

**English 7/8464**  
**Contemporary American Literature**  
**21<sup>st</sup>-Century Uses of the Western**  
**Spring 2025**

**Course Description:**

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the genre of the Western became one of the most important vehicles through which America narrated its identity and values. Since its heyday in the 1940s and 50s, cultural critics have frequently heralded the end of the Western, as the ideology on which it was based came into question. But beginning with the “revisionist” texts of the 1960s and 70s, the Western as genre has proved surprisingly adaptable, capable of interrogating and addressing a wide range of issues and concerns. This class will focus on how elements of the Western genre have been repurposed in 21<sup>st</sup>-century fiction, film, and television, exploring how the Western has enabled contemporary artists to address ideas about nation, race, class, and gender. Our range of texts will include short film anthology (the Coens’ *Ballad of Buster Scruggs*), speculative fiction (Jonathan Lethem’s *Girl in Landscape* and Jonathan Nolan’s *Westworld*), horror (Stephen Graham Jones’ *The Only Good Indians*), mystery (Tana French’s *The Searchers*), thriller (Cormac McCarthy’s *No Country for Old Men*), satire (Percival Everett’s *God’s Country*), along with other experiments in the Western form.