

Detective Fiction: Crime and the City

Course Details

Course Designator & Number: LNDN 3222

Number of Credits: 3

Language of Instruction: English

Contact Hours: TBD

Course Description

This course addresses the development of the modern detective novel, British and American, from the late 19th century into the 21st. Detective and crime fiction is one of the most popular forms of narrative, appealing to writers and readers with widely diverse interests and ideologies. It can offer intense action, intellectual challenge, access to criminal underworlds, political and social critique, and exploration of the psyche. The focus in this version of the course will be on cities (London and Los Angeles) as sites of criminal imagination, and on detectives as explorers of the city's hidden connections. Whether or not they bring about "justice" will be an open question. Our approach will be broadly historical, from the British amateur sleuths of Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie, through the American "hard-boiled" private eye, to the contemporary "police procedural" in television and film as well as fiction.

Course Objectives

Broad academic goals for the course include developing students' capacity for close critical reading of literary and visual texts, paying attention to: nuances of language and figuration, point of view, narrative structure and movement, etc. (At the University of Pittsburgh, this course meets General Education requirements in Literature and the Humanities. The instructor assumes minimal prior experience in literary reading on the part of students, and the course is designed to engage students from a wide range of majors and programs across the university.)

Participants will become skilled at recognizing the particular devices and tropes of detective fiction and crime drama, and analyzing the ways in which authors appropriate and revise these. They will also examine the workings of gender, race, class and sexuality in detective fiction.

By semester's end students will be able to offer informed answers to the following questions: Who is the detective? Why does he or she appear as a literary figure in the modern period? How do we understand "crime" and its relation to the city? What "cultural work" does crime fiction perform? What critical work do detective narratives ask of their readers?

Methodology

MYEDUCATION: OUT-OF-CLASS ACTIVITIES

During class time, we will attend a field study to the Metropolitan Police Black Museum, and will also attend a matinee of Agatha Christie's *The Mousetrap*.

Outside of class time, all students are encouraged to find opportunities throughout London that are relevant to this class. Options include:

- The City of London Police Museum
- The Sherlock Holmes Museum
- A Jack the Ripper walking tour

Those students wishing to explore other creative (and relevant) activities throughout London are encouraged to do so. Please be sure to discuss your own alternatives with the professor beforehand, though. This will ensure that the activity is appropriate enough to warrant the credit earned through your online discussion forum. Furthermore, by bringing such opportunities to the instructor's attention, students may additionally highlight further opportunities for other students in the class.

Required Reading / Materials

The exact list for reading and viewing is to be decided, but texts may include:

Reading:

Excerpts from Charles Dickens *Bleak House*

Arthur Conan Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet* and several short stories.

Agatha Christie, "Witness for the Prosecution" and a theatre visit to *The Mousetrap*

Raymond Chandler, *Farewell My Lovely*

Walter Mosley, *Devil in a Blue Dress*

P.D.James [Adam Dalgleish novel TBD]

Cynthia Harrod-Eagles [Bill Slider novel TBD]

Derek Raymond [Factory series novel TBD]

Viewing:

TV: episodes of Dixon of Dock Green, Fabian of the Yard, The Sweeney, The Bill, Prime Suspect, Law and Order UK, Sherlock Film: LA Confidential (1997), Sherlock Holmes (2009)
Visits: Sherlock Holmes museum at 221b Baker Street, the Met's "Black Museum" if it is open to the public in 2014, and if not the City of London Police Museum

Grading

CAPA PROGRAM AND INSTRUCTOR POLICY

The faculty expects from its students a high level of responsibility and academic honesty. Because the value of an academic course depends upon the absolute integrity of the work done by the student, it is imperative that a student demonstrate a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholastic work and class behavior. This means to gain full attendance you must attend all classes, you must not be late (unless with a valid reason) and you must be respectful of the professor and of other students by not talking/whispering in class when others are talking or presenting. Persistent lateness or lack of attention in class, i.e., reading materials other than the work assigned, may result in a low or zero grade for participation, and possible referral to the CAO. No electronic equipment will be used in class, including laptops, phones, ipods, cell phones, etc, unless you have written permission from the Chief Academic Officer prior to the course. If you are caught using any electronic equipment, you may receive a zero grade for participation. Plagiarism will be dealt with very seriously, and will be referred to the Chief Academic Officer in London. You may receive an F for the course. If all work is not submitted by the end of the program, you will receive an F for the course.

CLASS PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE

Attendance at all classes is mandated by CAPA; students who miss a class without permission from CAPA's Chief Academic Officer will have their grade for the course lowered. Informed participation is expected in every class, so students must have read the full assignment carefully before coming and be ready to discuss it if called upon. At any meeting there may be a brief, pass-fail two-minute quiz on some utterly obvious fact in the assigned reading. Students will also be asked to complete informal in-class writing assignments on a regular basis, which will require them to demonstrate their familiarity with the assigned materials. Students who repeatedly demonstrate unsatisfactory performance on these quizzes and exercises will be penalized in the participation grade.

Grading Rubric

Letter Grade	Score or Percentage	Description
A	93–100	Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.
A-	90–92	Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.
B+	87–89	
B	83–86	
B-	80–82	Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.
C+	77–79	
C	73–76	
C-	70–72	Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to fully meet the course requirements.
D+	67–69	
D	60–66	
F	0–59	Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an I.

Summary of How Grades Are Weighted

Assignments	Percentage of Grade
On-line Discussion	24%
Mid-term Exam	24%
Final Review Essay	24%
Participation/Presentation	16%
Quizzes	12%
Overall grade	100%

Policies

Attendance Policy

Regular attendance and punctuality are mandatory in order to earn full marks. The final grade will take into consideration preparation required for class (i.e. readings) and participation in class discussions. If you miss any meetings without an excused absence from the on-site director, your final grade will be dropped accordingly. In the case of absences, it is the student's responsibility to find out what information was given in class including any announcements made.

University of Minnesota Policies & Procedures

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in disciplinary action. The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows:

Scholastic Dishonesty

Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis.

Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an “F” or “N” for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

Student Conduct

The University of Minnesota has specific policies concerning student conduct. This information can be found [on the Learning Abroad Center website](#).