



ENGLISH 4109-01: FILM AS LITERATURE
“EARLY AMERICA AT THE MOVIES”
SUMMER 2014 (SESSION I—“MAYMESTER”)
MTWRF 1:00PM-4:25PM
TLC 1200



DR. PATRICK M. ERBEN
OFFICE: TLC 2239
OFFICE HOURS: MTWRF 10:00 AM-12:30 PM
AND BY APPOINTMENT
E-MAIL: perben@westga.edu
TEL.: (678) 839-6144 (OFFICE AND VOICEMAIL)

WEBSITE: WWW.WESTGA.EDU/~PERBEN
E-RESERVES PAGE: <http://westga.docutek.com/eres/coursepage.aspx?cid=876>.

Course Description: This course examines how American and international cinema has envisioned the discovery, exploration, and conquest of America and the national rise of the United States. How has the genre of film adapted early American history and literature and turned both into a “usable” past accessible to audiences in the 20th and 21st centuries? This course, in other words, views films about early America through a dual lens, asking what they reveal about the past and about the socio-cultural, political, and aesthetic contexts in which they were produced and viewed. The course groups the films into four thematic areas, highlighting questions that are equally relevant for understanding early America and our own time:

- a) Paradise Found and Lost: The Romance and Horror of the Conquest
 - b) The Last of the Mohicans: The Absence and Presence of Native Americans on the Screen
 - c) Founders’ Chic: The American Revolution, its Heroes, and its Discontents
 - d) “Remember the Ladies:” Early American Women and the Question of Gender Equality.
- Finally, we will ask how visions of the future—such as James Cameron’s recent film *Avatar*—reflect the hopes, dreams, and disappointments of the early American past.

In fulfilling the program’s genre/theory requirement, this course studies and distinguishes several types of film about early America: epic, spatial and psychological travel narrative, romance, bio pic, literary adaptation, documentary, and docu-drama. In analyzing these genres, we will try to understand how different modes of representation and techniques of blending the factual and the fictional intersect with the complex demands placed on these films, ranging from teaching tool or history lesson, to entertainment, to icon of national pride, to socio-cultural critique. Selected primary readings (period texts) and secondary readings (film criticism, literary criticism, and history) will inform the viewing, discussion, and analysis of the films.

Course Goals (same for all English 4109 courses):

- Students will learn to view and analyze films as texts.
- Students will gain an enhanced knowledge of the ways in which film employs the aesthetic and cultural techniques of other literary forms.
- Students will become familiar with the medium's distinctive qualities.
- Students will understand that social, political, economic, and historical influences affect the production and consumption of film texts.
- Students will demonstrate in both oral and written work a discipline-specific critical facility through convincing and well-supported analysis of related material.
- Students will demonstrate their command of academic English and the tenets of sound composition by means of thesis-driven analytical prose.
- Students will learn to use discipline-specific computer technologies related to the study of language such as listservs, word processing, and internet research.

Program Goals (same for all English 4109 courses):

- This course fulfills one of the departmental requirements for the completion of the English major.
- Students will develop the analytical, oral and written skills to pursue graduate study or careers in teaching, writing, business and a variety of other fields.
- Students will be able to define and pursue independent research agendas.

- This course contributes to the program goal of equipping students with a foundation in literary history and the issues surrounding literary study in contemporary culture.
- This course broadens students' desire and ability to take pleasure in their encounter with literature.

Required Texts/Films: There are 2 copies of each of the following films covered this semester on reserve in the library (3-hour reserve period for in-library viewing only). I do not require that you purchase these films, but you may find it helpful to own/rent the films you write about for your two formal papers (see requirements below).

Book:

Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca; editors/translators Martin A Favata and Jose B. Fernandez, *The Account: Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca's Relacion*. Arte Publico Press. 978-1558850606.

Please purchase this text at the UWG bookstore. We do not have time to wait for amazon or whoever to deliver it...

Films:

1) Films to be pre-viewed out of class:

The New World (Dir. Terrence Malick, 2005) (on amazon instant video)

The Last of the Mohicans (Dir. Michael Mann, 1992) (on amazon instant video)

The Patriot (Dir. Roland Emmerich, 2000) (on amazon instant video)

2) Films viewed fully in class:

Cabeza de Vaca (Dir. Nicolás Echevarría, 1991)

Jefferson in Paris (Dir. James Ivory, 1995) (on amazon instant video)

Yo, La Peor De Todas (I, The Worst of All) (Dir. Maria Luisa Bemberg, 1990) (on amazon instant video)

3) Excerpts of longer series, viewed in class:

We Shall Remain (Dir. Chris Eyre, PBS 2009) (on amazon instant video)

John Adams (Dir. Tom Hooper, HBO 2008) (on amazon instant video)

4) Primary and secondary reading assignments will be available at no cost electronically or in paper.

REQUIREMENTS:

Investment and Interest in the Course, its Materials, and its Subjects: I bring a great deal of enthusiasm and intellectual curiosity to my teaching and the materials and questions we discuss in class. I demand that you do the same and treat your work in this course as an important part of your intellectual growth, *especially* if it is not directly connected to your major. I will quickly recognize if you treat the course merely as “just another requirement” and/or try to coast through it by doing the minimum amount of work. If you are looking for an easy grade and little work, I urge you to drop the course immediately.

Attendance: Regular and timely attendance is **MANDATORY**. You have one (1) allowed absence for the semester (it's really short!). Each additional absence will result in a full letter grade deduction from your *final* course grade (A to B, B to C, etc.). All absences will be treated the same (i.e. no distinction between excused and unexcused absences). You do not need to turn in a doctor's note or any excuses for absences, email me, or call me about your absence. Classes missed for official UWG business, such as debate team or athletics) or jury duty will be excused (please provide documentation). Everyone is responsible for signing an attendance list circulated at the beginning of every class meeting. If you arrive late, it is your responsibility to request the attendance list at the end of class (do not interrupt class by asking for the list if you arrive late!). Failure to sign up on the attendance list may be counted as an absence for that day. Quizzes missed during your absence cannot be made up.

Participation: Active participation is the essence of a lively and productive course. I encourage you to cultivate an engaged reading and viewing style, especially keeping detailed notes while viewing the films. Classroom discussion will usually involve close readings and scene analyses, and I may ask you to support your comments with evidence from the text/film. I evaluate both the quality and quantity of your contributions, so less vocal students may excel through fewer, but thoughtful comments. I will help you prepare for your reading and classroom discussion by posting specific reading questions for each film on the website. I may restate these questions in class to guide discussion, and you may use them to cultivate active note-taking. We can discuss at any point during the semester how you are doing on your participation grade.

1-page response papers: For several films (see schedule), I will ask you to turn in a brief (minimum **one FULL** page, double-spaced) response paper, discussing one particular aspect in the assigned film, e.g. the portrayal of a character, the setting, the mood, the narrative development, or the film's adaptation of the historical/documentary background (based on the assigned readings). While these papers do not require a fully developed thesis and essay structure, they should nevertheless be analytical rather than merely narrating the plot. For each film, I will pre-circulate critical questions to inform your viewing and our discussion, and your papers may respond to one of these questions. Your response papers must **follow MLA format** (12-point font, double-spaced) and must be written in good academic prose. In grading these papers, I will evaluate attention to details, themes, and critical issues in the film, as well as the mechanics of writing. Response Papers are due, printed, at the beginning of the class period listed in the schedule.

3 (minimum) to 4-page Critical Analysis: This paper functions essentially the same as a short, analytical paper about a literary text you practiced in other classes. Pick a specific "literary" element in the film and analyze through "close reading" its role in the film overall. Just as any close analysis of literature, this paper must abide by standard essay format (introduction, body paragraphs, conclusion), state a clear, focused, and argumentative thesis, support the thesis with logical argumentation and textual evidence (from the film), and, overall, stress the significance of your argument/analysis for the larger understanding of the film and/or issues surrounding the film. The paper must use specific details from the film, perhaps even selecting one specific scene for analysis. **No secondary sources! (detailed description to follow).**

Critical Source Paper (minimum 5 full pages, double-spaced): Similar to the shorter Critical Analysis, this assignment asks you to analyze one film or a portion of a film closely. However, in this paper you also need to engage **at least two (2) critical or historical scholarly sources** (books or peer-reviewed essays) that directly analyze the film of your choice or provide historical background analysis. Thus, you must make your own argument about the film *while* considering the research you found. In order to generate a thesis/argument for this paper, you should ask/consider how and why the film adapts a particular aspect of the early American past; within this broad direction, you may focus on a variety of issues and questions, depending on your interest, e.g.:

- racial and ethnic politics
- gender politics
- colonial and national identity construction
- imperialism and colonialism
- genre and form
- film adaptation of literary material
- racial and ethnic politics
- gender politics
- colonial and national identity construction
- imperialism and colonialism
- genre and form
- film adaptation of literary material

Overall, you should consider what kind of view of the early American past the film presents and what cultural/political/sociological notions about America the film espouses. Important: while the argument may be political/sociological/cultural in nature, your *support/evidence* and *analysis* must be literary, i.e. using evidence from the film to support your argumentation. **(detailed description to follow!)**

GRADE BREAKDOWN:

| | |
|-------------------------|-----|
| Participation | 25% |
| Response Papers (total) | 25% |
| Critical Analysis | 20% |
| Critical Source Paper | 30% |

GRADING CRITERIA AND RUBRIC:

For all papers prepared for this course, the English Department grading rubric for 2000-level and above course applies: <http://www.westga.edu/~engdept/fr/Ruby.doc>. In addition, separate assignment descriptions will state additional grading criteria.

COURSE POLICIES:

- ☞ **Attendance and Deadlines:** It is your responsibility to note your attendance on the roster circulated at the beginning of each class meeting. In case of absence, you are responsible for keeping up with all assignments, readings, and in-class work. **I do not make lecture notes available to students who missed class** (please get in touch with a fellow student). I can only accept late work if you discussed the issue with me ahead of time. All exceptions and acceptance of excuses are completely at my discretion.

- ☞ **Tardiness:** A roll book will circulate at the BEGINNING of class. Everyone who is late will be noted as tardy. **Three (3) “tardies” will result in one (1) absence!**
- ☞ **Plagiarism:** There are different forms of plagiarism, from blatant theft of entire papers to negligence in acknowledging a source in your writing. However, you will be held responsible for any form of plagiarism—whether intentional or not. Consequences and responses to plagiarism are entirely at the discretion of the instructor. Please pay specific attention to the English Department’s site on plagiarism:
<http://www.westga.edu/%7Eengdept/Plagiarism/index.html>. I expect all out-of-class work to abide by MLA Format (See: *MLA Handbook for the Writers of Research Papers*) for proper documentation of sources (primary and secondary). “Recycled” papers, i.e. papers you wrote for other courses, may only be accepted if you apprise me of your previous work and present a cogent and significant plan for revision, expansion, or refocusing. Otherwise, submitting papers previously written for other courses may count as academic dishonesty.
- ☞ **CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE:** *NB: Before you read the following, keep in mind that I wouldn’t have to address these issues if they hadn’t caused problems in the past!* I expect everyone to be ready to work at the beginning of class. This means in particular having ALL reading materials assigned for that day on hand and ready to use, as well as any tools for note-taking. You MAY bring drinks and/or non-smelly or non-noisy food to class. Most importantly: Be respectful toward the opinions, ideas, and personal identity of all members of our class!

The following actions will result in an immediate dismissal from class and result in an absence for that day (and may result in the administrative withdrawal from the course):

- surfing the net, texting, or using email, Facebook, etc. on a personal device. **If you wish to use an electronic device for electronic books (see above for Required Texts), you must clear this with me at the beginning of the semester. You may only use those devices for that particular purpose.**
 - In particular, I am extremely allergic to students text-messaging during class. Please turn off any devices *before* class.
 - sleeping or even acting like you’re sleeping (e.g. putting your head on your desk)
 - **disruptive behavior**, such as interrupting other students or the instructor while they’re speaking, insulting or disparaging the opinions of other students, harassing other students or the instructor, inciting hate or prejudice, doing non-course related work, and especially the use of any electronic devices not used for course-related note-taking. **All rules stated under the UWG Student Conduct Code apply (<http://www.westga.edu/handbook/60.php>).**
- ☞ **UWG Email Policy:** University of West Georgia students are provided a MyUWG e-mail account. The University considers this account to be an official means of communication between the University and the student. The purpose of the official use of the student e-mail account is to provide an effective means of communicating important

university related information to UWG students in a timely manner. It is the student's responsibility to check his or her email.

☞ **Dr. Erben's E-Mail Etiquette:**

- All messages must include a subject line.
- All messages must include an address line (e.g. "Dear Dr. Erben" or "Dr. Erben").
- Use polite and appropriate language, as well as reasonably edited prose.
- No text-messaging language and abbreviations.
- Always sign your name.

In addition, please make sure that you check your email at least twice a day during this class—once in the morning and once in the evening after class. I want to make sure that I can communicate with you. Also, make an effort to check your email on an actual COMPUTER, and not just your phone! Very frequently now students miss important information because their phone did not display all of the message.

If I send you an attachment with comments on paper drafts, for example, you always have to check on a computer with Microsoft Word installed on it. Otherwise, you will not correctly see my comments.

☞ **Individual Help, Office Hours, and Writing Center:** The writing center provides individual tutorials for any writing-related problems, but no proofreading service. The center is located in TLC 1201. However, I am not only available during my designated office hours, but am happy to speak to you about assignments and any other questions by appointment (or right after class).

☞ **Americans with Disabilities Act:** Students with a documented disability may work with UWG Disability Services to receive essential services specific to their disability. All entitlements to accommodations are based on documentation and USG Board of Regents standards. If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability or chronic illness, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please notify your instructor in writing by the end of the second full week of class and include a copy of your Student Accommodations Report (SAR), which is available only from Disability Services. Students are entitled to accommodations if they deliver the SAR to the instructor no later than the end of the second full week of class.

Credit Hour Policy: The University of West Georgia grants one semester hour of credit for work equivalent to a minimum of one hour (50 minutes) of in-class or other direct faculty instruction AND two hours of student work outside of class per week for approximately fifteen weeks. For each course, the course syllabus will document the amount of in-class (or other direct faculty instruction) and out-of-class work required to earn the credit hour(s) assigned to the course. Out-of-class work will include all forms of credit-bearing activity, including but not limited to assignments, readings, observations, and musical practice. Where available, the university grants academic credit for students who verify via competency-based testing, that they have accomplished the learning outcomes associated with a course that would normally meet the requirements outlined above (e.g. AP credit, CLEP, and departmental exams).

☞ **University of West Georgia Honor Code:** At the University of West Georgia, we believe that academic and personal integrity are based upon honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Students at West Georgia assume responsibility for upholding the honor code. West Georgia students pledge to refrain from engaging in acts that do not maintain academic and personal integrity. These include, but are not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, aid of academic dishonesty, lying, bribery or threats, and stealing.

The University of West Georgia maintains and monitors a confidential Academic Dishonesty Tracking System. This database collects and reports patterns of repeated student violations across all the Colleges, the Ingram Library, and the School of Nursing. Additionally, you are responsible for safeguarding your computer account. Your account and network connection are for your individual use. A computer account is to be used only by the person to whom it has been issued. You are responsible for all actions originating through your account or network connection. You must not impersonate others or misrepresent or conceal your identity in electronic messages and actions.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

*All changes are at the discretion of the instructor. Important: All assignments, including readings and film viewings, are to be completed for the date listed in the schedule! All readings in addition to *Cabeza de Vaca* will be accessible through e-reserves or as paper handouts (see note in schedule below); in e-reserves simply look for the folder labeled with the respective dates for which the readings are assigned.*

| DATES | COURSE TOPICS AND ASSIGNED READINGS/VIEWINGS | ASSIGNMENTS DUE/DEADLINES |
|-------|---|---|
| M 5/5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Introduction to the Course and Assignments Theme: Paradise Found and Lost: The Romance and Horror of the Conquest ➤ Instructor lecture: “European Images of the New World” ➤ In-class viewing: <i>Cabeza de Vaca</i> ➤ Read (at home, for today!): <i>Cabeza de Vaca</i>, <i>Relación</i>, “Introduction” | |
| T 5/6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Read (at home): <i>Cabeza de Vaca</i>, <i>Relación</i>: (main text). ➤ In-class scene analysis and discussion: <i>Cabeza de Vaca</i> (film) and comparison to <i>Relación</i> | 1-page response paper (<i>Cabeza de Vaca</i>) due at beginning of class. |
| W 5/7 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Read (at home): Selections on English settlement of Virginia, Captain John Smith, Pocahontas (e-reserves) ➤ Pre-view (at home): <i>The New World</i> ➤ In-class scene analysis and discussion: <i>The New World</i> | 1-page response paper (<i>The New World</i>) due at beginning of class |

| | | |
|--------|---|--|
| R 5/8 | <p>Theme: The Last of the Mohicans: The Absence and Presence of Native Americans on the Screen</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In-class viewing: selections from <i>We Shall Remain</i> and <i>The Last of the Mohicans</i> (1936) ➤ Read (at home): excerpts from <i>The Last of the Mohicans</i> (James Fenimore Cooper) (e-reserves) | |
| F 5/9 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Pre-view (at home): <i>The Last of the Mohicans</i> (1992) ➤ In-class scene analysis and discussion: <i>The Last of the Mohicans</i> (1992) | 1-page response paper (<i>Last of the Mohicans</i>) |
| | | |
| M 5/12 | <p>Theme: Founders' Chic: The American Revolution, its Heroes, and its Discontents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Pre-view (at home): <i>The Patriot</i> ➤ Read (at home): primary and secondary selections on the American Revolution (e-reserves) ➤ In-class scene analysis and discussion: <i>The Patriot</i> | 1-page response paper (<i>The Patriot</i>) at beginning of class. |
| T 5/13 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In-class viewing: <i>Jefferson in Paris</i> | 3-4 page Critical Analysis at beginning of class (this paper maybe on any of the films viewed and discussed up to this point). |
| W 5/14 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Read (at home): primary and secondary selections on Thomas Jefferson, Maria Cosway, and Sally Hemings (e-reserves) ➤ In-class scene analysis and discussion: <i>Jefferson in Paris</i> | |
| R 5/15 | <p>Theme: “Remember the Ladies:” Early American Women and the Question of Gender Equality.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Read (at home): primary and secondary selections on Sor Juana Inez de la Cruz (e-reserves) ➤ In-class viewing: <i>Yo, La Peor De Todas (I, The Worst of All)</i> ➤ In-class scene analysis and discussion: <i>Yo, La Peor De Todas (I, The Worst of All)</i> | 1-page response paper (<i>Jefferson in Paris</i>) at beginning of class. |
| F 5/16 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Read (at home): primary and secondary selections on Abigail and John Adams; gender issues in revolutionary America. ➤ In-class viewing: scenes from <i>John Adams</i> ➤ In-class scene analysis and discussion: <i>John Adams</i> | 1-page response paper (<i>I, The Worst of All</i>) at the beginning of class. |
| | | |
| M 5/19 | <p>Final instruction day.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Research and writing workshop: Critical Source Paper (NB: bring all of your previous 1-page response papers AND all of | 1-page response paper (<i>John Adams</i>) at the beginning of class. |

| | | |
|---------------|--|---|
| | <p>your reading materials).</p> <p>➤ In-class viewing and discussion: <i>Avatar</i></p> | |
| T 5/20 | No class meeting; research time. | |
| W 5/21 | <p>Final Exam period: 1-3 pm</p> <p>Writing workshop</p> | <p>Bring 2 printed copies of your full draft (minimum 5 pages, plus Works Cited) for the Critical Source Paper.</p> |
| R 5/22 | | <p>Final version of Critical Source Paper due as Word attachment to perben@westga.edu by 5pm.</p> |