Swashbucklers, Brutes, and Muscular Christians
The Remasculinization of American Literature and Culture (1875-1925)

Course description:
Recent cultural criticism has shown that the modern «tough guy» hero and the Western code of cold-blooded masculinity are, in fact, modern cultural constructions, shaped by the discourse of anti-genteel and anti-feminist writing around the turn of the 20th century. This course will examine under which historical and cultural circumstances the modern «code» of masculinity emerged in the United States. We will start by taking a look at the ideological roots of this reorientation in the 1870s to 1880s, then move on to the aesthetics of masculinist writing in the naturalist period from the 1890s to the 1900s, and finally explore the overall effects on American literature and culture, especially on the hard-boiled genre in the 1910s to 1920s. While the seminar focuses on negotiations of the masculinist backlash in literature (Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, Jack London, Owen Wister, Ernest Hemingway), we will also delve into other discourses, such as painting (Thomas Anshutz, Thomas Eakins), non-fictional writing (Frank Norris, Theodore Roosevelt), and photography (Eadweard Muybridge). The main goal of the course is to gain deeper insights into the function and aesthetics of the masculine paradigm shift at the fin de siècle and understand the inherent dynamic and performativity of modern gender codes. The course will be held in English.

Credit requirements: Regular attendance and thoughtful participation in class (30%), an oral presentation as part of an expert group (30%), and a final paper (40%).

Required reading: A course reader will be available at the start of the semester.

Seminar papers: The seminar paper will be 17 to 20 pages long. It will make an original argument about one or more of the texts we’ve been reading, present this argument coherently and logically, and use both close readings of the text(s) and secondary sources to support it. Every paper should include a «works cited» list of at least six secondary sources. The paper is due March 31, 2006.

! Note: There is no extension of this deadline. Late essays will not be accepted!

1st session: Tue November 01, 2005 11:30-13:00 2/NK004
2nd session: Fri December 16, 2005 10:30-17:00 2/N106
3rd session: Sat December 17, 2005 10:30-17:00 2/B102
4th session: Fri February 03, 2006 10:30-17:00 2/N106
5th session: Sat February 04, 2006 10:30-17:00 2/B102
SYLLABUS

01. Nov. 2005  Introduction: Manliness at the Fin de siècle


10:30-12:00  Masculinity in Crisis: The Historical and Cultural Background


12:00-12:15  Short Break

12:15-13:00  The ‘Feminization’ of American Culture


Frank Norris, “Why Woman Should Write the Best Novels” (1901), pp. 231-38.


13:00-14:00  Lunch Break

14:00-15:30  The Paradigm Shift: The ‘Masculine Principle’ in American Fiction


15:30-15:45  Short Break

15:45-17:00  Victorian Manhood and the Visual Arts


Masculinity and Whiteness: Remaking Manhood Through Race

10:30-12:00 Gender, Race, and Civilization

12:00-12:15 Short Break

12:15-13:00 The Survival of the Fittest: The Lure of Darwin and Spencer

13:00-14:00 Lunch Break

03. Feb. 2006 The Ideology of the ‘Strenuous Life’

10:30-12:00 “Let’s get physical”: Living the Strenuous Life
Additional texts: Harvey Green, *Fit for America: Health, Fitness, Sport, and American Society* (Chapter “Living the Strenuous Life”), pp. 219-58.
Theodore Roosevelt, “Manhood and Statehood” (1901), 245-259.

12:00-12:15 Short Break

12:15-13:00 Old and New Frontiers: Challenges to American Manhood
Main text: Frank Norris, “The Frontier Gone At Last” (1902), pp. 69-81.
13:00-14:00 Lunch Break

14:00-15:30 Sentimentalism vs. Hardboiled Literature
Additional text: Mark Seltzer, *Bodies and Machines* (Chapter “The Love-Master”) (1992), pp. 149-172 (text can be found in the slot for the Darwin/Spencer session above).

15:30-15:45 Short Break

15:45-17:00 Realism, Romanticism, Naturalism

04. Feb. 2006 Going Primitive: Men and Beasts

10:30-12:00 The Nature Revival: The American Landscape as a New Frontier
Main text: Owen Wister, *The Virginian: A Horseman of the Plains* (1901).

12:00-12:15 Short Break

12:15-13:00 Edgar Rice Burroughs and the Male Savage Hero

13:00-14:00 Lunch Break

14:00-15:15 TARZAN OF THE APES (1918), Film Screening

16:00-16:15 Short Break

16:15-17:00 Back to Nature: American Literature and the Search for the Primitive