

# THE WEST AND THE FRONTIER

GIS 3991: Intermediate Core Seminar  
(981, 93642; 4 cr.)  
223 Cohn, Tuesdays at 6:00 p.m.

Instructor: Prof. Julie Thompson Klein

**Email and URL for course website**

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- Course website:

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## SEMESTER CALENDAR

Week 1: May 8  
Week 2: May 15  
Week 3: May 22  
Week 4: May 29  
Week 5: June 5  
Week 6: June 12  
Week 7: June 19  
Week 8: June 26  
Week 9: July 3  
Week 10: July 10  
Week 11: July 17  
Week 12: July 24  
Week 13: July 31 (Finals week)

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

GIS 3991: Intermediate Core Seminar emphasizes interdisciplinary problem-solving through critical, analytical, and integrative approaches to the study of a particular topic. The course is a graduation requirement for ISP students.

### Objectives

- (1) to explore concepts of disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity at an intermediate level
- (2) to gain experience in skills of interdisciplinary analysis and problem solving applied to a particular topic/case study
- (3) to gain greater sophistication in reading and writing skills and strategies.

### Intellectual Focus

The designated topic for this semester is one of the most powerful composite ideas in American cultural history – the “West” and the “frontier.” Five overlapping themes comprise the heart of our interdisciplinary study:

- narrative and visual meaning (iconography)
- myth and reality
- land and identity
- individualism and community
- dominant culture and the experience of “others” (gender, race, and class).

Of necessity, our study is interdisciplinary and the course concentrates on the nature of interdisciplinary study. We cross disciplinary boundaries of humanities (history, art history, photography, cinema, and literature) and social sciences (sociology, economics, political science, psychology, geography, and anthropology). We also draw on the interdisciplinary fields of American cultural studies, women’s studies, ethnic and African American studies, and rhetoric and semiotics, with added insights from religious studies, technology studies, environmental studies, public health and biomedicine.

## TEXTS

- Course Portfolio (see Requirements), includes 4 photocopied essays from instructor
- M.E. Jones, Ed. 1994. The American Frontier: Opposing Viewpoints. San Diego: Greenhaven (purchased from instructor).
- J. Grossman, Ed. 1994. The Frontier in American Culture. An Exhibition at the Newberry Library, August 26, 1994 - January 7, 1995. Berkeley: University of California Press (purchased from instructor).
- A. Lunsford and R. Connors. 2001 (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition). The Everyday Writer. N.Y.: St. Martin’s Press. (Available at Marwils, Barnes and Noble, Paperbacks Unlimited).
- Visual Texts: throughout the semester we draw on an array of documentary films, using a visual text form for recording notes. Completed forms go into the Portfolio.

# REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING POLICIES

- (1) Attendance, Participation and Groupwork (20%)
- (2) Portfolio, including weekly agendas (15%)
- (3) 3 Papers (65%)

## (1) Attendance, Participation and Groupwork

**Attendance is mandatory at every meeting.** Spring/Summer is a shorter, compressed semester, so any student who misses more than 2 meetings will be automatically dropped from the course. There will be makeup work for any absence. All absences are equal, whether illness-, work-, vacation-, or family-related. If an emergency arises, contact me within 24 hours. Coming to class significantly late or leaving significantly early will be factored into attendance. You will do best if you keep up. If you fall behind or have a bad week, it's better to come to class to benefit from discussion than to hide at home.

### ***Cinema Groupwork:***

Everyone will join a cinema workgroup that explores the rhetoric of the West and the Frontier in one film of the group's choice. (Detailed instructions follow).

## (2) The Portfolio

A portfolio is a system for organizing and developing everything in the course. It is a living laboratory for making connections and incubating ideas. Bring to class each week

### Materials:

- \* a large three-ring binder (preferably with pockets on inside covers)
- \* a set of dividers with tabs to mark separate sections
- \* a 3-hole punch, pens & pencils; post-it notes; a stapler, tape; plastic pouch

### Organization

You may add sections, but everyone should have the following sections at a minimum:

- i. course syllabus
  - ii. study tools: important definitions, concepts, dates, names, and other tools
  - iii. weekly agendas (with photocopy submitted to the instructor each week):**
    - 1-page informal notes to prepare for class, answering three questions:**
      - (1) How do readings relate to the ideas of the West and the Frontier?**
      - (2) What interested you most about the readings?**
      - (3) What questions or confusion do you have?**
  - iii. weekly sections: handouts, class notes, visual text forms, and related material.
  - iv. scrapbook: a collection of ephemera relevant to the course (cartoons, print media, company publications and office memos, advertisements, notes on conversations; in short, anything you find that deals with the course theme).
  - v. the reader: articles, essays, book chapters, articles and other publications on the topic
  - vi. research paper: materials such as data-base sheets. bibliography, notes, and all drafts.
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## (2) The Papers

### Paper #1: Synthesis Essay 1 (15%)

The first essay synthesizes insights from class materials around the question, "How is the study of the 'West' and the 'Frontier' interdisciplinary?" The essay should be 7 typewritten pages, and no external research sources are required.

Due: May 29 (Wk. 4)

### Paper #2: Synthesis Essay 2 (15%)

The second essay refines the definition established in Paper #1 in three contexts: the lessons of Paper #1, new classwork, and a bridge to your personal research topic. The essay should be 8 typewritten pages. Due June 18 (Wk. 7)

### Paper #3: Final Research Paper (35%):

The research paper applies insights from the Synthesis Essays to a topic of the your choice. The essay should 12-15 typewritten pages, with a minimum of 10 external research sources (including but not exclusively Internet sources). First draft due July 2 (Wk. 9), with ongoing dialogue via the Internet required. Final draft due July 30 (Week 13).

## Grading Policies

A = Excellent (A equivalent to 4.00 HPA; A- equivalent to 3.67)

B = Good (B+ 3.33 HPA; B 3.00; B- 2.67)

C = Average (C+ 2.33 HPA; C 2.00; C- 1.67)

D = Poor (D+ 1.33 HPA; D 1.00; D- 0.67)

E = Not acceptable (E or F = 0.00 HPA)

I = Requirements not completed but at least 50% of coursework submitted. At the end of one year, the University converts an "I" into an "E."

X = A most unpleasant grade: means did not attend or do enough to qualify for an "I." You must pay tuition again to retake the course.

Criteria for grading all written work include following instructions, completing all assignments, and demonstrating quality in organization, critical thinking, and conventions of grammar and style.

Internet Submissions: A "page" means approximately 250 printed words, double-spaced, with standard 1-inch margins and 12-point font. If you are submitting electronically, print a hard copy first or do a word-number count to be sure you have the adequate amount.

# WEEKLY SCHEDULE

## PART I: The Ideas of “West” and “Frontier”

### Week 1      May 8: Framework

- Introduction to the Course: syllabus, enrollment sheets
- Core texts: Jones “Foreword,” “Introduction,” “Discussion,” “Chronology” (9-19, 286-88; Grossman, “Introduction” (1-5); EVERYDAY WRITER
- Exercise in “reading” visual texts and using viewing logs
- Definition of Interdisciplinary Study Round 1 and In-class writing**

### Week 2      May 15: The Frontier Hypothesis

- Course Website: Blackboard.com
- Jones, Chapter 1: “The Frontier Hypothesis” (21-57); White in Grossman, “Frederick Jackson Turner and Buffalo Bill” (pp. 7-26) and related visual texts
- Definition of Interdisciplinary Study Round 2**

### Week 3:      May 22: The Native American Part I

- Jones, Chapter 2: “The Frontier and the Native Americans” (59-102) and visual texts
- Definition of Interdisciplinary Study Round 3 and Cinema Workgroups Round 1**

### Week 4: May 29: Native American Part II

- The visual iconography of Native Americans with related visual texts
- Edward Buscombe “Photographing the Indian,” from Back in the Saddle Again, ed. E. Buscombe & R. Pearson, pp. 29-45. London: British Film Institute, 1998; and J. W. Davidson and M. L. Lytle, “The Noble Savage and the Artist's Canvas.” From After the Fact, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. NY: McGraw Hill (2 photocopied essays)
- Cinema Workgroups Round 2 and Paper #1 Due**

### Week 5      June 5: The Pioneer Experience

- Jones, Chapter 3: “The Wilderness Versus the Pioneer” (104-41) and related visual texts
- J.W. Davidson and M. H. Lytle, “The Invisible Pioneers.” From After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection, 3rd Combined Edition. New York: McGraw Hill.

### Week 6      June 12: Gender and Race on the Frontier

- Jones, Chapter 4: “Gender and Race on the Frontier” (143-86)
- Related visual texts
- Cinema Workgroups Round 3 and Definition of Interdisciplinary Study Round 4**

## PART II: CULTURAL MYTHOLOGIES

Week 7 June 19: Frontier Mythologies

- Jones, Chapter 5: “The Creation of Frontier Mythic Heroes” (187-236)
- White in Grossman, “Frederick Jackson Turner and Buffalo Bill” (pp. 27-65)
- Relevant visual texts
- Paper #2 Due**

Week 8 June 26: GIS 3991 Goes to the Movies

Part I: Cinema Workshop Presentations

- Jones, Chapter 6: “The Frontier and Today’s Popular Culture” (238-67)
  - Preface and G. O’Brien, “The Western Film is Merely Entertainment”
  - J. Slively, “The Western Film Provides Cultural Insights”
  - S. Wloszczyna, “Some Western Films Clarify the Historical Record”
- Related visual texts selected by Cinema Workgroups

Week 9 July 3: GIS 3991 Goes to the Movies Part II

- Related visual texts selected by Cinema Workgroups
- Draft 1 of Paper #3 Due**

Week 10 July 10: The West of Advertising and Costume

- In Grossman (pp. 66-102):
  - P.N. Limerick, “The Adventures of the Frontier in the Twentieth Century”
- Definition of Interdisciplinary Study Round 5:**
  - How is my research topic interdisciplinary?
- Related visual texts\_

Week 11 July 17: GIS 3991: The New West

- In Jones, Chapter 6 (268-81): “The Cowboy in Advertising”; L. Downey, “Levi Strauss Invented Western Work Clothes for Miners, Cowboys, and Engineers”; A. Fabian, “Ralph Lauren Appropriated Western Work Clothes .... ”
- Colin McArthur, “Magazine Advertising and the Western” (pp. 170-71) and J.M. Gaines & C.C. Herzog, “The Fantasy of Authenticity in Western Costume” (pp 172-81) (photocopy)

Week 12 July 24: Definition of Interdisciplinary Study Last Call

- Collaborative authorship of “a Primer for Interdisciplinary Study in the ISP”
- Presentation of Portfolios**

Week 13 July 31

- Paper #3 due by email or snailmail