

WHITE/BLACK/TEN GALLON HAT:

Myth, Memory, and the American Western



English 157.05

Fall 2006

T R 2:55-4:10

WN 261

Autumn Watts

aew35@cornell.edu

GS 347 4:30-5:30

& by appt

Description and Required Texts

The Western genre saturates the American self-imagination, inspiring tales from singing cowboys to spaghetti westerns, frontier thrillers, and sci-fi outposts. In this course, we'll identify the most pervasive Western tropes—the outlaw, the cowboy, the sheriff, the frontier, the prostitute, and the "savage," among others—and explore what these icons say about the reimagined histories and mythologies America tells itself about itself, and its embedded beliefs, boundaries, norms, biases, and anxieties. What do these collectively retold narratives embroider and erase, who do they elevate, who do they exclude, and how do they continue to resonate today: politically, artistically, even intimately? Writing assignments will include short responses and multi-draft critical essays examining classic to contemporary Western literature and film.

Please buy or rent the following books:

- *All the Pretty Horses* by Cormack McCarthy
- *The Jump Off Creek* by Molly Gloss
- *A Pocket Style Manual*, by Diana Hacker

You are, however, responsible for downloading and printing the several short stories and critical articles available on our Blackboard website. **You must bring a hardcopy to class on the day scheduled for discussion.**

Occasionally I will screen films outside of class. Attending these screenings is optional, but if you opt not to attend, you are required to watch the film on your own time. After the screening, each film will be available to check out at the Uris reserve desk for a limited time.

Course Goals

The primary goals for this course are twofold:

- *Muscular Reading.* We will move beyond passive reading (reading for entertainment, escapism, or because we “have to,”) to an active, thoughtful, exploratory reading that opens up the text on thematic, stylistic, and conceptual levels.
- *Muscular Writing.* Like any other specialized field, academic writing has its own tools of the trade. This course is designed to provide you with a good beginner’s kit, which you will continue to use and hone throughout your academic career. As with all skills, proficiency follows through repetition and practice, practice, and more practice. Oh yes, and practice.

By the close of this semester I aim to equip you with the following writing powertools:

- Fertile pre-writing
- Provocative questioning
- Reckless drafting
- Aggressive revision
- Sharp presentation
- Brawny language
- Eagle-eye proofreading
- Grammar savvy

Course Work

As well as regular readings and in-class activities, your required work for the course will include the following:

- **Essays.** You will write six essays, four of which will include the following steps:
 - A) a first draft (which you will workshop with peers in class)
 - B) a second draft (after peer feedback) with self-evaluation. Self-evaluations are a brief (1/2-1 page) response to your own work: what you think works well, what you think could stand improving.
 - C) a third draft (after my feedback) with another self-evaluation. This evaluation will respond to my comments: what helped, what didn’t.

Please remember to:

- ✓ Double space, with 1 inch margins
- ✓ Use Times New Roman 12 point font
- ✓ Number your pages and staple them in the upper left corner
- ✓ Include your name, my name, the course, the assignment, date, and essay title
- ✓ Proofread and spell check every draft

Essays that are not correctly formatted, or revisions that do not include a self-evaluation, will lose ½ letter on the final essay grade.

- **Extended Revision.** You will extensively revise an advanced draft of an essay (which I will have commented on) of your choice, including expanded sources, MLA, APA, or the format of your field, and further development of your ideas.
- **Peer Workshop.** As a discourse community member, your thoughtful, constructive feedback on your peers’ work develops both of your skills in writing and reading, and offers valuable insight. *Drafts must be distributed to your peer workshop circle by the class before a Peer Workshop is scheduled.* On Peer Workshop days, you must come to class prepared with a peer letter for each workshop circle member. You will have the opportunity to work with your Peer Workshop circle throughout both preliminary and advanced stages of your essay.

- **Reading Responses.** Each week, you will informally but critically respond to the assigned readings, in 1-2 paragraphs (at least 250 words) and post them to the online Blackboard Discussion Board (due by 8am the day the reading is scheduled for discussion) at www.blackboard.cornell.edu.
- **Discussion Leadership.** With a partner, you will co-lead at least one class discussion on assigned readings. In preparation for this, you'll compose provocative discussion questions, which you will turn in to me the class session before your discussion day.
- **Conferences.** Twice during the term you will meet with me for mandatory individual conferences.
- **Portfolio.** At the end of the semester you will compile your essays into a final portfolio, which will include a final self-evaluation on your work for the course.

Participation

As this is a seminar course, much of our in-class time will be devoted to extensive class discussion. Your participation in this ongoing dialogue is critical; the class will benefit, your peers will benefit, and you will benefit. In this regard, you have a responsibility to each other and to yourselves (the discourse community) as much if not more than as to me.

Toward this end, please come to class on time! Chronic tardiness will affect your participation grade, and being 10 minutes late counts as one absence.

Attendance

Absences disrupt the course pace, weaken the discourse community, alarm the instructor, and are only excused by *documented medical or family emergency*. You may miss up to two classes without penalty, but after that, each unexcused absence will negatively impact your final grade by ½ of a letter for regular class days, or **one full letter for peer workshop days**.

In the case of an absence, excused or otherwise, please do not contact me for missed work; it is your responsibility to keep up with the class. Assignments and most handouts will be posted on Blackboard, and you can contact your peer circle for the rest.

Grading Policy

Grades will be based on essays, regular attendance, timely completion of all coursework, active participation in discussions, prepared discussion leadership, engagement with the text, thoughtful, respectful discourse with peers, and sincere effort to improve your own writing.

- Essays: 60%
- Participation: 30%
- Other: 10%

Late Assignments

Barring documented medical or family emergencies, coursework deadlines will not be extended under *any* circumstances. I mean this. Late work will lose one full letter grade for each day past the deadline, including weekends. This is a fast-paced, interdependent, writing-intensive course, and as such, falling behind disrupts the course and overwhelms you.

Respecting Boundaries

I have zero tolerance for racist, sexist, classist, or homophobic comments, and purposefully negative or disparaging behavior towards anyone in this class. This does not mean we can't: disagree, make mistakes, blurt out something accidentally rude, ask silly or uncomfortable questions, expose our ignorance, or get cranky at each other. This *does* mean that we will strive for respect, patience, empathy, sincerity, and a willingness to give each other the benefit of the doubt. Anyone who chooses not to honor the professional, respectful behavior expected in this classroom will be asked to leave. Period.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

Plagiarism, or academic theft, is passing off someone else's work as your own. Regardless of your background, you are responsible for not plagiarizing and will be held accountable if you do. See the sections in Cornell's *Policy Notebook* on the "Code of Academic Integrity" and "Acknowledging the Work of Others." Plagiarism will be prosecuted, it could permanently affect your academic record, and will flunk you in this course.

The "Code of Academic Integrity" is available at <http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/Academic/AIC.html>. After reading the *Code* thoroughly, I strongly advise that taking the quiz offered at that site to see how well you have interpreted what you read. If you have questions at any time about what constitutes plagiarism or whether something should be cited, err on the side of caution or consult me directly.

Privacy

All student writing for this course may be read and shared by all members of this class, as well as Cornell faculty. I may share segments of student essays with the rest of the class to illustrate certain writing techniques; however, I will strive to the best of my ability to keep the authors' identity anonymous. Please let me know if you are uncomfortable with this policy.

Students with Disabilities

In compliance with the Cornell University policy and access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for students with disabilities. Requests for academic accommodations are to be made during the first three weeks of the semester, except in unusual circumstances. Students are encouraged to register with Student Disability Services (SDR) to verify their eligibility for appropriate accommodations. More information about SDR, including an online registration form, may be found at <http://www.cit.cornell.edu/campus/sds/>

Open Door Policy

I encourage you to contact me or visit my office if you have any questions or concerns about your work in this course, or other general issues. I am always happy to meet with you individually or suggest referrals, if your needs fall outside my professional scope. If, for any reason, you experience a serious emotional or psychological crisis, and need immediate assistance, please contact Gannett Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS): 255-5208

Some Important Resources

Alcoholics Anonymous: 273-1541

Blue Light Escort Service: 255-7373
8:30 p.m. to 1:00 a.m. seven days a week during class session

Gannett Contraception, Gynecology, and Sexuality Service
3rd floor Gannett, 255-3978
8:30-4:30 Monday-Friday

Cornell Information and Referral Center (IRC)
Day Hall lobby, 254-INFO

Cornell Police (non-emergency): 255-1111

Cornell University Library reference desk: 255-4144
www.library@cornell.edu

Gannett Health Services
After hours, non-emergency: 255-5155
Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS): 255-5208
Sexual Health Services: 255-5155

Ithaca Rape and Abuse Hotline (24 hrs): 277-5000

Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender Resource Center
www.lgbtrc.cornell.edu
341 Caldwell Hall, 254-4987

Lost and Found (Cornell Police)
G2 Barton Hall, 255-7197

Office of the University Ombudsman
118 Stimson Hall, 255-4321

Planned Parenthood of Tompkins County
314 West State Street, 273-1513
Mon-Thurs 9am-8pm; 9am-4pm Friday

Suicide Prevention and Crisis Line (24 hrs): 272-1616

John S. Knight Institute Writing Workshop: 255-6349
www.arts.cornell.edu/Knight_institute/workshop/walkin/walkin_about.html
Walk-in Service:

Central campus

178 Rockefeller Hall: Sun.-Thurs. 3:30pm-5:30pm
106 Olin Library: Sun.-Thurs. 7:00pm-10:00pm

North campus

Carol Tatkon Center, 3343 Balch Hall: Sun.-Thurs. 7:00pm-10:00 PM
222 Robert Purcell Center: Sun-Wed 7:00pm-10:00pm