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
• Email <jklein4295@aol.com>
• Course website:

Telephone:
• 734-482-2793 (home number with voice mail)

Snail Mail:
• 111 Linden Court in Ypsilanti, MI 48197-4703
• always check “Signature Waived” box on Speedo snailmails

Office:
• Interdisciplinary Studies Program/ 5700 Cass Avenue/ Rm. 2414 AAB
• FAX: 313-577-8585
• Office Hours: 24/7 on E-mail, in person by appointment.

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
- 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.

GIS 3991 (Klein) - 3
**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):
   * l-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.

GIS 3991 (Klein) - 4
(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.
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
• 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

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

GIS 3991 (Klein) – 6

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

© Julie Thompson Klein, julietklein@comcast.net, 11/28/03