If you choose not to submit your paper via Turnitin, submit your essay directly to me at vlamont@uwaterloo.ca, together with at least two prior drafts of the essay representing substantially different stages of the drafting process, as well as any notes taken during the preparation of the essay. These can be in electronic or paper form. If in paper, submit to the English department drop box, located near the main office (HH 252).