



English 258 Popular American Culture, Section 002
Spring Semester, 2015 • MWF: 2:30-3:20
317 Clark Hall • Downtown Campus

Instructor: Ms. Amanda Bailey

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Course Description:

West Virginia. The Mountain State. Almost Heaven. Wild and Wonderful. Open for Business. The Hillbilly Capital of the World. One of the last strongholds of family values and tightknit communities. A land plagued by drug and alcohol abuse. Big 12 Football. Redneck parties and off-roading. A land of ghosts. Dying economies. Dying towns. Fracking. Chemical spills. Desperation. Despair. Good old-fashioned values. Western Virginia? No, *West* Virginia. It's its own state, actually.

When you tell a non-West Virginian that you're from West Virginia or going to school in West Virginia, what do they say? How does the rest of the country (and arguably, the rest of the world) view this state?

This course seeks to explore the reputation of West Virginia and West Virginians as represented in popular American media and culture. We'll look at various genres including TV shows, documentaries, film, music, literature, and folklore to investigate the following topics:

- WV stereotypes and tropes as settings/characters in popular media
- WV as exotic, mysterious, dangerous, and *Other*
- WV as a prime location for horror film and ghost stories
- WV in the recent news: what stories get told? (i.e. how do media authorities want the rest of the nation to perceive WV—what stories pay the bills? what garners public interest?)
- WV as the new whipping boy for Appalachian stereotypes as a whole (a new habit?)

Required Texts:

- Giardina, Denise. *Storming Heaven*. New York: Ivy Books, 1987. (ISBN: 978-0-8041-0297-1)
- Grubb, Davis. *The Night of the Hunter*. New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1953. (ISBN: 978-0753111451)
- LeRoy, JT. *Sarah*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2000. (ISBN: 1-58234-146-X)
- Pollock, Donald Ray. *The Devil All the Time*. New York: Anchor Books, 2011. (ISBN: 978-0-307-74486-9)

Required Visual Media:
(available for streaming at reserves.lib.wvu.edu)

Films:

- *Matewan*. Dir. John Sayles. 1987.
- *October Sky*. Dir. Joe Johnston. 1999.
- *The Mothman Prophecies*. Dir. Mark Pellington. 2002.
- *The Night of the Hunter*. Dir. Charles Laughton. 1955.
- *Tucker and Dale vs. Evil*. Dir. Eli Craig. 2011.
- *We Are Marshall*. Dir. Joseph McGinty Nichol. 2006.
- *Wrong Turn*. Dir. Rob Schmidt. 2003.

TV:

- *Buckwild*. MTV. 2013.
- *Blue Mountain State*. Dir. Eamon Carty. Spike. 2010.
- *Hatfields and McCoys*. Dir. Kevin Reynolds. 2012.
- *Jamie Oliver's Food Revolution*. Season 1. BBC America. 2012.
- *NCIS*. Season 2. Episode: "Vanished." 2004.

Documentaries:

- *Hollow: An Interactive Documentary*. Dir. Elaine Mcmillion. 2013. (Hollowdocumentary.com)
- *Oxyana*. Dir. Sean Dunne. 2013. (available at FFilms.org)
- *The Last Mountain*. Dir. Bill Haney. 2011.
- *The Wild and Wonderful Whites of WV*. Dir. Julien Nitzberg. 2009.

Note:

Secondary sources (mostly articles) will be posted on course website along with other important course documents and posting opportunities:

wvpopculture.pbworks.com

(the instructor will invite you to join our website one she receives your first day index card info)

See also:

Appalachian Collection Bibliography and Web Resources for primary and secondary sources (<https://lib.wvu.edu/collections/appalachian/>)

Assignments:

Project #1: Folklore Analysis: choice between option A and option B:

- *Option A:* choose a piece of WV folklore from our library's Appalachian Collection to first summarize and then analyze. In your analysis consider the speaker of the folklore and his/her connection to the larger community.

- *Option B:* interview a native West Virginian requesting stories he/she has heard or told that relate to the local community. Choose one story to focus on for your analysis.

Project #2: WV Pop Culture Reference: Search for a mainstream popular cultural reference to WV or West Virginians to evaluate and analyze. Describe this reference in detail, giving appropriate background info such as air dates, writer, source background, etc. Your analysis of this reference should carefully consider what you believe to be the intended audience response, the purpose of the WV reference in context of the overall aim of source (ex. comedy, horror, shock, exoticism), and what (if any) stock stereotypes this reference draws from.

Project #3: Primary Source Analysis: For your final project choose one of the longer sources we've covered in this course (a book, film, TV show, or documentary) to focus on in an in-depth analysis.

Viewing/Reading Notes: You are responsible for coming to each class ready to participate in discussions and able to ask and answer questions concerning the assigned viewing/reading for that day. To help you do that, you will write up and turn in viewing/reading notes throughout the semester which will be graded and returned to you the following class. In your notes, try to do the following:

- keep track of the **basics** (i.e. what's going on, who the main characters are, etc.)
- note any **questions** that occur to you during or following your encounter; these can vary greatly and can deal with: inconsistencies in the presentation, confusing information or jumbled presentation, foreign terms/expressions used, plot holes, inexplicable or surprising actions/motivations on the part of the characters, etc.
- note major **topics** that the text/video addresses *and* its treatment of those topics (particularly those dealing with our course's main questions and concerns)
- note your personal **reactions** to what you're reading/seeing → these are extremely valuable and important to get down as close to the encounter as possible before your response is influenced by other data
- finally, note **at least 3** topics/questions that you'd especially like us to talk about in class concerning this text/video; we probably won't be able to get to all of these, but you will be expected to contribute in a meaningful way to our encounters with the material
- ****keep track of timestamps of important scenes you wish to discuss!****

Presentations: Following your submission of Projects #1, 2, and 3, class time will be set aside for all students to present their findings in a brief presentation. This presentation should provide a comprehensive overview of your project's goals and methods as well as your findings and conclusions. A visual aid of some kind is required. Popular visual aids include power-point presentations, videos, projected images, handouts, etc. (Note: If public-speaking isn't your thing and/or you enjoy filming, feel free to film your presentation instead to show to the class.)

Grade Breakdown and Scale:

Project 1:	20%
Presentation 1:	5%
Project 2:	20%
Presentation 2:	5%
Project 3:	30%
Presentation 3:	5%
Viewing/Reading Notes:	15%

A+ 100-98	B+ 89-88	C+ 79-78	D+ 69-68	F 59-0
A 97-92	B 87-82	C 77-72	D 67-62	
A- 91-90	B- 81-80	C- 71-70	D- 61-60	

Attendance:

You are permitted to miss up to **five** non-exam days without consequence. Each additional absence will affect your participation grade by as much as a full letter grade. Use your absences wisely! Plan ahead and when possible inform the instructor of impending absences to stay caught up. (Make arrangements to copy any missed notes from your classmates—not your instructor)

Any student who misses ten or more class days will fail the course.

Also, be aware that a repeated pattern of lateness can count as an absence(s).

Plagiarism Statement:

Plagiarism is the (mis)representation of someone else's work as your own. It may be direct (e.g., not documenting a quoted source) or indirect (paraphrasing ideas, thoughts, etc. without due credit). In either case, neglecting to acknowledge sources for outside material is a serious offence and may result in failure for the assignment and possibly the course. Please see me if you are not sure about how to use or acknowledge certain materials.

Academic Integrity Statement:

The integrity of the classes offered by any academic institution solidifies the foundation of its mission and cannot be sacrificed to expediency, ignorance, or blatant fraud. Therefore, I will enforce rigorous standards of academic integrity in all aspects and assignments of this course. For the detailed policy of West Virginia University regarding the definitions of acts considered to fall under academic dishonesty and possible ensuing sanctions, please see the Student Conduct Code at <http://studentlife.wvu.edu/studentconductcode.html>. Should you have any questions about possibly improper research citations or references, or any other activity that may be interpreted as an attempt at academic dishonesty, please see me before the assignment is due to discuss the matter.

Social Justice Statement:

West Virginia University is committed to social justice. I concur with that commitment and expect to maintain a positive learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. Our University does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veterans' status, religion, sexual orientation, color or national origin. Any suggestions as to how to further such a positive and open environment in this class will be appreciated and given serious consideration.

If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Accessibility Services (304-293-6700) located in Suite 250 at 1085 VanVoorhis Rd (beside Applebee's and across from the Mountaineer Station transportation center) or visit <http://accessibilityservices.wvu.edu/>.

English Major Program Goals:

Upon completing a B.A. in English, a student should be able to:

1. Interpret texts within diverse literary, cultural, and historical contexts.
2. Demonstrate a general knowledge of the social and structural aspects of the English language.
3. Demonstrate a range of contextually effective writing strategies.

Four aspects of Goal 1 are especially important. A student should be able to:

- Identify genre conventions and analyze their effects
- Identify and analyze effects of complexity or ambiguity
- Locate texts in social, economic, political, and literary history
- Connect a text to other literary or cultural texts

Course Schedule:

Note: this schedule is subject to slight changes; however, the instructor will make every effort to inform students about changes as soon as possible.

DATE	CLASS DESCRIPTION
Week 1: Mon Jan 12	Introduction to course and instructor; Intro to WV/Appalachian Stereotypes discussion HW: draw (or use the internet to help you “draw”) your idea of the stereotypical West Virginian/Mountaineer/Hillbilly; include labels—bring in to class and/or post on course website main wiki (main page)
Wed Jan 14	Con't discussion of WV/Appalachian stereotypes Intro to WV Folklore HW: recall/search for at least 2 jokes about Appalachia/hillbillies—bring in to class and/or post on course website main wiki
Fri Jan 16	WV Folklore excerpts Intro to Project #1 HW: read “From Hillbilly to Frontiersman: The Changing Nature of the WVU Mountaineer”
Week 2: Mon Jan 19	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day/ NO CLASSES

Wed Jan 21	Discussion of WV National Reputation (Part 1) HW: watch <i>Oxyana</i> documentary
Fri Jan 23	Tour Appalachian Collection at Downtown Library (meet in library lobby) HW: watch <i>Hollow: An Interactive Documentary</i>
Week 3: Mon Jan 26	Compare and contrast <i>Oxyana</i> and <i>Hollow</i> documentaries HW: watch <i>Jamie Oliver's Food Revolution</i> episodes 1 & 2
Wed Jan 28	HW: read <i>Sarah</i> (pgs 1-133)
Fri Jan 30	Reading Day (instructor out of town)
Week 4: Mon Feb 2	Reading Day (instructor out of town)
Wed Feb 4	Discuss <i>Sarah</i> HW: read <i>Sarah</i> (pgs. 133-166)
Fri Feb 6	Finish <i>Sarah</i> HW: watch <i>Buckwild</i> episodes 1 & 2
Week 5: Mon Feb 9	Discuss <i>Buckwild</i> show and fallout HW: watch <i>Blue Mountain State</i> episodes 1 & 2
Wed Feb 11	"Is <i>Blue Mountain State</i> supposed to portray WVU?"
Fri Feb 13	No Class: optional conferences with instructor (sign up for time beforehand)
Week 6: Mon Feb 16	Project #1 Due; Project #1 Presentations
Wed Feb 18	Project #1 Presentations HW: read <i>The Night of the Hunter</i> (Book One: The Hanging Man)
Fri Feb 20	Intro to Project #2 Intro to WV as Site for Horror/Freak Show HW: read <i>The Night of the Hunter</i> (Book Two: The Hunter)
Week 7: Mon Feb 23	HW: read <i>The Night of the Hunter</i> (Book Three: The River)
Wed Feb 25	HW: read <i>The Night of the Hunter</i> (Book Four: They Abide)
Fri Feb 27	HW: watch <i>The Night of the Hunter</i>
Week 8: Mon Mar 2	Final Discussion of <i>The Night of the Hunter</i> book and film adaptation

	HW: explore Appalachian English website & listen to a few MP3 files of native speakers (under “Transcripts” tab): http://artsandsciences.sc.edu/engl/dictionary/
Wed Mar 4	Appalachian Dialect Presentation with Dr. Kirk Hazen HW: watch <i>The Mothman Prophecies</i>
Fri Mar 6	HW: watch <i>Wrong Turn</i>
Week 9:	
Mon Mar 9	HW: watch <i>Tucker and Dale vs. Evil</i>
Wed Mar 11	HW: watch <i>NCIS</i> episode “Vanished”
Fri Mar 13	HW: watch <i>The Wild and Wonderful Whites of WV</i>
Week 10:	
Mon Mar 16	Conclude Horror and the Freak Show in WV Discussion
Wed Mar 18	Project #2 Due; Project #2 Presentations
Fri Mar 20 (last day to drop a class)	Project #2 Presentations HW: over the break read <i>Storming Heaven</i> Parts 1 & 2
Week 11:	
Mon Mar 23	Spring Break/ NO CLASS
Wed Mar 25	Spring Break/ NO CLASS
Fri Mar 27	Spring Break/ NO CLASS
Week 12:	
Mon Mar 30	Intro to WV: Coalmining, Coalminers, and the Land Discuss <i>Storming Heaven</i> HW: read <i>Storming Heaven</i> Part 3, Chpts 10-14
Wed Apr 1	HW: finish <i>Storming Heaven</i>
Fri Apr 3	Good Friday/ NO CLASS
Week 13:	
Mon Apr 6	Wrap-up discussion of <i>Storming Heaven</i> HW: watch <i>Matewan</i>
Wed Apr 8	HW: watch <i>October Sky</i>
Fri Apr 10	HW: watch <i>The Last Mountain</i>
Week 14:	
Mon Apr 13	Intro to: WV National Reputation (Part 2) HW: read <i>The Devil All the Time</i> Prologue & Part 1, Chpts 1-3
Wed Apr 15	HW: read <i>The Devil All the Time</i> Part 1, Chpts 4-9
Fri Apr 17	HW: read <i>The Devil All the Time</i> Part 2 & 3

Week 15:	
Mon Apr 20	HW: read <i>The Devil All the Time</i> Part 4
Wed Apr 22	HW: read <i>The Devil All the Time</i> Part 5
Fri Apr 24	HW: read <i>The Devil All the Time</i> Part 6 & 7
Week 16:	
Mon Apr 27	HW: watch <i>Hatfields and McCoys</i>
Wed Apr 29	Discuss Appalachian feudal society
Fri May 1	Course wrap-up and SEIs
FINALS WEEK: May 4-9	Final Exam Slot: Monday, May 4th: 11-1 p.m. Project #3 Due; #3 Presentations