

WESTERN UNIVERSITY
3640F: Crime Writing
Fall 2025

Course Objectives

This course introduces students to the conventions of crime fiction through the interdisciplinary lens of both literary studies and criminology. Students will in turn become acquainted with the process of writing substantive and procedurally accurate crime stories for a variety of media, including print, television, podcast, stage, and film. Drawing on classic and canonical works, as well as iconic crimes and trials, students will have an opportunity to author manuscripts reflecting three major subgenres: the cozy whodunit, the hardboiled thriller, and the police procedural. Students will also be introduced to the theory and practice of criminal evidence and procedure, as well as the study of the criminal mind as they create original texts encompassing the genre's archetypal crimes, including but not necessarily limited to murder, ransom kidnapping, and the theft of art and antiquities.

Required Texts

- ☞ Arntfield, M. (2017) *Mad City*. New York, NY: Little A Books - \$20.95 (required)
- ☞ Messent, R. (2012) *The Crime Fiction Handbook*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell - \$32.59 (required)

Recommended Texts

☞ See titles as listed in the course schedule by section. Many are available online for free through the Gutenberg Project, and all are additionally available at the D.B. Weldon Library.

Course Assignments

1. One quiz covering Parts I & II (10%) – **September 22, 2025**
2. Cozy whodunit short story (20%) – **Due October 20, 2025**
3. Hardboiled thriller teleplay/pilot outline (30%) – **Due Nov. 10, 2025**
4. Police procedural prospectus & sample chapter (40%) - **Due Dec. 8, 2025**

Tentative Course Schedule

Part I: The Literary Origins & Fundamentals of Crime Writing

Recommended readings for this section:

- 📖 Arntfield, M. A. (2016) *Gothic Forensics*. Palgrave-Macmillan
- 📖 Crow, C.L. (1999) *American Gothic: An Anthology: 1787-1916*. Wiley-Blackwell
- 📖 Poe, E. A. (2009) *Edgar Allan Poe: Complete Tales & Poems*. Castle Books

🔪 Week 1: The Gothic Tradition & Crime Fiction

Required readings: Arntfield, Messent: pp. 1-8, 109-115

Part II: The Amateur Detective

Recommended readings for this section:

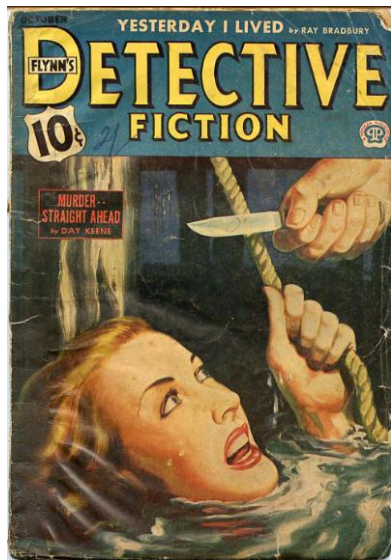
- 📖 Chesterton, G.K. (1910) *The Blue Cross*. Chesterton & Brown
- 📖 Christie, A. (1930) *Murder at the Vicarage*. Harper-Collins
- 📖 Doyle, A.C. (1902) *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Oxford
- 📖 Gardner, E.S. (1961) *The Case of the Postponed Murder*. Pocket Books
- 📖 Minichino, C. (1998) *The Helium Murder*. Avalon

🔪 Week 2: Conventions, Style, & Narrative Staples

Required readings: Arntfield, Messent: pp. 27-33, 116-126

🔪 Week 3: Overview of Key Works & Quiz (20 questions)

Required readings: Arntfield, Messent: pp. 127-135



Part III: The Cozy Whodunit

Recommended readings for this section:

- 📖 Allingham, A. (1929) *The Crime at Black Dudley*. Jarrolds Publishing
- 📖 Christie, A. (1934) *Murder on the Orient Express*. Harper-Collins
- 📖 Collins, W. (1868) *The Moonstone*. Wadsworth Classics
- 📖 Crispin, E. (1946) *The Moving Toyshop*. Vintage
- 📖 Winters, B. (2012) *The Last Policeman*. Quirk Books

📌 Week 4: Conventions, Style, & Narrative Staples

Required readings: Arntfield, Messent: 127-135

📌 Week 5: Overview of Key Works & Peer Review Workshop

Required readings: Arntfield, Messent: pp. 34-40, 50-84

📌 Week 6: THANKSGIVING MONDAY – NO CLASS

Required readings: Arntfield, Messent: pp. 11-26 & 127-135

Part IV: The Hardboiled Thriller

Recommended readings for this section:

- 📖 Cain, J.M. (1944) *Double Indemnity*. Vintage
- 📖 Chandler, R. (1939) *The Big Sleep*. Vintage
- 📖 Hammett, D. (1941) *The Maltese Falcon*. Vintage
- 📖 Hammett, D. (1934) *The Thin Man*. Vintage
- 📖 Moore, A. & Campbell, E. (1999) *From Hell: Collected Edition*. Top Shelf

📌 Week 7: Conventions, Style, & Narrative Staples

Assignment #1 due via OWL by 11:59 p.m.

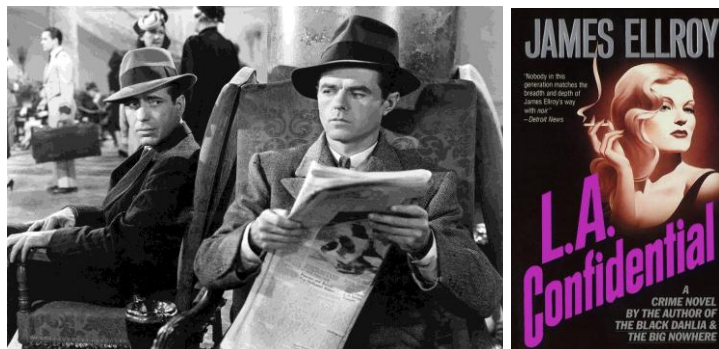
No readings

📌 Week 8: Section Summary & Peer Review Workshop

Required readings: Arntfield, Messent: pp. 136-158 & 227-239

📌 Week 9: FALL READING WEEK – NO LECTURE

Required readings: Arntfield, Messent: pp. 136-158 & 227-239



Part V: The Police Procedural

Recommended readings for this section:

- 📖 Connelly, M. (2020) *Fair Warning*. Little, Brown & Co.
- 📖 Deaver, J. (2021) *The Midnight Lock*. Penguin
- 📖 Ellroy, J. (1987) *The Black Dahlia*. Grand Central Publishing
- 📖 Harris, T. (1981) *Red Dragon*. Penguin
- 📖 McBain, E. (1956) *Cop Hater*. Pocket Books

📌 Week 10: Conventions, Style, & Narrative Staples

Required Readings: Arntfield, Messent: pp. 41-49, 85-106

Assignment #2 due via OWL by 11:59 p.m

📌 Week 11: Formatting of Final Assignment & Publishing Industry Overview

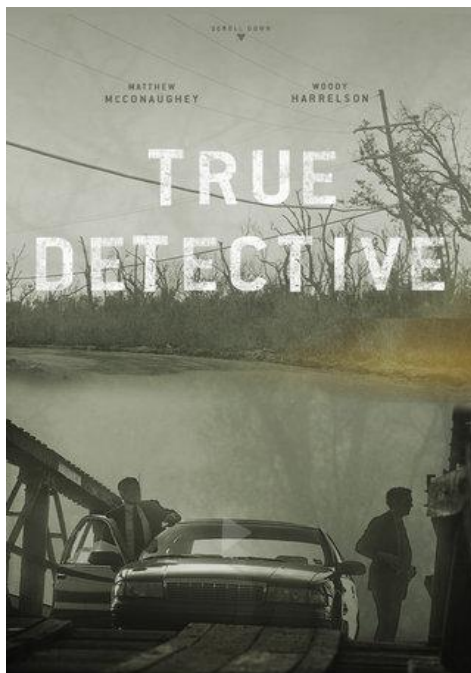
Required readings: Arntfield, Messent: pp. 187-207

📌 Week 12: Peer Review Workshop & Course Wrap-up

No readings

📌 Week 13: Independent writing/editing session – no class

📌 Week 14: Assignment #3 due via OWL by 11:59 p.m. (Voluntary drop-in office hours during regular class time)



➡ **Assignment Format**

All assignments are to be typed, 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.

When using sources in a paper, you will be expected to follow MLA, APA, or CMS standards for documentation, detailed in *The Brief Penguin Handbook* sections 22, 23, 24, and 25.

↪ **Statement on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)**

In this course, students are permitted to use AI solely for the purposes of information gathering and research. Beyond this, the use of AI to generate text submitted for evaluation will be deemed plagiarism and, given the specificity of the language used in the required assignments, will be easily detected. Please uphold academic integrity and use these resources responsibly while ensuring that all written contributions reflect your own thoughts.

↪ **Assignment Deadlines**

Assignments are due via OWL Brightspace by 11:59 p.m. on the date specified on the schedule. Late essays will be penalized at the rate of 5% per day, including weekends, unless I've granted an extension at least 72 hours in advance and in writing. A "day" ends at 4:30 p.m.. You must apply for extensions, via self-reporting, no less than a week ahead of the due date. 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.

N.B.: NO ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER THE TERM/STUDY PERIOD ENDS AT 4:30 P.M. ON DECEMBER 9, 2025.

How to Submit Assignments

Assignments are due via OWL Brightspace on the date specified on the schedule. Late assignments will be penalized at the rate of 5% per day unless I have granted you an extension, as explained in the previous section. Note that late assignments submitted after 4:30 p.m. (the end of the "business day") in subsequent days are graded as though they are received the day after they are uploaded.

Hard copies of assignments are not currently being accepted via the drop-box. Further, do not:

- fax assignments
- e-mail assignments

Also, be aware that **you are responsible for keeping 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 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 instead receive a recorded grade of 65. This penalty will be applied in addition to any other penalties incurred, e.g. for late submission.*

↪ **About OWL Brightspace**

All course material will be posted to OWL Brightspace: <https://westernu.brightspace.com/>. If students need assistance with OWL Brightspace, they can seek support on the [OWL Brightspace Help](#) page. Alternatively, they can contact the [Western Technology Services Helpdesk](#) online or by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800 for technical support. Current versions of all popular browsers (e.g., Safari, Chrome, Edge, Firefox) are supported with OWL Brightspace; what is most important is that you update your browser frequently to ensure it is current. All JavaScript and cookies should be enabled."

↪ Attendance policies

Attendance at class is required to improve as a writer. Here is the Writing Studies attendance policy in this class:

- You may miss up to three hours (the equivalent of one week of class) of class meetings during the term without explanation. That means that the first three class hours you miss will be recorded as absences but *excused provided you don't miss any more*.
- However, if you miss a total of four to nine class hours (the equivalent of up to three full weeks of class), your final grade will be reduced by 10% (e.g. an earned final grade of 80% will be reported as a final grade of 72).
- If you miss a total of more than nine hours of class meetings (the equivalent of more than three weeks of class meetings) your final grade will be reduced by 15% (e.g. an earned final grade of 80% will be reported as a final grade of 68).
- Note that the three-hour exemption does not, however, apply to missed peer review sessions. These editing workshops are essential to the collective success of the class. Failing to attend peer review workshops without corresponding approved accommodation will result in an immediate 10% deduction on the associated pending assignment once submitted.

This policy will be waived only for medical or compassionate reasons. If you have good reasons for waiving an absence of one class meeting (e.g. if you've missed three hours, and need or want to miss another class meeting) discuss these reasons 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. See also: '**Accommodation Policy**' below.

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 Western University 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 Writing class in order to write such a test in another class, that is your choice; your absence will not be excused.

Attendance also extends to tardiness. If you are more than 20 minutes late, you will be penalized an hour of attendance. Please make every effort to be on time as late entry can disrupt the flow of discussion in our class. Early departures from class, which have not been previously arranged with the instructor, will also be counted as an absence. If you leave during the break, you will be docked an hour of attendance.

↪ 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/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/schloff.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 section’s OWL Brightspace 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.”

↪ **Accommodation Policy**

Note: the official Western Accommodation Policy appears below. This is in effect, but may be modified temporarily by the university during the academic year as conditions change.

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 by email within 24 hours of the end of the period of the self-reported absence. 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 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.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: (<https://www.uwo.ca/health/psych/index.html>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

➔Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing (email), 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](#).

➔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.

➔Additional Resources:

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

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/>

➔Policy on Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

Note that the use of racist, discriminatory, or any language that works against the values of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion will not be tolerated in any course or university communication, whether oral or written.

➔Statement on Gender-Based & Sexual Violence

Western University [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website:

<https://www.uwo.ca/health/studentsupport/survivorsupport/get-help.html>. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

✦ **My Policy on “Wrong Version” Resubmissions:**

A recent tech-driven trend has also, and regrettably, necessitated a new course policy on what might be best described as the questionable “wrong version” submission of assignments on OWL. In brief, all submissions for course assignments are *first and final* in nature as though they were (and as was the case for the initial 130-year history of this university) hard copies either hand delivered in person or submitted via department mailbox. Thus, you are *not* permitted to make supplemental submissions via OWL, email, or even in person as addendums to your original submission. Aside from the fact that writers are expected to maintain a diligent file management system and exhibit an appropriate attention to detail so as to avoid sending improper or incomplete files to editors, agents, publishers, or—in this case—professors, there is obviously also no way to ensure that the ostensibly “correct version” sent after the fact is not actually some improved version on what was previously sent. In either case, what you upload to OWL for each assignment cannot be changed, replaced, or added to—no exceptions.