

Code: FLMD16-212.15  
BMI-FLMD-314E.09  
BMI-FLMD-312E.09

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Course title: **Changing faces of the Western: myth and genre**

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Course convenors: **Tibor Hirsch**

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Class time and place: Monday 12 30-14 00 -137

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Course type: Seminar

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**Course content:** The course will offer an overview on the Western both as a unique phenomenon within the American film history and as an independent genre with a rich typology and numerous ways of classification. On the other hand “Western phenomenon” is going to be analysed (in workshop frame) as the richest reservoir of cinematographic reflections on the American Myth. From this respect we will take the most benefit from the Western theory and Western typology of Will Wright (*Six-Guns and Society*, Berkeley: California Press, 1975.) as a guideline. Before dealing with the genre and the movies in this context we are going to touch some related topics, first of all the idea of the “Frontier” (using and discussing the different generic interpretations of the Turner Theory), and the “Myth”, referring to C.G. Jung, and Bronislaw Malinowski whose defining sentences are just good for a proper starting point: *“Myth...safeguards and enforces morality, it vouches for the efficiency of ritual and contains practical rules for the guidance of man... Myth is thus a vital ingredient of human civilization; it is not an idle tale, but a hard-worked active force...”*

**Classes and Topics:**

1. The elements of the “**America Myth**”
2. The Jungian **collective unconsciousness (genetic memories)** and the all-time pioneer/immigrant - represented in American literature and cinema
3. The Western and its interpretations as a genre
4. **Wright’s Western typology** and its connection to the Myth
5. The **Classical Pattern**, the values conveyed and its social-historical context.
6. Films to represent the **Classical Pattern** (analysis and workshop discussion)
7. The **Vengeance Pattern**, the values conveyed and its social-historical context.
8. Films to represent the **Vengeance Pattern** (analysis and workshop discussion)
9. The **Transitional Pattern**, the values conveyed and its social-historical context.
10. Films to represent the **Transitional Pattern** (analysis and workshop discussion)
11. The **Professional Pattern**, the values conveyed and its social-historical context.
12. Films to represent the **Professional Pattern** (analysis and workshop discussion)

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**Requirements:** First classes are rather lectures, later ones are rather seminars – and students are expected to analyse films in independent presentations, using the common social-historical approach and terminology we have previously agreed. Presentations and a final thesis (6 pages) are the base of the evaluation.

***Watching these 10 westerns in parallel with the course is a must.***

**For classes 4-7:**

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Curtiz: *Dodge City* (1939)  
Ford: *Stagecoach* (1939)  
Ford: *My Darling Clementine* (1946)  
Hawks: *Rio Bravo* (1959)

**For classes 8-9:**

Ray: *Johnny Guitar* (1954)  
Zinnemann: *High Noon* (1952)  
Wellman: *The Ox-Bow Incident* (1943)

**For classes 10-12:**

Sturges: *The Magnificent Seven* (1960)  
Leone: *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* - "*Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo*" (original title) (1966)  
Leone: *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968)

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**Indicative Reading:** Wright, Will. *Sixguns and Society: A Structural Study of the Western*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975.  
Bazin, André. "The Western, or the American Film Par Excellence" and "The Evolution of the Western." In *What is Cinema?*, translated by Hugh Gray, vol. 2, 140–157. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971.  
Slotkin, Richard. *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America*. New York: Atheneum, 1992.  
Smith, Henry Nash. *Virgin Land: The American West As Symbol and Myth*. 1970 ed. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950.  
Turner, Frederick Jackson. *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1893.  
Tocqueville: *Democracy in America*. University of Chicago Press, 2000.

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