Course Description
The purpose of this class is to introduce students to American Studies, an interdisciplinary study of American culture. The academic field of American Studies evolved in the early twentieth century to integrate literature and history and create a better understanding of the American experience. Since that time, American Studies has grown to incorporate its own theory and methodology and integrates a variety of disciplines.

We will focus on two major areas. First, we will define and explore American Studies as a field of study. What are the disciplines involved in this study? What are the advantages of this interdisciplinary approach? We will examine methodological studies that employ different theories and perspectives, and we will evaluate what we feel works most effectively.

Secondly, we will focus on two important symbols that speak much about our culture and also dominate much of the American Studies scholarship. The first theme is the American West, including the frontier, the cowboy, and the interpretations of America's western experience. This image of America's "garden" clashed with the emerging industrialization of American culture and the rise of technology in the nineteenth-century, a second important theme that we will explore. We will consider the impact that industrialization and new technology had on many facets of American life in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the tensions between these symbols of the West and industrialization in modern America.

This course is required for the American Studies minor.

DSW Designation
A W designation means that this course is a Discipline Specific Writing (DSW) course. DSW accepts as its guiding principle the idea that writing is a valuable tool for learning and communication. The writing components of a DSW course are designed to communicate what you have learned.

Students completing majors in any area of arts and sciences are required to take two DSW courses for the undergraduate degree.

Learning Outcomes
1. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the interdisciplinary field of American Studies, including its methods and theories, and the significant works that have shaped this field.
2. Students will demonstrate the ability to interpret and analyze cultural myths and symbols to understand American culture.
3. Students will demonstrate the ability to think critically about American history and culture.
4. Students will demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively both in written and oral form.
5. Students will demonstrate knowledge of the American West and the process of industrialization and rise of technology in the United States.

Required Texts
Owen Wister, *The Virginian: A Horsemen of the Plains* (copyright 1902). Any edition that you find is fine to use for the class.


**Course Reserves**

The other readings on the syllabus will be available on electronic reserve through the Ingram Library webpage. The password for the E-reserves is “studies” and the course is cross-listed under both History and English 3300. Some books may also be placed on course reserves.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**Class Participation (15% of final course grade)**

Students are expected to attend and to participate in class each day. Your final grade will be lowered one full letter grade if you have more than three unexcused absences, two letter grades for more than six absences, and three letter grades for more than nine absences. Please note that anyone arriving to class late or leaving before the class is over will be counted absent for that day. To receive credit for class attendance, you must attend the entire class.

This class will involve discussion of the assigned readings. Please read each assignment **before** that class period and come prepared to discuss the readings. Your opinions count, so please contribute.

**Written Assignments**

Please note that all **written assignments are due at the beginning of the class period** on the date listed in the syllabus. Any late assignments (including those turned in at the end of class) will be marked down. Please do not come to class late because you have not finished your paper. No late papers will be accepted after three days. No papers will be accepted by email. Any late papers must be submitted through the Desire2Learn course page.

**Plagiarism** is a serious offense. Plagiarism means using someone else’s words as your own without providing appropriate citation. My policy is that any paper that includes any example of plagiarism—even one sentence—will result in an automatic “F” for the final class grade. There are no exceptions to this policy.

**Informal Writing Assignments**

Students will write two assignments requiring analysis of primary documents from American culture

1. A two- to three-page, word-processed analysis of one example of western art. The art should date prior to 1920 and may be a painting, lithograph, drawing, or similar type of two-dimensional work or a sculpture. If you are not sure about your selection, contact me in advance. Please include a copy of the artwork with your paper. **(10% of final grade)**

2. A two- to three-page, word-processed analysis of the lyrics for a contemporary country-western song of your choice. This song should be one written within the last twenty years. Please
include the lyrics and appropriate citations (including writer and date published) with this assignment. (10% of final grade)

The American Western (15% of final course grade)
The American West has long been a popular symbol and myth of American culture. In this assignment, you will compare the movie *Stagecoach* and the novel *The Virginian* to a modern Western movie (from the last ten to fifteen years). How has the western changed in the twentieth century and why? In what ways has the Western stayed the same and why? What do these three westerns tell us about American culture? This paper should be approximately four to five pages, double-spaced and word-processed, and should be your own idea and analysis.

This is not a research paper. You do not need to consult or use any secondary sources for this paper. Please use appropriate citations from the sources, including the movie and the book. English students may use MLA format, and historians should use Kate Turabian’s *A Manual for Writers* or the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

Technology and American Culture (20% of final grade)
All students will choose an artifact of American culture, either an object from an early twentieth century Sears Catalogue or a more contemporary object that represents some aspect of American technology (broadly speaking), with approval of the instructor. Each student will write a five-page, double-spaced essay analyzing that object and assessing what it says about American culture.

Students will be expected to use three secondary sources, which may include books or articles (but no websites). Exceptions may be made for websites that are archival collections of sources, but please review any proposed website with me in advance. Please remember, however, that this essay should also contain your own interpretation of the object. Use appropriate citations. English students may follow MLA format, and historians should use Kate Turabian’s *A Manual for Writers* or the *Chicago Manual of Style*. Works Cited or Bibliography pages must be included.

This essay is a “Writing to Communicate” assignment, a required element of a DSW class. It will require a rough draft, and I will offer comments for revision. The paper will be evaluated based on content, form, grammar, and spelling. According to the DSW requirements, this assignment should represent a sustained effort on the part of the student. Please note that students who do not turn in a rough draft on the due date will receive no credit for the entire assignment.

Exams

Midterm Exam (15% of final grade) and Final Exam (15% of final grade)
Both exams will include essay questions related to the readings and classroom discussions. Please note that movies, videos, art, music, or other material present in class will be included as potential content for the exam.

Class Etiquette

1. Students will come to class on time and not leave class early, unless you have discussed a particular reason why you need to leave early with the instructor in advance.
2. Students will not use cell phones during class, including text-messaging and Facebook or other such programs. If I see cell phones in use, I will confiscate them for the rest of the class.
3. Students will not need to use laptop computers during class. If you feel you need your
computer, please discuss your reasons with me in advance. Otherwise, computers will not be allowed.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Please note that any updates to the schedule will be announced in class. All students are responsible for announcements made in class. Missing the class announcements will not excuse you for any missed assignments or changes in the readings.

January 8: Introduction to the Course

Part 1: The American West

January 10: The Ideal of the West

- Review UWG's “Go West” Campaign, accessible on the university's main web page
- Begin reading The Virginian

January 15: The Western Movie: John Ford’s Stagecoach

Watch in Class: the John Wayne movie "Stagecoach"

- Continue reading The Virginian.

January 17: The Western Novel: Owen Wister's The Virginian

- Complete reading The Virginian

January 22: The Western: Myth and Iconography

January 24: The Frontier Ideal: Buffalo Bill and Frederick Jackson Turner

- Ann Fabian, "History for the Masses: Commercializing the Western Past," in Cronon, Open Sky, 223-238;

Assignment due: The American Western paper

January 29: The Western Journey and the American West as "Garden"

- Leo Marx, Machine in the Garden, 3 – 144

January 31: Artists of the American West, part I

View in class: “The West of the Imagination"

- Martha A. Sandweiss, "Views and Reviews: Western Art and Western History," 185-202, in Cronon, Open Sky.

February 5: Artists of the American West, part 2

Assignment due January 31: Analysis of Western Art

February 7: The New Western History
• William Cronon, George Miles, Jay Gitlin, “Becoming West: Towards a New Meaning for Western History,” 3-27;
• William Cronon, “Kennecott Journey: The Paths Out of Town,” 28-51
• Patricia Nelson Limerick, “Making the Most of Words: Verbal Activity and Western America, 167-184;”
• Clyde Milner II, “The View From Wisdom,” 203-22; all in Under an Open Sky

February 12:  The Cowboy: Myth vs. Reality
• “Obituary: Wayne McLaren—Marlboro Man” on reserve
• Review and come prepared to discuss what you have learned from the website by the American Folklife Center, “Buckaroos in Paradise,” at http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/buckaroos/

Bring to class: Any examples of how the “cowboy” image is used today in popular American media

February 14: Other voices from the West
• Katherine G. Morrissey, "Engendering the West," in Cronon, Open Sky, 132-14;
• Sarah Deutsche, "Landscapes of Enclaves: Race Relations in the West, 1865-1990," in Cronon, Open Sky, 110-131;
• George Miles, "Rediscovering Native Americans in American History," in Open Sky, 52-70;

February 19: Midterm Exam

Part 2: The Machine and Technology

February 21: Technology as Symbol: The Brooklyn Bridge
• Review the website http://www.pbs.org/kenburns/brooklynbridge/

February 26: The Machine in America
• Leo Marx, Machine in the Garden, 144-226.

February 28: The Beginnings of Industrialization: The Lowell mill girls
• Robinson, Loom and Spindle, iii-59, for Tuesday

March 5: Industrialization and Technology in the 19th century
• Robinson, Loom and Spindle, 60-131, and 202-216

March 7: A View of Industrialization through Photography
• Peter Sexias, "Lewis Hine: From 'Social' to 'Interpretive' Photographer," American Quarterly 39 (Autumn 1987) 3:381-409, on reserve
March 12:  
**Public History Showcase, Ingram Library, 2=3:20.**
We’ll be participating in the Public History Showcase to learn more about how to integrate American culture studies into the community and to learn about southern industrialization. All students will submit an ungraded response assignment to the Showcase as proof of attendance/participation when they leave the event.

March 14:  
**The Sears Catalog**
- Thomas Schlereth, “Country Stores, Country Fairs, and Mail Order Catalogues: Consumption in Rural America,” on reserve;
- John Kouwenhoven, “American Studies: Words or Things,” on reserve

March 19-21:  
**Spring Break**

March 26:  
**Industrialization in the Home**
- Ruth Schwartz Cowan, “The Industrial Revolution in the Home: Household Technology and Social Change in the Twentieth Century” on reserve

March 28:  
**Visions of Technology: Yesterday’s Tomorrows**

*Due:*  
**Technology and American culture paper draft:** Please note this should be a complete draft, full length, with bibliography and illustrations, as appropriate. Points will be taken off on the final paper grade for incomplete rough drafts.

**Part 3: Cultural Conflicts in America in the Twentieth Century**

April 2  
**“Modern Times”—America in the 1920s and 1930s**
- Carroll Pursell, “The Decade of Prosperity and Consumption,” on reserve

*Due this day:* we will develop a group of documents and sources that one could use in analyzing American response to industry and technology in the 1920s and 1930s. All students will be assigned a type of document (such as novel, film, artwork, etc) and we will share and discuss our ideas. No papers are due this day; this is an in-class discussion.

April 4:  
**Depression and Disillusionment: 1930s Photography**
- “Carroll Pursell, Depression: Study and Subsidy,” on reserve

April 9:  
**Country Music**

*Due:*  
**Assignment on Country Music lyrics**

April 11:  
**Modern Symbols**
• Joseph F. Trimmer, "Monuments and Myths: Three American Arches," on reserve

April 18: Final Exam

April 23: Due: Revised Technology in American Culture paper, by 4:30 p.m.