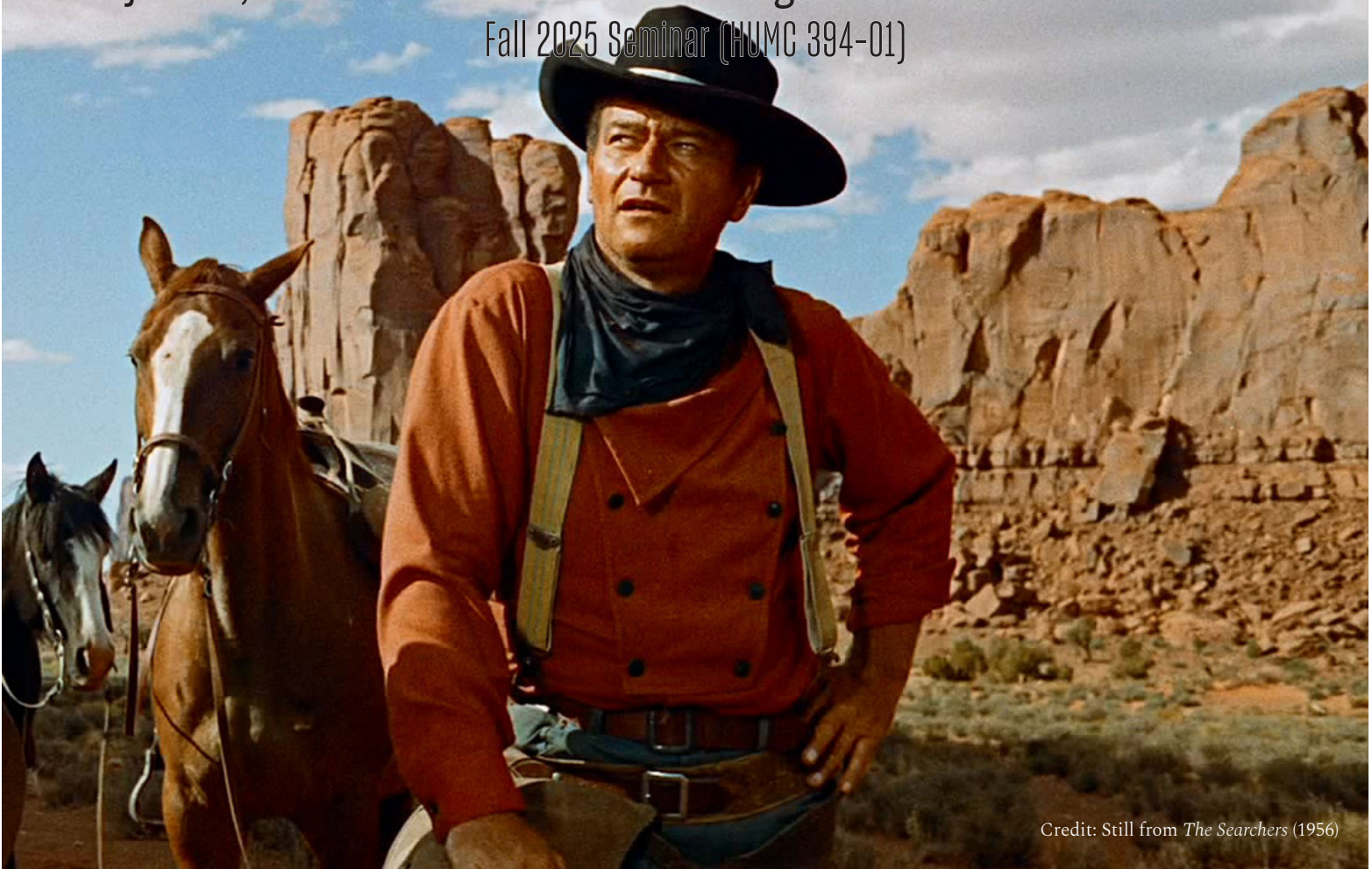


# Cowboy As Superhero?

Hollywood, The “Western” and the Making of Modern America 1900–1980

Fall 2025 Seminar (HUMC 394-01)



Credit: Still from *The Searchers* (1956)

## Fall 2025 Seminar: HUMC 394-01

Dates: Tuesdays at 2-3:50 p.m.  
September 16 through October 28

Instructor: Michael J. Gonzalez, PhD  
Department of History  
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Details: One (1) unit of credit  
Pass/fail only  
No prerequisites required.  
Open to all upper division students.

For at least a century, many thinkers, writers, politicians, moviegoers, and Presidents like Donald Trump, have used the grammar of cinema to “become” the heroes they see on the silver screen. Indeed, more than any other film genre, movies about the American West—the ‘Western’—provided the characters which often shaped the nation’s self-image as a force for good. At heart, the Western often revolves around the story of the manly hero, as cowboy or gunslinger, who rescues a woman from danger. By the same token, the template of the Western, when inverted, transformed these heroic traits into their opposite during the 1960s and 1970s after Americans began to question the nation’s purpose. Thus, this class will show how beginning in 1900 and up through the 1980s, Hollywood created the images and archetypes that have long resonated with Americans, from President Trump—who was born in 1946 and comes from Queens—to the person in the street.