

M.A. Seminar
Going West: An American Fantasy
Spring Term 2019, Thursday, 16:15-18:00
Prof. Elisabeth Bronfen

The notion of ‘going West’ is quintessential to the American cultural imaginary. Indeed, since the beginning of the Puritan settlements, the entire American project has been predicated on this fantasy. The geographical West is an unchartered territory, any frontier beyond the civilized community. The spiritual West entails the demand for moral self-perfectibility at the heart of American individualism, and, concomitant with this, a constant need for self-improvement and self-redefinition. The entanglement of the two is the subject of this seminar.

1. Feb 21 Introduction: Frederick Jackson Turner “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” (1893)
2. Feb 28 Catharine Sedgwick: *Hope Leslie, or Early Times in the Massachusetts* (1827)
3. Mar 7 James Fenimore Cooper: *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826)
4. Mar 14 Special Session: Visual Essay and discussion of group presentations
5. Mar 21 Willa Cather: *My Antonia* (1918)
6. Mar 28 Workshop with Prof. Heike Paul on Alexis de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America*
7. Apr 4 John Ford: *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence* (1962)
8. Apr 11 John Ford: *The Searchers* (1956)
9. May 2 Terrence Malick: *Days of Heaven* (1978)
10. May 9 John Edward Williams: *Butcher’s Crossing* (1960)
11. May 16 David Milch: *Deadwood* (2004-2006)
12. May 23 What I learned, *Deadwood* cont.

Requirements for Class:

All students must prepare a one-page preliminary discussion for each class session. These are to be posted on Olat (course forum) by Wednesday, 9 am of the respective week. This can entail a thesis, a series of questions, comments or associations. This will count towards your class participation. Writing this preliminary discussion is, thus, compulsory for each session. **Neglecting to hand in 10 thesis papers will result in a fail.**

Given that this seminar is part of the e-learning project on visual essays in the class room, all students are also required to take part in a group presentation using a multi-media format. Details will be discussed in the first class session.

Students taking the class for **9 KP** must also write an essay, to be handed in by **October 1, 2019**. As with any written assignment, it is wise to use the class discussions to test your ideas for your essay. Please discuss an outline of your essay either with Elisabeth Bronfen, or with one of her assistants, Morgane Ghilardi (morgane.ghilardi@es.uzh.ch) and Hannah Schoch (hannah.schoch@es.uzh.ch).