

Writing 3640F CRIME WRITING: Black Dahlias, Red Herrings, and Tequila Sunrises

Fall 2026

Section: # 001

Time/Room: Monday 2:30-5:30pm / SSC-3028

Instructor: A. Devereaux

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Office: UC 1426

Office hours: Tuesday 11am-1pm (or by appt)

Course Description and Objectives

This course introduces students to the process of writing crime fiction for a variety of media. Drawing on classic works, students will also learn about the criminal mind and investigative procedure as they create realistic portrayals of the genre's archetypal crimes, including murder, ransom kidnapping, and the theft of antiquities. Skill development includes communicating information, arguments and analyses accurately and reliably, orally and in writing to a range of audiences. Extra Information: 3 lecture hours.

Required Texts and Course Materials

There is no required textbook for this course. Course readings will be posted to OWL.

Course Requirements

Book Critique	10%
Short Story	30%
Book Outline	20%
Sample Chapter	40%

Students are responsible for checking the course OWL site (<https://westernu.brightspace.com/>) regularly for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class. If students need assistance with the course OWL site, they can seek support on the [OWL Brightspace Help](#) page. Alternatively, they can contact the Western Technology Services Helpdesk. They can be contacted by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800.

Assignment Format

Students will complete a book critique, short story, book outline and sample chapter.

Submitting Assignments/Due dates/late submission penalties etc.

Assignments filed after the deadline will lose 5% daily, unless an extension has been granted beforehand.

Attendance Policies

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

If you miss nine unexcused hours of class (the equivalent of up to three full weeks of class), your final grade will be reduced by 10 marks (e.g., an earned final grade of 80% will be reduced to a final grade of 70%; a grade of 70% will be reduced to 60%).

If you miss a total of more than nine unexcused hours of class (the equivalent of more than three weeks of class meetings) your final grade will be reduced by 15 marks (e.g., an earned final grade of 80% will be reduced to a final grade of 65; a final grade of 70 will be reduced to 55).

This policy will be waived only if you have either undocumented or documented academic consideration. You may only use the undocumented consideration option once each term. If your absence is extended and prolonged (over one week of continuous non-attendance), then you must discuss it with your academic advisor in your home faculty, and submit documentation to support your request for academic consideration. (See Academic Consideration policy below.)

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.

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.

Scholastic Offences, including Plagiarism

Scholastic Offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, which can be found here:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_offences.pdf#Policy

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.

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 Western and Turnitin.com

<http://www.turnitin.com>

In this course, students are permitted to use AI tools for information gathering and preliminary research purposes only (unless otherwise indicated in the assignment instructions). These tools are intended to enhance the learning experience by providing access to diverse information sources. It is essential, however, that students critically evaluate the obtained information, exercise independent thinking, and engage in original research to synthesize, develop, and articulate their own ideas, arguments, and perspectives. The use of AI tools can serve as a starting point for exploration, but students are expected to uphold academic integrity by appropriately attributing all sources and avoiding plagiarism in any form. Note that for all assignments completed outside of class, the instructor can require you to attend an in-person interview to discuss your work and/or to review research notes, rough drafts, outlines and other materials used in preparing the assignment before a mark is finalized. Assignments should always reflect students' own thoughts and constitute independent written work. By adhering to these guidelines, students contribute to a responsible and ethical learning environment that promotes critical thinking, supports independent inquiry, and encourages original written contributions.

Prerequisites

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.

The prerequisite for this course are:

- At least 65% in one of Writing 2101F/G, Writing 2111F/G, Writing 2130F/G or Writing 2131F/G;
- or at least 65% in one of Writing 1000F/G, Writing 1031F/G or Writing 1035A/B;
- or at least 65% in each of MediaCom 1020E (or both of MediaCom 1021F/G and MediaCom 1022F/G) and MediaCom 1025F/G;
- or permission of the Department (consult the Undergraduate Program Director, Writing).

Antirequisites

The former Writing 2227F/G.

Academic Consideration Policy

University policy on academic considerations is described [here](#). This policy requires that all requests for academic considerations must be accompanied by a self-attestation.

Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor, in consultation with the academic advisors in your Faculty of Registration, in accordance with information presented in this course outline.

For procedures on how to submit Academic Consideration requests through the Student Absence Portal, please see the information posted on the Office of the Registrar's webpage:

https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academic_considerations/index.html

All requests for Academic Consideration must be made within 48 hours after the assessment date or submission deadline.

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:
https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodation_disabilities.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. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519-661-3030 (during class hours) or 519-433-2023 after class hours and on weekends.

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.

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.

Other Student 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/>

Academic Support and Engagement <https://academicsupport.uwo.ca/index.html>

Intellectual Property and Copyright

All instructor-written materials (e.g., PowerPoints, lecture notes, oral lectures) for this course are created solely for students' personal use within the course and remain the instructor's intellectual property. Further reproduction, fixation, distribution, transmission, dissemination, communication, or any other uses without securing the consent of the copyright owner (the course instructor) may be an infringement of copyright. You may not distribute, email, or otherwise communicate these materials to any other person. These limitations extend to recording, photographing, or sharing lectures (online or in-person) and lecture material without permission. Posting the instructor's content from this course to online course sharing sites like OneClass or Course Hero without permission is both an infringement of intellectual property law and a violation of academic integrity guidelines. The instructor will pass these cases on to the Western University Ombudsperson or their Department Chair as appropriate.

Class Meeting Schedule

WEEK ONE/Sept 14: Introduction & Syllabus Review

+ Setup for Book Report

WEEK TWO/Sept 21: Mystery + detective stories

Required readings for this section:

☞ Arntfield, Michael and Marcel Danesi. *Murder in Plain English*. Simon & Schuster, 2017. (p. 35-43)

☞ Penzler, Otto, and James Ellroy. *The Best American Noir of the Century*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011. (p. 187-189)

☞ Messent, Peter. *The Crime Fiction Handbook*. John Wiley & Sons, 2012. (p. 27-59).

☞ Oates, Joyce Carol. "Detour." *Harper's Magazine*, Mar. 2021.

WEEK THREE/Sept 28: Thriller: hard boiled, ecological

+ Setup for Workshop

Required readings for this section:

☞ Ashman, Nathan. *The Routledge Handbook of Crime Fiction and Ecology*. Taylor & Francis, 2023. (p. 1-11)

WEEK FOUR/Oct 5: Writing workshop (Short Story)

BOOK CRITIQUE DUE AT 11:59 PM

WEEK FIVE/Oct 12: NO CLASS – Reading Week/Thanksgiving

WEEK SIX/Oct 19: Craft: Red herrings, clues & reveals

+ Setup for Book Outline/Sample Chapter

SHORT STORY DUE AT 11:59 PM

WEEK SEVEN/Oct 26: Tension, suspense & satisfying resolutions

Required readings for this section:

☞ Edwards, Martin. *Howdunit: A Masterclass in Crime Writing by Members of the Detection Club*. HarperCollins UK, 2020. (p. 217-221)

WEEK EIGHT/Nov 2: Craft: Writing scenes

Required readings for this section:

☞ Rosenfeld, Martha and Jordan Rosenfeld. *Writing Deep Scenes*. Penguin, 2015. (p. 32-64)

BOOK OUTLINE DUE AT 11:59 PM

WEEK NINE/Nov 9: Craft: Setting & character

WEEK TEN/Nov 16: The world of publishing

WEEK 11/Nov 23: Writing workshop (Sample Chapters)

WEEK 12/Nov 30: Independent Writing/Editing Session

WEEK 13/Dec 7: NO CLASS – Submissions Due

