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## USD History Professor Comments on Western Movies

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# NEWS RELEASE



## University of San Diego

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### IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(Note to Editors: This speech is being made in Tucson, Ariz., Thurs., Oct. 17)

### USD HISTORY PROFESSOR COMMENTS ON WESTERN MOVIES

SAN DIEGO, Calif. --Western movies have created misconceptions about Western history that are almost impossible to overcome, Dr. Ray Brandes, University of San Diego associate professor of history, said today (Thur.) at a historical association meeting in Tucson, Arizona.

"The unfortunate part about the influence of movies and television is that millions of people are reached in minutes, whereas it takes several generations of people reading accurate Western history to correct these misconceptions," said Dr. Brandes.

Dr. Brandes presented a paper on "The Impact of the Western Motion Picture on the Writing of History" to the annual meeting of the Western Historical Association.

"There is no question that the Western motion picture is most universally appealing to people on a world-wide basis," he said. "This mass exposure has emphasized a way of life that otherwise might have been obscured, but it has also magnified inaccuracies.

"For instance, much of the violence shown on the screen is artificial. It is a type of violence that has never really existed to any degree."

(more)

Dr. Brandes also condemned the technique of making outlaws appear as misunderstood heroes.

"The nature of the movie industry is the cause for much of this inaccuracy," he said. "They are forced to produce films hurriedly and to make what they think the public wants.

"The solution to this problem as I see it is that the movie industry should plan their productions more carefully."

Dr. Brandes named examples of movie and television films he considered historically accurate.

"'Across the Wide Missouri' produced by MGM was one of the great westerns," he said. "It was very realistic and accurate. Also excellent was an outstanding Walt Disney television series on the life of Elfego Baca, a law enforcement officer and legislator of New Mexico."

He said that the weekly television program "Discovery", produced by Jules Powers Productions of New York City has shown some outstanding documentary films on the West.

"Most important, I feel that history is exciting as it really happened," he said. "It ought to be transmittable as it really is."

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