

CLEMENTS CENTER FOR
SOUTHWEST STUDIES
SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY

You are invited to the Brown Bag Lecture Series

Wednesday, February 16, 2011
12 noon to 1 pm
Texana Room, DeGolyer Library
6404 Hyer (formerly Hilltop) Lane & McFarlin Blvd.

**Bull Chic: *Urban Cowboy*,
Saturday Night Fever, and Seventies
Discourses of Region, Class and Gender**

Jason Mellard

Summerlee Fellow for the Study of Texas History

The films *Saturday Night Fever* and *Urban Cowboy* trace near-identical narratives in which the protagonist escapes the periphery (the outer boroughs, the country) by moving closer to the City (Manhattan, Houston) through night-time leisure spaces defined by dance (the disco, the honky-tonk). Key differences mark both the origins and popular reception of these formulaic similarities, however, and as John Travolta dances between Rust and Sun Belt, the films become primers on an American sense of region, the importance of place, in a moment in which the social mobility preached by both movies came under considerable strain. Though these films by no

means possess the gravitas of the decade's auteur turn, reading such popular movies in their wider

contexts--the bankruptcy of New York City, the oil crises,

women's and gay liberation, the New Right--does help shade our understanding of an undertheorized moment in recent American history.

Jason Mellard received his PhD in American Studies from the University of Texas. He is spending his fellowship year at the Clements Center for Southwest Studies completing his manuscript, "Cosmic Cowboys, Armadillos, and Outlaws: the Cultural Politics of Texas Identity in the 1970s," for publication



Image left from *Urban Cowboy*. Directed by James Bridges, Paramount, 1980.

Image right from *Saturday Night Fever*. Directed by John Badham, Paramount, 1977.

For more information or if you need special accommodations, email swcenter@smu.edu or call 214-768-3684.