

ENGLISH 6029: SPECIAL TOPICS IN LITERATURE
DETECTING TEXTS: CRIME AND LITERATURE FROM POE TO NEO NOIR

Instructor: Professor Swope
Office: Pedreira Hall, 6A
Hours: Th 3:30-4:30 or by Appointment
Email: rswope@gmail.com

Description: a study of the various forms of detective fiction and film as well as its literary and cultural influence from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. We will begin with the classic detective, originated in the Dupin stories of Poe, move to the hardboiled works of the early twentieth-century (accompanied by the complimentary tradition of film noir), then to the postmodernist or “metaphysical” detective story, finishing with recent neo-noir film. Placing works of crime and detection alongside critical and theoretical readings, we will inquire into both the literary implications of the genre—including its impact on criticism—as well as the social implications of its ongoing dialogue on the following: capitalism and consumer culture, gender construction, racial identity, sexuality, urban space, and the production of knowledge.

Requirements: The obvious requirement is that you read. At times, I will assign secondary texts to supplement your reading of the primary texts. In conjunction with the reading, you will research an essay or chapter relevant to one of our primary texts or to that section of the course (classic, hardboiled, postmodern, neo-noir) and complete a one-paragraph **Annotation**. I will collect the first 3 annotations separately at intervals throughout the semester (see schedule) and then the final **Annotated Bibliography** with all five sources on 12/6.

Each student will make a 15-20 minute **Presentation** on one of the assigned authors/texts/films. These presentations should cover biographical information (notable events rather than a boring list of dates) as well as the impact of the author/text/film on the genre. You should feel free to use technology or other materials when appropriate.

Each student will complete both a **Mid-Term Exam** (take home) and a **Final Paper**. For the mid-term I will give you a choice of questions, each of which will ask you to compare or contrast and analyze at least two of the texts we will read. For the **Final Paper** each student will complete an original researched term paper (12-15 pages) on a topic of your choosing (pending instructor’s approval) that discusses at least two of the texts from our readings.

Participation	10%
Presentation	20%
Mid-term	20%
Annotated Bibliography	20%
Final Paper	30%

Schedule: (subject to revision)

8/23: Introduction to course

- 8/30: Edgar Allan Poe, “Murders in the Rue Morgue,” “The Mystery of Marie Rôget,” “The Purloined Letter,” “The Man of the Crowd”; Nathaniel Hawthorne, “Wakefield” (PDF of each story can be found online)
- 9/6: Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Sign of the Four*
Supplemental Reading: Robin Woods, “‘His Appearance is against Him’: The Emergence of the Detective” and Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, “The City, the Sewer, the Gaze and the Contaminating Touch”
- 9/13: Agatha Christie, *Murder on the Orient Express*
Due: Annotation 1
- 9/20: Pauline Hopkins, *Hagar’s Daughter*: [Online Link](#)
- 9/27: Raymond Chandler, *The Big Sleep*
- 10/4: Dashiell Hammett, *The Red Harvest*
- 10/11: Film: *Double Indemnity* (Billy Wilder)
- 10/18: Chester Himes, *A Rage in Harlem*
Due: Annotation 2
- 10/25: **Due: Mid-Term Exam**
- 11/1: Paul Auster, *The New York Trilogy*
Supplemental Reading: Michael Holquist, “Whodunit and Other Questions: Metaphysical Detective Stories in Post-War Fiction”
- 11/8: Ishmael Reed, *Mumbo Jumbo*
- 11/15: Film: *Blue Velvet* (David Lynch)
Due: Annotation 3
- 11/22: **No Class: Thanksgiving**
- 11/29: Yuri Herrera, *The Transmigration of Bodies*
- 12/6: Film: *Blood Simple* (Coen Brothers)
Due: Annotated Bibliography
- 12/13: **Due: Final Paper**