Tuesday and Thursday, 2:00 PM – 3:15 PM

**Teacher:** Lorna Veraldi, Associate Professor  
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Office hours: Monday, Noon – 3 PM  
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and by appointment

The land was ours before we were the land's.

...  
Something we were withholding made us weak
Until we found out that it was ourselves
We were withholding from our land of living,
And forthwith found salvation in surrender. . . .

--Robert Frost
"The Gift Outright"

(with many thanks to Natalie Maricic for reminding me of it last semester)

**Course description, objectives and learning outcomes:** Welcome to IDH 2004, Inhabiting other Lives. The FIU catalog describes this as a class that “exposes students to issues of human commonality and diversity, and invites them to investigate and to understand the interconnectedness of various cultures, times and life experiences.”

This is a continuation of the seminar begun last semester, which began to look at the origins of the myths and realities of the American West, considering the sometimes violent clash of interests and cultures that marked the end of a cherished way of life for some and the beginning of a new way of life for others.

This semester, we will continue this exploration, taking up where we left off and moving to the present day. We will try to see through the eyes of diverse participants and observers and to consider how westward migration helped to shape not just the geography of our nation, but our vision of what it means to be an American.

The reading, listening, watching, thinking, writing, and speaking you do this semester will help you build skills, confidence and awareness. As we share works of fiction and nonfiction, we will look for the connections between these works—using history,
geography, ethnography and art to help us understand “others” and ourselves. We will use the works of others as inspiration for our own creative projects. By the end of the semester, I hope that many of you will have completed projects worthy of consideration for a variety of Honors College competitions and conferences.

**Required texts:** You will need the following texts this semester. All will be available for purchase in the FIU bookstore. All are available in libraries and used bookstores, too. I have listed the paperback editions I asked the bookstore to order (as well as the original publication dates). Any edition will do.


**Assignments and evaluation:** This is a seminar. Much of our work will be done in class. It is vital that you are here, on time, every time. Attendance will count for up to 28 points toward your semester grade. Each class session is worth one point toward the maximum 28 for the semester; you will receive no points for any class for which you are absent or late or leave before the end of class.

I expect to see evidence of consistent advance preparation and regular, active participation in class at a high level of competence. You may earn up to 10 points toward your semester grade based on the quality of your contributions to class discussions, including those sessions for which you serve as discussion leader.

You may earn up to 12 points toward your semester grade based on written journals responding to your reading, viewing and discussion.

You may earn up to 50 points toward your semester grade based on a project you will complete outside class and present to the class at the end of the semester.

As you read this syllabus at the beginning of the semester, you have an A. It is yours to keep, provided you keep up with your work. Here are the point totals needed at the end of the semester for each of the following letter grades:

- 96 – 100: A
- 92 – 95: A-
- 88 – 91: B+
- 84 – 87: B
- 80 – 83: B-
- 76 – 79: C+
- 72 – 75: C
- 68 – 71: C-
- 64 – 67: D+
- 60 – 63: D
- 56 -59: D-
- 55 or below: F
I expect you to come prepared, having completed the reading or other work assigned to you in advance. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to see me before the next class for any assignments or materials distributed in your absence.

Assignments:

Complete the reading listed for each date before class on that date. Additional assignments may be given in class during the semester.

1/11 West heads East: *Midnight Cowboy*

Last semester, we began our journey west with John Ford’s 1962 classic movie, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*. We considered the ways in which the myths and stereotypes of "easterner" and "westerner" depicted in the movie are reflected in American policy and politics. Less than a decade later, in 1969, John Schlesinger directed *Midnight Cowboy*, a movie that took a very different look at the myths and stereotypes of “easterner” and “westerner.” To the extent that the two movies reflect changing American values and views, they offer us an insight into the decade they framed and the ongoing process of defining what it means to be “American.”

1/13 *Midnight Cowboy*

1/18 *Midnight Cowboy*

1/20 *Midnight Cowboy*

1/25 *My Ántonia* (Book I, The Shimerdas, 3–93)

Willa Cather’s story of the life of a Bohemian immigrant girl who comes of age on the prairie speaks of those who came West after, as Dee Brown put it, “the culture and civilization of the American Indian was destroyed.” As we consider what becomes of Ántonia, we will ponder the way the land shapes people and people shape the land.


2/3 *My Ántonia*

Responsive journals due

2/8 *The Grapes of Wrath*

The dreams of many homesteaders turned to dust in the twenties and thirties. We will consider their connection to the land as we watch and discuss this screen adaptation of John Steinbeck’s 1939 novel.
2/10  *The Grapes of Wrath*
*Project proposals due*

2/15  *The Grapes of Wrath*

2/17  *The Grapes of Wrath*

2/22  *A River Runs through It*  (1 – 104)

Norman Maclean was yet another product of the Western migration. His 1976 story explores memories of his Montana roots and family.

2/24  *A River Runs through It*
*Responsive journals due*

3/1  *Breaking Clean*  (1-109)

By way of introduction to her memoir of personal transition from a way of life generations old to a new place and time, Judy Blunt quotes Joan Didion: “A place belongs forever to whoever claims it hardest, remembers it most obsessively, wrenches it from itself, shapes it, renders it, loves it so radically that he remakes it in his image.”

Reading this contemporary story of descendants of settlers, we will consider once again just who owns the transitory place we call the West.

3/3  *Breaking Clean*  (110 – 216)

3/8  *Breaking Clean*  (217 - 303)

3/10  *Breaking Clean*

3/15  *War Party*

This 1988 movie provides one possible answer to the question of who owns the West, while exploring the historical tensions lurking beneath the surface.

3/17  *War Party*

3/22 – 3/24  Spring Break

3/29  *Smoke Signals*

This 1998 screen adaptation of Sherman Alexie’s *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* brings us back to the cultural icons of the West and gives us one possible look at the American future. Shall we forgive our fathers for the past? How do we begin? And what does it mean to be an “American” at the beginning of a new century?
3/31 Smoke Signals

4/5 Presentation of projects

4/7 Presentation of projects

4/12 Presentation of projects

4/14 Presentation of projects

4/19 Looking forward

4/21 Looking forward

Responsive journals due

About your teacher: In 1970, I graduated from Eastern Montana College with a B.A. in English and a minor in theater. I taught English to ninth graders for a year, saved some money, and went off to write and to act. I did both for a couple of years, for very little pay. Then one of my smarter sisters pointed out that if I actually wanted to earn a living acting or writing in the second half of the 20th Century, I ought to learn more about television. So I headed off to graduate school to do that.

While I worked on my master's degree at the University of Utah, my interests turned to news and law. After I earned my M.A. in Mass Communication in 1976, I worked as a television news writer, reporter and producer. Then I went back to school again. I studied law part time at night at New York Law School while I worked full time—first for a law firm with an FCC practice and then for a talk radio station. After I earned my J.D. in 1981 and was admitted to the New York bar in 1982, I became Vice President and General Counsel of a media corporation. In 1985, I started my own law practice in New York City. In 1988, I moved to Florida and joined the FIU faculty.

Since I came to FIU, I have continued a limited law practice. I am a member of the Federal Communications Bar Association and currently work on First Amendment issues as a member of the Legal Panel of the Greater Miami ACLU. I teach courses about law and ethics and television in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication. I previously taught at the University of Utah and at Hofstra University School of Law.

I hope that you will find this class both intellectually challenging and useful. Your future achievements after you complete your studies in the Honors College will be a source of pride and satisfaction to me long after you have graduated. If this class is to meet your expectations, it is important that you understand mine. Here is what I expect from you.

Veraldi's Rules
1. **Spelling, etc.:** Spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, word choice, organization—the elements that make speech and writing clear, accurate and effective—always count.

2. **Office hours:** I am happy to meet with you to discuss this class or your career—or just to talk. You are welcome to call or stop in whenever I am in my office, whether or not I have scheduled office hours at that time.

   If I were in my office all day, you could drop in whenever you happen to have a free moment. Unfortunately, the university requires me to be many other places. So please try to come by during my scheduled office hours. If my scheduled office hours aren't convenient for you, let me know and we will try to work out a mutually convenient time.

   If you are making a special trip to campus to meet with me, please make an appointment in advance, even if you are coming during my scheduled office hours. I won't be able to meet with you unexpectedly if I am busy with another student. And be sure to let me know if you need to cancel a scheduled appointment.

   You are always welcome to send an e-mail message or leave a voice mail message. I will try to respond within 24 hours.

3. **Late papers:** I will accept a late paper or reschedule a class presentation only if you supply written evidence of an emergency beyond your control that prevented you from making a presentation or handing in a paper on time (for instance, a doctor's note showing that you were ill on the day the paper was due) or if FIU policy otherwise entitles you to make up work (for instance, if you are traveling with a university athletic team the day a presentation is due).

   Emergencies beyond your control do not include conflicts with your job. I will not accept late papers to accommodate travel to conferences, real estate closings, unexpected meetings with important customers, covering breaking news stories, etc. I expect that you have discussed the schedule for this class in advance with your employer and that he or she has agreed that you may arrange your work schedule to give this class priority during scheduled class time. Emergencies do not include social events or family gatherings, even important ones like weddings and anniversaries.

   If after the drop date an emergency arises that will prevent you from regularly attending class or doing your best work, talk with me about an incomplete as soon as possible. If you have special needs for accommodation of a disability or a religious observance, please discuss appropriate accommodations with me in advance.

4. **Attendance, conduct:** Don't take this class if you know in advance you won't be able to attend regularly or to be on time. Class starts promptly at 2:00 and does not end until 3:15. Do not disrupt the class by arriving late or leaving early. Please be realistic about other demands on your time and don't expect the rest of us to work around you.
Don't bring food or drinks to class. Set your beeper to silent page and turn off your phone before class starts. Save conversations for after class. If at any time during the semester I feel that your behavior is disruptive to the class, I reserve the right to drop you from the class (in which case you will receive a "DF" if the deadline to drop has already passed).

5. **Retaining course materials:** Save this course outline, any other materials I distribute in class and all work I return to you until you have received your semester grade. If you have a question about your grade on an assignment or your semester grade, let me know immediately.

6. **Academic misconduct:** The Honors College Plagiarism Policy is attached to this course outline. Please read it carefully. In addition, the University publishes in its student handbook a section on "Student Rights and Responsibilities." Please read it. University policy requires that academic misconduct be reported to the Office of Academic Affairs. Academic misconduct (including cheating on exams, plagiarizing or other misrepresentations about your work) can result in severe penalties, including a failing grade for the assignment or test in question, a failing grade in the class, being dropped from the class or being expelled from the university. Whether you steal someone else's work or pay good money for it, representing someone else's efforts as your own is unacceptable.

7. **Time required for class:** I know that you are busy with other classes, jobs, family and friends. So are all your classmates. Balancing your responsibilities isn't easy.

A prolific writer whose name I have forgotten was asked how he had managed to write so many books. He replied that every day there are "16 hours until midnight." Like him, each of us can accomplish a lot in 16 hours. But none of us can do (or have) it all. No one knows better than you how much time you need for your other responsibilities. But I can tell you how much time you need for this class.

As a general rule, you should expect to work about two hours outside class for every hour you spend in class. For an average student in a 3-credit course like this, that means about 6 hours outside class in addition to almost three hours in class every week—about a workday a week. (A course load of 12-15 credits is expected to be the equivalent of a fulltime job.)

The required reading is the minimum you are expected to do to pass this class. If you have time left over after finishing the required reading, use it for the additional work that will help you excel.

I give assignments in advance so you can complete them on a flexible schedule. But if you don't have the equivalent of a workday each week to devote to this class this semester, please take this class when you can make time for it.
As I see it, my job as a teacher is not to make everything easy—even if I could. Most things worth thinking about are not simple. Many of the questions we will explore have no simple solution, no single right answer. I will do my best to help you find the information you need to make judgments about complex problems. In return you must commit yourself to your work.

I cannot give you all the answers. But I hope you will leave this class asking better questions. I hope the work we do in this class will help you to learn to listen better, to read more critically, to write more clearly, to speak more confidently. I hope you will become both more skeptical and more tolerant—even though those two qualities may at first seem mutually exclusive. I hope you will become more critical of yourself even as you become more confident—though those qualities, too, may seem at odds. I hope this class will help you to leave FIU with both a credential and an education.