

Film Noir and the Crime Genre
Film 3366F (Section 001)
Fall/Winter 2020-2021

Instructor: Prof. Manina Jones

Course Location: Zoom <https://westernuniversity.zoom.us/j/97070116293> (see end of syllabus for full invitation)

Course Day/Time:

Lecture Wednesdays 12:30-2:30 pm

Prerequisites: At least 60% in Film Studies 1020E or Film Studies 1022 or permission of the Department.¹

Class Format

I will post lecture PowerPoints and recordings of lectures on OWL. Students can view these independently. We will meet during the assigned lecture times (specific times TBA) on Zoom for synchronous discussion. Students may view films on their own time. Streaming sources for films are listed on the class schedule.

Calendar Description

This course examines the narrative and aesthetic innovations of film noir in relation to its literary origins and cinematic influences. Tending to key figures such as the hard-boiled detective and the femme fatale, the course will chart the development and revision of noir from WWII to the present.

Course Description

Film noir emerged as an identifiable phenomenon in the United States in the 1940s and continues to influence contemporary culture. This course challenges students to consider film noir and its historical and cultural contexts, considering the way it both emerges from and shapes both aesthetic and social visions. We will consider its distinctive representations of crime, the law, racial issues, ideas about masculinity and femininity, the impact of American consumer culture. While “noir” is one of the most widely applied descriptions of film style, it is also one of the most notoriously contentious filmic categories: is it a genre, a period, an aesthetic, a mood, a psychology, a philosophy, an associated set of themes, icons, character types, and/or narrative conventions? In this course, we will explore film noir from a variety of critical lenses, considering both classical exemplars and revisionary approaches to noir.

Objectives:²

By the end of the course, successful students will be able to:

- Understand film noir in terms of style, genre, themes, icons, and narrative conventions.
- Understand the development of film noir in its historical, industrial, cultural, and aesthetic dimensions.
- Advanced research in film studies.
- Advance critical analyses, including integration of scholarly resources.
- Advanced presentation and oral communication skills.

¹ Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

² Detailed objectives at end of syllabus.

Course Materials

Links to film streaming sources and critical readings are in the Resources file on OWL.

Methods of Evaluation³

ASSIGNMENT	VALUE	LENGTH/FORMAT	DUE DATE
Selfie Noir	5%	250 words + image(s)	Fri. Sept. 18 th 2020
Weekly Forum Reflections	15%	10 posts + 5% content bonus	
Mid-term Test (remote)	10%	700-900 words	Oct. 21 2020
Neo-Noir Assignment	25%	See below	Wed. Nov. 11 th 2020
Working Bibliography + Topic	5%	See below	Nov. 25 th 2020
Synchronous Participation	5%	See below	
Final Essay	35%	2500 words	Mon. Dec. 14 th 2020

General Information

Attendance Policy: All students to “attend” Wednesday classes by viewing the posted lecture and joining our synchronous Zoom discussion. Synchronous Zoom discussion meetings will be scheduled within the 12:30-2:30 pm scheduled lecture window. Within that window, start times may vary. I will post Announcements to keep everyone updated.

Late Policy: Assignments submitted late will be deducted at a rate of 2% per day late.

Accommodation Policies

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

Academic Consideration for Student Absence

Students will have up to two (2) opportunities during the regular academic year to use an on-line portal to self-report an absence during the term, provided the following conditions are met: the absence is no more than 48 hours in duration, and the assessment for which consideration is being sought is worth 30% or less of the student’s final grade. Students are expected to contact their instructors within 24 hours of the end of the period of the self-reported absence, unless noted on the syllabus. Students are not able to use the self-reporting option in the following circumstances:

- for exams scheduled by the Office of the Registrar (e.g., December and April exams)
- absence of a duration greater than 48 hours,
- assessments worth more than 30% of the student’s final grade,
- if a student has already used the self-reporting portal twice during the academic year

If the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence are *not* met, students will need to provide a Student Medical Certificate if the absence is medical, or provide appropriate documentation if there are compassionate grounds for the absence in question. Students are encouraged to contact their Faculty academic counselling office to obtain more information about the relevant documentation.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation

³ Students are responsible for being familiar with the information posted on the department website at <http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/Student%20Information.html>

directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds, or for other reasons. **All documentation required for absences that are not covered by the Self-Reported Absence Policy must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's Home Faculty.**

For Western University policy on Consideration for Student Absence, see [Policy on Academic Consideration for Student Absences - Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#) and for the Student Medical Certificate (SMC), see: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the [Western Multicultural Calendar](#).

Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage 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.

Plagiarism Checking:

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>.

All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.

Support Services

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

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.

For information on Western's Covid-19 policies and protocols, visit <https://www.uwo.ca/coronavirus/>

ASSIGNMENT OVERVIEW

Selfie Noir	Due September 18 th	Value 5%
<p>Read Place & Peterson’s essay “Some Visual Motifs of Film Noir” (in OWL Resources folder). Take a cell phone photo of yourself (or 30 second video, if you prefer). Write a short paragraph (250 words) under the heading Commentary, identifying the formal features of your image that are suggestive of film noir style. In the same document, under the heading Biography (max. 250 words), introduce yourself, including the Film courses you have taken and your interest in Film. The second section won’t be marked.</p>		
Forum Reflections	Weekly	Value 15%
<p>There are 13 weeks of classes for this course. You must post at least 10 substantial reflections over the course of the term – but you may post additional shorter responses to earn points between 11 and 15. For each substantial reflection, you will earn 1%. A substantial reflection will be written in the first person in complete sentences and between 50 and 100 words. It will offer your informal (but analytical) personal reaction to the week’s film and/or critical reading, referring to it directly. It may pose a question or respond to other student posts or raise an issue to pursue in class or highlight a potential essay topic. The reflection may be evaluative, but your opinions should be substantiated. The Forum for each film will close the Friday after our Wednesday class, but you may post anytime before that and after you view the film. Remember that this is a scholarly forum and that you should use only appropriate language and demonstrate respect and support for your peers.</p>		
Synchronous Particip’n	Weekly	Value 5%
<p>This grade is based on your attendance and participation in the synchronous portion of the class. This participation may include contributing via the Zoom Chat function, taking part in break-out groups, asking questions, or offering comments.</p>		
Test	October 21 st	Value 10%
<p>The test will be an analysis of a film sequence taken from one of the films on the course and posted on owl on October 21st. Detailed instructions are available on OWL in the Assignments folder.</p>		
Neo-Noir Assignment	Due November 11 th	Value 25%
<p>The Neo-Noir Assignment allows you to consider the ways in which noir style has been elaborated in recent culture. For this assignment, you will choose a recent (post 2015) film, television series, novel, computer game, fashion line, or advertisement. You will complete a 5-7 minute narrated audio-visual presentation on the text you have chosen, demonstrating how it exemplifies “the persistence of noir” in contemporary culture and reflecting on how noir influences impact on its meaning. You should also consider its innovations to and/or reactions against conventional noir characteristics. On the last day of classes, we will view the presentations as a group and there will be discussion. Detailed instructions for this assignment are available on OWL in the Assignments folder. If you have suggestions for neo-noir texts you or other students might analyse, list them in the course Wiki whenever you think of them.</p>		
Bibliography & Topic	Due November 25 th	Value 5%
<p>A topic/title for the Final Essay with supporting annotated bibliography of at least five entries (including a book, an article, and a web source). See the Instructions in the OWL Assignments folder for more details.</p>		
Final Essay	Due December 14 th	Value 35%
<p>This is a comparative research essay of 2,000-2,500 words on a topic developed in consultation with the instructor or chosen from a list of suggested included in the Assignments folder in OWL.</p>		

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

General Objectives

1. To identify the primary elements of film noir and to assess them aesthetically, narratively, and historically.
2. To situate film noir texts in relation to the specific industrial, cultural, and technological conditions of their production, distribution, exhibition, and reception.

Analytic Skills

1. To closely analyze a film's formal and narrative structures in relation to its specific cultural and/or industrial context.
2. To evaluate theoretical texts and scholarly research in Film Studies and to engage with this material in their own original analyses of film texts and contexts.
3. To use the critical reading and organizational skills developed in the program to construct logical, clearly reasoned, and effectively supported arguments.

Research Skills

1. To perform advanced research based on broadly applicable library and citation skills as well as specific knowledge of key scholarly books, peer-reviewed journals, on-line databases, and historical archives in Film Studies.

Communication Skills

1. To convey critical arguments in a clear and compelling manner in writing, oral presentations, and film/media-based forums while welcoming the intellectual engagement of others.
2. To work effectively with others through the development of practical (e.g. time management and careful organization), ethical (e.g. a fair division of intellectual responsibility and credit), and social (e.g. respecting differences) skills in the classroom.

ZOOM INVITATION DETAILS

Prof. Manina Jones (she/her) is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: FILM 3366F 001 FW20

Time: Sep 9, 2020 12:30 PM Montreal

Every week on Wednesday until Dec 9, 2020 (except Reading Week)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://westernuniversity.zoom.us/j/97070116293>

Meeting ID: 970 7011 6293

One tap mobile

+16475580588,,97070116293# Canada

Dial by your location

+1 647 558 0588 Canada

Meeting ID: 970 7011 6293

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Western's land acknowledgment reminds us that the place we inhabit and the places we learn are complex physical and social spaces with histories which are often unrecognized. Digital course

delivery can make us feel that we are not grounded. Wherever you are when you learn, take a moment to reflect on and respect the unique environments, peoples, and histories of the place you inhabit.

Western's land acknowledgment recognizes that Western University is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Attawandaron peoples, on lands connected with the London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796 and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum. With this, we/I respect the longstanding relationships that Indigenous Nations have to this land, as they are the original caretakers. We acknowledge historical and ongoing injustices that Indigenous Peoples (e.g. First Nations, Métis and Inuit) endure in Canada, and we accept responsibility as a public institution to contribute toward revealing and correcting miseducation as well as renewing respectful relationships with Indigenous communities through our teaching, research and community service.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF FILMS AND READINGS

WEEK	DATE	YEAR	FILM TITLE	DIRECTOR	ACCESS	READING	ASSIGNMENTS	
1	Sept. 9	1941	<i>The Maltese Falcon*</i>	Houston	Criterion	Naremore, "American Film Noir The History of an Idea" and Place & Peterson, "Some Visual Motifs of Film Noir"		
2	Sept. 16	1944	<i>Double Indemnity</i>	Wilder	Internet Archive	Tasker, "Women in Film Noir"	Selfie Noir (Friday, Sept. 18 th)	
3	Sept. 23	1947	<i>Out of the Past</i>	Tourneur	McIntyre Media	Hollinger, "Film Noir, Voice-Over, and the Femme Fatale"		
4	Sept. 30	1953 1945	<i>The Hitch-Hiker Detour</i>	Lupino Ulmer	Internet Archive McIntyre Media	Naremore "Low is High: Budgets and Critical Discrimination"		
5	Oct. 7	1974	<i>Chinatown</i>	Polanski	Criterion	Cawelti, " <i>Chinatown</i> and Generic Transformation in Recent American Films"		
6	Oct. 14	1981	<i>Body Heat</i>	Kasdan	McIntyre Media	Short, "Why is it Noir and How is it New"		
7	Oct. 21	1982	<i>Blade Runner</i>	Scott	Criterion	Doll and Faller, "Blade Runner and Genre Film Noir and Science Fiction"	Mid-term test (scene analysis)	
8	Oct. 28	1996	<i>Fargo</i>	Coens	McIntyre Media	Tuck, "Laughter in the Dark: Irony, Black Comedy and Noir in the Films of David Lynch, the Coen Brothers and Quentin Tarantino"		
	Nov. 4	READING WEEK						
9	Nov. 11	1995	<i>Devil in a Blue Dress</i>	Franklin	McIntyre Media	Nieland, "Race-ing Noir and re-placing history: the mulatta and memory in <i>One False Move</i> and <i>Devil in a Blue Dress</i> "	Neo-noir Assignment	
10	Nov. 18	1996	<i>Bound</i>	Wachowskis	McIntyre Media	Straayer, "Femme Fatale or Lesbian Femme: <i>Bound</i> in Sexual Différance"		
11	Nov. 25	2000	<i>Memento</i>	Nolan	McIntyre Media	Ghislotti, "Narrative Comprehension Made Difficult: Film Form and Mnemonic Devices in <i>Memento</i> "	Bibliography & topic	
12	Dec. 2	2005	<i>Brick</i>	Johnson	McIntyre Media	Vermeulen, "Teen Noir: The Suburb as Lived Space"		
13	Dec. 9		Neo-Noir Q&A + Final Essay Discussion				Neo-Noir Q&A	
							Final Essay (December 14 th)	