

WESTERN UNIVERSITY
2291F: Writing Crime Fiction
Fall 2013

Section: # 001
Time/Room: Mondays 10:30am-12:30pm &
Wednesdays 10:30-11:30am in UCC 54A
Instructor: Dr. Michael Arntfield
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Office: Lawson Hall 3270G

Office hours: Mondays, 9:30-10:30am &
Tuesdays, 5:30-6:30pm

Course Objectives

This course introduces students to the narrative structure of crime fiction and mystery writing for a variety of media, including print, television, stage, and film. Drawing on classic and canonical stories, students will have an opportunity to author original narratives reflecting the four major subgenres of crime writing: the amateur detective, the cozy whodunit, the hardboiled thriller, and the police procedural. Students will also be introduced to the theory and practice of criminal investigation and procedure, as well as the study of the criminal mind as they create fictive portrayals of the genre's archetypal crimes, including but not necessarily limited to murder, ransom kidnapping, the theft of art and antiquities, and espionage.

Required Text

☞ Scaggs, John (2005) *Crime Fiction*. New York: Routledge

Recommended Texts

↘ See titles as listed in the course schedule. Many titles already on reserve at Weldon.

Course Assignments

1. Amateur detective short story (15%) – Due Oct. 2, 2013
2. Cozy whodunit short story (20%) – Due Oct. 23, 2013
3. Hardboiled thriller teleplay/screenplay/radio play (25%) – Due Nov. 20, 2013
4. Police procedural novel prospectus & sample chapter (30%) - Due Dec. 4, 2013
5. Attendance & in class work (10%)

ATTENDANCE & ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION POLICY:

Attendance is taken at each class. Should you arrive late it will be your responsibility to ensure that you are not marked as absent by seeing me after class or during break. Attendance is required to improve as a writer and for you to achieve a superior grade in this course. Thus, absences will be penalized other than for medical or compassionate reasons, complete with documentation. I don't like to penalize late assignments; however, since the purpose of this course is to prepare you for a career in writing, you need to know that deadlines are not a matter of negotiation. For these reasons, all assignments will be due on the date specified barring some catastrophic event. Following any other policy would be an injustice to you as a future writer. Assignments should be submitted in class, or electronically if necessary. You may also place them in the drop box outside my office. **Late assignments will be penalized at 5% per day, including weekends. NO ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER THE TERM ENDS.**

Tentative Course Schedule

Part I: The Origins & Fundamentals of Writing Crime Fiction

Recommended readings:

- 📖 Crow, C.L. (1999) *American Gothic: An Anthology: 1787-1916*. Wiley-Blackwell
- 📖 Poe, E. A. (2009) *Edgar Allan Poe: Complete Tales & Poems*. Castle Books
- 📖 Punter, D. & Byron, G. (2004) *The Gothic*. Wiley-Blackwell

📌 Week 1 (Sept 9 & 11): The Gothic Tradition & Crime Fiction

Read textbook chapter 1

Part II: The Amateur Detective

Recommended readings:

- 📖 Christie, A. (2010) *Murder at the Vicarage*. Harper-Collins
- 📖 Doyle, A.C. (1998) *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Oxford
- 📖 Gardner, E.S. (1974) *The Case of the Postponed Murder*. Pocket Books

📌 Week 2 (Sept 16 & 18): Conventions, Style, & Narrative Staples

Read textbook chapter 2

📌 Week 3 (Sept 23 & 25): Overview of Key Works & Writing Workshop

Read recommended readings

📌 Week 4 (Sept 30 & Oct 2): Section Summary

No readings. **Assignment #1 due Oct 2**



Part III: The Cozy Whodunnit

Recommended readings:

- 📖 Allingham, A. (1929) *The Crime at Black Dudley*. Jarrolds Publishing
- 📖 Christie, A. (2011) *Murder on the Orient Express*. Harper-Collins
- 📖 Collins, W. (1997) *The Moonstone*. Wadsworth Classics

↳ Week 5 (Oct 7 & 9): Conventions, Style, & Narrative Staples

Read textbook chapter 6

↳ Week 6 (Oct 16): Overview of Key Works & Writing Workshop

Read recommended readings

↳ Week 7 (Oct 21 & 23): Section Summary

No readings. **Assignment #2 due Oct 23**

Part IV: The Hardboiled Thriller

Recommended readings:

- 📖 Cain, J.M. (1989) *Double Indemnity*. Vintage
- 📖 Chandler, R. (1988) *The Big Sleep*. Vintage
- 📖 Hammett, D. (1989) *The Maltese Falcon*. Vintage

↳ Week 8 (Nov 4 & 6): Conventions, Style, & Narrative Staples

Read textbook chapters 3 & 5

↳ Week 9 (Nov 11 & 13): Overview of Key Works & Writing Workshop

Read recommended readings

↳ Week 10 (Nov 18 & 20): Section Summary

No reading. **Assignment #3 due Nov 20**

Part V: The Police Procedural

Recommended readings:

- 📖 Connelly, M. (2007) *The Concrete Blonde*. Grand Central Publishing
- 📖 Ellroy, J. (1990) *LA Confidential*. Grand Central Publishing
- 📖 McBain, E. (2010) *Cop Hater*. Pocket Books

↳ Week 11 (Nov 25 & 27): Conventions, Style, & Narrative Staples

Read textbook chapter 4

↳ Week 12 (Dec 2): Overview of Key Works & Writing Workshop

Read recommended readings

↳ Week 13 (Dec 4): Course Wrap-Up

No readings. **Assignment #4 due Dec 4**

↪ **Assignment Format**

All assignments are to be typed, double-spaced, using 12 point font unless otherwise specified. All assignments must have your name, course name, section number, and the professor's name on the first page.

This is a creative writing class and it is expected that you will not be citing any outside source material as you would when writing conventional academic monographs or research papers. In any exceptional cases when you might be inclined or required to cite outside sources (including any copywrited images or multimedia content that accompanies your narratives) you will be expected to follow MLA, APA, or CMS standards for documentation.

↪ **Assignment Submission**

Assignments are due in-class on the date specified on the schedule. Late essays will be penalized a full letter grade unless your instructor has emailed you to grant an extension. You must apply for extensions ahead of the due date; they are not automatic.

Your instructor will advise you at the beginning of term of her/his preferences as to assignment submission (paper, electronic, or both) for grading purposes. Note, however, that in this course you will be required to submit the final version of each of your essays electronically, through WebCT, to turnitin.com.

If necessary, please submit essays to the Writing Department Drop Box outside Lawson Hall Room 3270, making sure you include your instructor's name and your section number. However, do not

- fax assignments
- e-mail assignments

Keep copies of all assignments submitted.

*N.B: In addition to submitting final drafts on/by the due date for each assignment, you are required to bring a rough draft of each assignment to class for each of the scheduled peer-review sessions. Failure to attend a scheduled peer-review session with a sufficiently completed rough copy (in your instructor's opinion) to enable a meaningful review, or to otherwise participate in the peer-review session, **will** result in the earned mark for that assignment being reduced by 10%. In other words, an assignment that would have normally earned a 75, for example, will receive instead a recorded grade of 65. This penalty will be applied in addition to any other penalties incurred, e.g. for late submission.*

↪ **Attendance**

Attendance is required to improve as a writer. If you miss more than six hours of class meetings (the equivalent of two weeks of class meetings) your final grade will be penalized a full letter grade (for example, an earned grade of 80% would be reported as a 70%); if you miss more than nine hours of class meetings, you will not be given a passing grade for the course.

This policy will only be waived for medical or compassionate reasons. If you have good reasons for waiving an absence of one class meeting, discuss these with your instructor within one week of that absence. If your absence is extended and prolonged (over one week of continuous non-attendance), then you should discuss it with your academic advisor in your home faculty, who may require documentation. That advisor may then contact all of your instructors.

Note: a class meeting missed in order to write a test, exam, or other form of ‘make-up class’ in another course **will** count as non-attendance, and **will** attract penalties as defined above if applicable. Instructors at the University of Western Ontario **shall not require** a student to write a make-up test or similar at times which conflict with that student’s other scheduled class times. If you are asked or ‘required’ to do this, you should immediately contact an academic counsellor in your Dean’s office. If you elect to miss a class in order to write such a test, that is **your** choice; your absence will not be excused.

See also: ‘**Medical Accommodation Policy**’ below

↳ **Scholastic Offences, including Plagiarism**

The University Senate requires the following statements, and Web site references, to appear on course outlines:

“Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:
<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholoff.pdf>.

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage of text from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy as above).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).”

Note: *In this course you will be required to submit an electronic copy of the final version of each of your essays to turnitin.com through your sections’s WebCT HomePage.*

↳ **Prerequisites**

The prerequisite for registration in this course is a) a final grade of 65 or more in one of Writing 2101, 2121, 2111, or 2131, or b) a final grade of 70 or more in Writing 1000F/G, or c) Special Permission of the Program.

The University Senate requires the following statement to appear on course outlines:

“Students are responsible for ensuring that their selection of courses for ensuring that their selection of courses is appropriate and accurately recorded and that all course prerequisites have been successfully completed, and that they are aware of any antirequisite course(s) that they have taken. If the student does not have the requisites for a course, the University reserves the right to remove the student from the course and to delete it from the student’s record. This decision may not be appealed. A student will receive no adjustment to his or her fees in the event that he or she is dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.”

↳ **Medical Accommodation Policy**

For UWO Policy on Accommodation For Medical Illness, see:
<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/medical.pdf>

(downloadable Student Medical Certificate (SMC): <https://studentservices.uwo.ca> under the Medical Documentation heading)

Continued: Students seeking academic accommodation **on medical or other grounds** for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments **worth 10% or more of their final grade** must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation on medical grounds cannot be granted by the instructor or the Program in Writing, Rhetoric, and Professional Communication, and the Program requires students in these circumstances to follow the same procedure when seeking academic accommodation on non-medical (i.e. non-medical compassionate or other) grounds.

Students seeking academic accommodation **on medical grounds** for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments **worth less than 10% of their final grade** must also apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Where in these circumstances the accommodation is being sought on **non-medical grounds**, students should consult in the first instance with their instructor, who may elect to make a decision on the request directly, or refer the student to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive medical documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for accommodation on medical grounds, or for other reasons (e.g. to explain an absence from class which may result in a grade penalty under an 'Attendance' policy in the course). **All** medical documentation **must** be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's home Faculty.

Special Requests: Special Examinations, Incomplete Standing, Aegrotat Standing

Please refer to the "Information for All Students in a Writing Course" for more detailed information. Briefly, remember that your instructor does not have the discretion to initiate, consider, or grant (or not) such requests; you must go directly to the Dean's office of your home faculty.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to **MentalHealth@Western:**

<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

📌 Dr. Mike's Policy on Social Media & Wireless Devices:

Note that while the responsible use of smartphones, notebook computers, tablets, and other devices as learning tools in this course is certainly encouraged, and while I understand that smartphones in particular are increasingly integral to students' social experience at Western, it is expected that these technologies will be used appropriately in the context of the classroom. Please respect your professor (me) and peers (your friends and classmates) by refraining from SMS texting, BBMing, iMessaging, or using social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, et al. other than during the designated break times. Students who are found to be distracted by and/or routinely engaged in social media, or found using wireless devices for personal business during lectures, peer review sessions, or in-class assignments will be deemed to be *mentally absent* and will have their attendance and participation marks affected to the same degree as someone who has failed to attend entirely. Please don't make this an issue. Please use discretion and common sense.