



## **LITR 3315 Detective Fiction**

### **Course Description**

This course addresses the concept of the detective story. Crime fiction is one of the most popular forms of narrative, appealing to writers and readers with widely diverse interests and ideologies, and we shall investigate why this is so. Why, for example, is the concept of the amateur detective globally popular? What are the specific connections between detective fiction and an urban environment? What are the writers' attitudes to diversity? How do we define the social dynamics of the detective story? The focus of this course will be on the significance of the sites of criminal investigation, and on the varying characters and motives of the detectives. We shall consider how far characters and their writers are preoccupied with issues other than detection (for example, ethnicity), and to what extent they are interested in notions of truth and justice.

### **Course Aims**

The aims of this course are the development of the students' capacity for the close critical reading of literary texts, the development of their sensitivity to nuances of language and of imagery, and to the narrative structure of a text, and the articulation of their ideas about globalization, the urban environment, the handling of diversity, and the understanding of social dynamics.

### **Requirements and Prerequisites**

The prerequisites are an interest in literature, and some background reading, of any kind, in detective fiction.

### **Learning Outcomes**

- a. At the end of the course students should be able to place detective fiction in the context of the globalization of detective fiction.
- b. They should be able to make connections between detective fiction as a literary genre and the use of an urban environment as a literary setting.
- c. They should be able to identify the strategies by which writers of detective fiction handle questions of diversity in gender, sexual orientation, social class and race.
- d. They should be able to analyze the social dynamics of detective fiction.
- e. They should be able to recognize the particular devices of detective fiction, and the ways in which writers appropriate and revise these.
- f. They should be able to demonstrate an understanding of the emergence of the detective as a literary figure in the modern period.
- g. They should understand the cultural work performed by detective fiction.
- h. They should understand the critical work which detective fiction demands of its readers.

### **Developmental Outcomes**

Students should demonstrate: responsibility and accountability, independence and interdependence, goal orientation, self-confidence, resilience, and appreciation of difference.

### **Class Methodology**

The main emphasis is on class discussion, but there are also class presentations, introductory lectures, films, field trips, and visits from practising writers of detective fiction.

### **Field Components**

CAPA provides the opportunity to learn about London through direct, guided experience. Participation in field activities for this course is required. You will actively explore London. Furthermore, you will have the chance to collect useful information that will be an invaluable resource for the essays and presentations assigned in this course.

**The assigned field components are:**

Two guided London walks connected with detective fiction.

**Final Exam.**

The final exam lasts two hours and consists of a single essay question about the nature of detective fiction which must be answered with reference to all the texts on the course, plus one text of your own choosing. No books or notes may be used. Answers must be planned, carefully and economically written without any repetition, and proof-read.

**Assessment/Grading Policy**

Descriptor	Alpha	UK	US	GPA
Excellent	A	75+	93+	4.0
	A-	70-74	90-92	3.7
Good	B+	66-69	87-89	3.3
	B	63-65	83-86	3.0
	B-	60-62	80-82	2.7
Average	C+	56-59	77-79	2.3
	C	53-55	73-76	2.0
Below Average / Poor	C-	50-52	70-72	1.7
	D+	46-49	67-69	1.3
	D	40-45	60-66	1.0
				0.7
Fail	F	<40	<60	0

**Grade Breakdown and Assessment of Learning Outcomes**

Assessment Task	Grade %	Learning Outcomes	Due Date
Class participation	25%	All	Every week
Oral Presentation 1 X 15-20 minute class presentation during which the student provokes and leads discussion	25%	All	
ONE 2,500 word Essay	25%	All	Week 5
Final Exam.	25%	All	Week 14

**Assignments**

**CLASS PARTICIPATION.** This is expected from each student every week. It must be based on a thorough knowledge of the text of the week, a copy of which, not in electronic form, must be brought to class. Grades will be awarded at the end of the course, on a competitive basis; the important thing here is to participate, not to be too critical of your contribution.

**ORAL PRESENTATION.** This will be either singly or in pairs. One class presentation, to last 15-20 minutes (20 minutes if a pair of students) is required once per semester per student. It must provoke class discussion, which will be led by the presenter or presenters. When a writer visits, an interview may be offered in lieu of a presentation.

**ESSAY.** This should be about 2,500 words. Topics will be suggested; you may choose your own, but must have these approved. Essays should be carefully planned and proof-read, economically written and not repetitive. They should be analytical and not contain any element of plot summary. They are due in Week 6, the week of our first visiting writer. Essays will not be accepted by e-mail.

**FINAL EXAM.** This will last two hours, to give you time to plan your answers carefully and proofread them when you have finished. It will require a knowledge of all the texts on the course, together with a working concept of the essential characteristics of detective fiction. No books or notes may be used. Your answers should be carefully planned and proof-read, economically written and not repetitive.

## **Dress Code**

Comfortable shoes and rainproof clothes for the walks.

## **Course Materials**

A copy of each text (see below) in book form (any edition)

**NB:** Where a text is named, this means that the text must have been read in its entirety before class, and a copy in book form brought to class. Since some texts are longer than others, reading ahead will almost certainly be necessary. No laptops or cell phones or similar equipment are to be used in class.

## **Required Readings**

All readings must be purchased, in book form. You may if you wish share one between two. You may like to have the novels by our visiting writers signed by them.

Agatha Christie, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926)  
Jill Dawson, *The Crime Writer* (2016)  
Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Sign of Four* (1890)  
Rudolph Fisher, *The Conjure-Man Dies* (1932)  
Sophie Hannah, *Closed Casket* (2016)  
Alice Munro, 'The Love of a Good Woman', the lead story of her collection (1998)  
Josephine Tey, *The Franchise Affair* (1949)

## **Recommended Reading**

Bertens, Hans and Theo D'haen. *Contemporary American Crime Fiction* (Palgrave, 2001).  
Browne, Ray B. *Murder on the Reservation: American Indian Crime Fiction: Aims and Achievements* (U of Wisconsin P, 2004).  
Fischer-Hornung and Monika Mueller (eds.). *Sleuthing Ethnicity: The Detective in Multiethnic Crime Fiction* (Associated UP, 2003).  
Gosselin, Adrienne Johnson (ed.). *Multicultural Detective Fiction: Murder from the "Other" Side* (Garland, 1999).  
Horsley, Lee. *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction* (OUP, 2005).  
Jackson, Christine A. *Myth and Ritual in Women's Detective Fiction* (McFarland, 2002).  
Kestner, Joseph A. *Sherlock's Sisters: The British Female Detective, 1864-1913* (Ashgate, 2003).  
Klein, Kathleen Gregory. *Diversity and Detective Fiction* (Bowling State UP, 1999).  
Knight, Stephen. *Crime Fiction, 1800-2000: Detection, Death, Diversity* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).  
Kungl, Carla T. *Creating the Fictional Female Detective: The Sleuth Heroines of British Women Writers, 1890-1940* (McFarland, 2006).  
Matzke, Christine and Susanne Muhleisen (eds.). *Postcolonial Postmortems: Crime Fiction from a Transcultural Perspective* (Rodopi, 2006).  
Moore, Lewis D. *Cracking the Hard-Boiled Detective: A Critical History from the 1920s to the Present* (McFarland, 2006).  
Reddy, Maureen T. *Traces, Codes, and Clues: Reading Race in Crime Fiction* (Rutgers UP, 2003).  
Roth, Laurence. *Inspecting Jews: American Jewish Detective Stories* (Rutgers UP, 2004).  
Willett, Ralph. *Hard Boiled Detective Fiction* (BAAS, 1992).  
Thomas, Ronald R. *Detective Fiction and the Rise of Forensic Science* (CUP, 1999).

# Weekly Course Schedule

## WEEK 1

Introduction

The course will be explained and class presentations assigned. The principles of detective fiction will be discussed.

## WEEK 2

**NB:** Where a text is named, this means that the text must have been read in its entirety before class, and a copy in book form brought to class. Since some texts are longer than others, reading ahead will almost certainly be necessary. *No laptops or cell phones or similar equipment are to be used in class.*

Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Sign of Four* (1890)

This was only the second outing for Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson, a story in which Conan Doyle is still establishing their essential characteristics. We shall discuss the way that the morality of imperial possessions is explicitly debated, as well as the implicit judgements made on race and class.

Why is Sherlock Holmes a globally popular figure?

## WEEK 3

**Guided walk: IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF SHERLOCK HOLMES. Meet at Embankment tube, Villiers St exit . The guide will make sure we finish at a tube. The walk will take about two hours.**

## WEEK 4

Josephine Tey, *The Franchise Affair* (1949)

The National Crime Writers' Association voted this the eleventh out of the hundred best crime stories. This is the story of an alleged kidnapping in Middle England, where the detectives' challenge is to disprove it.

## WEEK 5

We shall watch an early film version of last week's text, and discuss the significance of the changes which were made.

## WEEK 6

Jill Dawson, *The Crime Writer* (2016)

This has as its protagonist a real-life writer, Patricia Highsmith. What is the distinction between crime fiction and detective fiction?

## WEEK 7

**BREAK**

## WEEK 8

**Guided walk: LEGAL AND ILLEGAL LONDON. Meet 10 am at Holborn tube. The walk will take about two hours.**

## WEEK 9

Rudolph Fisher, *The Conjure-Man Dies* (1932)

This is an early African American detective story set in Harlem. Is race its major preoccupation?

## **WEEK 10**

**Agatha Christie, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926)**

A classic mystery by the Queen of Crime. This is an unusually 'pure' example of the detective story. It features the Belgian detective Hercule Poirot.

## **WEEK 11**

**Sophie Hannah, *Closed Casket* (2016)**

This is Sophie Hannah's second Poirot novel; she is the only writer to be officially approved by the Christie estate. We shall discuss the implications of this kind of literary homage.

## **WEEK 12**

**Alice Munro, 'The Love of a Good Woman' (1998)**

In this story it is the reader who has to play detective to determine whether a murder has occurred or not.

## **WEEK 13**

*For this class you must bring your own choice of a detective story; it must be originally in English, and you must know the date of first publication, and bring a copy. You must explain it clearly to the rest of the class WITHOUT TELLING THE PLOT. You must also explain how it might fit into the course.*

## **WEEK 14**

**FINAL EXAM.**

## **Attendance, Participation & Student Responsibilities**

**Attendance:** CAPA has a mandatory attendance policy. Attendance is taken at the beginning of every class. Unauthorized absence from class will result in a reduction of the final grade and potentially a failure for the course.

**Missing classes for medical reasons:** If you need to miss a class for medical reasons or for a family emergency, **you must send an e-mail** to let the Associate Director of Academic Affairs (ADAA) know at least one hour in advance of your class or meeting at the following e-mail: [excused.absence@capa.org](mailto:excused.absence@capa.org). Note that calling the CAPA Centre (0207 370 7389) is acceptable only if you do not temporarily have access to the internet. An e-mail is still required as quickly as you can get access to the internet again. You will need to provide evidence of the reason for your absence. Unexcused absences will result in a grade reduction. In the event of a missed class or field trip, it is your responsibility to contact your instructor and make up any missed assignments.

**Class Participation:** Students are expected to participate actively and critically in class discussions, and the participation portion of the class will be graded accordingly. Students must read assignments BEFORE the class, and come in on time. Participation is a vital part of your grade: students are expected to participate orally in seminars and in online forums and discussions in a critical and evaluative manner; to interact with the faculty and fellow students with respect and tolerance; and to actively engage in discussion. Derogatory or inflammatory comments about the cultures, perspectives or attitudes of others in the class will not be tolerated.

**Academic Integrity:** A high level of responsibility and academic honesty is expected. Because the value of an academic course depends upon the absolute integrity of the work done by the student, it is imperative that a student demonstrates a high standard of individual honour in his or her scholastic work and class behaviour. Plagiarism and cheating will result in dismissal from the program. See the Handbook of CAPA Academic Policies for more information and resources on plagiarism.

**Use of electronic equipment in class:** All devices such as laptops, i-pods, i-pads, netbooks, notebooks and tablets, smartphones, cell phones, etc. are **NOT** allowed unless you have express permission from the faculty or you have been instructed to do so. If you require an accommodation to use any type of electronic equipment, inform the Associate Director of Academic Affairs at the beginning of Term.

**Use of Electronic Translators:** In Language courses students are NOT allowed to use electronic translators for writing texts in the target language: those submitting compositions and texts of whatever kind translated in such a fashion will receive a final F grade for the course.

**Late Submission:** Late submission of papers, projects, journal entries, pieces of homework and portfolios is only permitted with prior approval. A request must be made to the relevant Faculty member no later than two days prior to the due date. Late submission without prior approval will result in a full alpha grade penalty. In either case, work cannot be submitted after feedback has been provided to the rest of the class on the relevant assessment or one week after the due date whichever comes first, after which point a grade of F will be given for the assessment.

**Behaviour during Examinations:** During examinations, you must do your own work. Unless specifically instructed by the lecturer or instructor, talking during an exam is not permitted, nor may you compare papers, copy from others, or collaborate in any way. Any failure to abide by examination rules will result in failure of the exam, and may lead to failure of the course and disciplinary action.