CALL FOR PAPERS

CFP: Manifest Destiny and the Godless Frontier

An area of multiple panels for the 2016 Film & History Conference:
Gods and Heretics: Figures of Power and Subversion in Film and Television
October 26-October 30, 2016
The Milwaukee Hilton
Milwaukee, WI (USA)

DEADLINE for abstracts: June 1, 2016

AREA: Manifest Destiny and the Godless Frontier

Are there really no Sundays west of St. Louis and is there no god west of Fort Smith? Representing a set of assumptions about the American Character, progress, law, order, and the conquest of nature, conflicts concerning the ideal and themes of redemption figure prominently in Westerns. On the Western’s frontier, figures of power and subversion abound—lawmen and outlaws, gamblers and gunmen, cavalry wives and soiled doves, the Indian chiefs and buffalo scouts. Frequently presented as the Divine calling, Manifest Destiny promises material and spiritual rewards to the pilgrims travelling West—but the rugged individualists who succeed are often social, political, or even spiritual heretics. How do such figures of power and subversion—materially or metaphorically—shape the creation, delivery and reception of the American West in film? How are these figures glamorized or critiqued in the Wild West? What structural or thematic roles in Westerns involve figures of power and/or subversion? As heretics mediated through film, how do these figures create or contest our perceptions of the West and the American Character? When is the American ideal disguised in Western narrative, and when is it advertised? Why does this perfection fail and when does it succeed on the frontier—as an image, a means, or a principle—and for whom? Finally, what do we make of Western idols like Roy Rogers and John Wayne and Western mash-ups that attempt to subvert the ideals of the genre itself?

This area, comprising multiple panels, welcomes papers on the subject of gods and heretics / figures of power and subversion in Western film. Possible topics include, but are certainly not limited to, the following:

- Heretics for Hire (Wyatt Earp, Bat Masterson, For A Few Dollars More, High Plains Drifter, Sukiyaki Western Django, The Train Robbers, Have Gun Will Travel, The Wild Bunch, Butch Cassidy and The Sundance Kid)

- Redemption on the Range (Pursued, 3 Godfathers, The Quick and the Dead, Rifleman, The Proposition, El Topo, Redemption, Redemption: A Mile from Hell, Redemption: For Robbing the Dead)
• Power on the Plains (*Red River, High Noon, Ride The High Country, Custer of the West, The Sundowners, Rawhide, Open Range, Outlaws and Angels*)

• Religion and Heretics in the West (*Wagon Master, The Duchess and the Dirtwater Fox, McCabe and Mrs. Miller, Western Religion, Buck and The Preacher, Two Mules for Sister Sarah, Pale Rider, God’s Gun, The Gatling Gun, The Quick and the Dead, Deadman*)

• Native American Heresies (*Geronimo, Cheyenne Autumn, Little Big Man, Dances With Wolves*)

• Genre Subversion (*Bone Tomahawk, Ravenous, The Burrowers, Eyes of Fire, The Living Coffin*)

• The Gods of the Range: Western Stars and Idols (John Wayne, Gary Cooper, Gene Autry, Tom Mix, Audie Murphy, James Arness, Richard Boone, Roy Rogers, Randolph Scott, Harry Carey)

Proposals for complete panels (three related presentations) are also welcome, but they must include an abstract and contact information, including an e-mail address, for each presenter. For updates and registration information about the upcoming meeting, see the Film & History website ([www.filmandhistory.org](http://www.filmandhistory.org)).

Please e-mail your 200-word proposal by June 1, 2016, to the area chair:

Sue Matheson  
University College of the North  
Email: smatheson@ucn.ca