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ENGL 265-02, Criminal Fictions, Spring 2008

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ENGL 265.02: Criminal Fictions
Literature and Transgression (1824-2000)



Course Description

This course considers literature's fascination with criminality and forms of transgression over the last 200 years. It offers students the chance to develop a historical understanding of the formal and thematic movements in literary fiction, while at the same time noting how literature uses crime to interrogate its own 'legitimate' identities.

Our program will move from the early nineteenth century, where criminals become the heroes of popular romance, into the complexities of late nineteenth-century crime: artistic genius as criminal mastermind, the emergence of aesthetic 'disinterestedness' and the twin developments of law and literature (resulting in a formalized 'detective fiction'). Finally, we will also look at modern crime fiction, with its generic formulas and diversifications.

The primary goals of this course are as follows:

- **To develop students' sense of historical, formal and thematic movements in literature over the last 200 years.** You should see the texts set before you both as an opportunity to explore your own interest in crime fiction, and the historical moments specific to each of these texts. Understanding their presentation of certain thematic

interests therefore also allows us to understand some of the wider cultural pressures on the production of literature in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

- **To develop skills in the critical analysis of literature.** Class periods will be devoted to detailed discussion of the literary works assigned for the day. Often I may ask you to prepare discussion questions or brief presentations to facilitate discussion. The goal is for you to practice "close reading", and for you to be able to apply those techniques to the literature we *haven't* explicitly discussed. A good reader is a reader sensitive to the nuances of written communication, and its relationship to literary and historical context. As such, you should be able to understand formal aspects of literary fiction as well as the particular contextual meanings of writings.
- **Develop skills in writing.** This course is writing intensive and it includes a number of writings assignments arranged to encourage the development of your critical thinking and written English. You will be writing two shorter essays on literary texts, and one extended essay where you bring in outside sources to create argument. As part of that extended essay, you will submit a plan and an annotated bibliography earlier in the semester. The class will also include some workshop sessions on writing, individual student conferences on progress in writing, and instruction on the use and documentation of outside sources.

Prerequisites: 151 or permission from the instructor.

Course Format

The class meets twice a week in a seminar and discussion format. You will be expected to complete all readings assigned for the class and prepare for class discussions upon them. Sometimes I will supply you with particular questions of tasks to guide you in your preparation. This will mean preparing the answers in advance to particular questions so you are able to talk about them when called upon. There will also be a substantial number of student presentations and discussion tasks that will involve oral work. Participation in discussion is a vital part of this course and your overall semester grade will reflect that. With each reading you should expect to comment or pose questions about it, as well as challenge or test the ideas within it. By participating in class discussion, your analytic skills and interpretative strategies will be strengthened and your experience of a particular text will be enriched. This may seem like a daunting task, but if you are nervous about speaking up in class, look on this as a personal challenge. I would like everyone to set themselves the task of saying something in each class.

Course Requirements

Formal Essays

You will complete three essays this semester. Two will be of 3-5 pages. These need not involve use of outside critical sources, though you may use them if you wish. The third will be 10-12 pages long and will constitute an 'extended essay' (10-12 pages). This 'extended' essay explicitly requires the use of secondary critical sources and historical context, thereby improving and testing your skill as a researcher. For all the essays, I encourage students to choose some aspect of the course texts which interests them, and upon which they have not already submitted work. In preparation for this longer paper, this will be a collaborative project for which you will submit

a proposal (outlining your thesis) and an annotated bibliography with at least 4 secondary sources you have consulted.

All assignments must be typed in 12pt Times New Roman font, double-spaced with margins of one inch. Full format details can be found in the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (sixth edition) in the library or by emailing me. Although I assume this will mean there are approximately 300 words on each page, every paper must include **a word count, your name, my name and a title (to be decided upon by you)**. Every paper must be proofread for grammatical and spelling errors. Your grade will reflect the appropriate penalties if errors are not corrected. I allow 10% leniency in the word count. So if the paper should be 1200 words long, I will not penalize if it is between 1080 and 1320. For papers under 90% of the word count, I will deduct at least 0.3 of a grade point. Submissions at less than 60% of the word count will automatically receive a fail, regardless of their other merits.

Final exam

At the end of the class there will be an in-class assignment that will ask you to demonstrate your understanding of the course concepts and show factual knowledge of the texts we have considered.

Participation and Discussion

Your participation is crucial to this course and it involves not only attendance, but reading and preparation before class, and contribution during. I will expect each person I call on during class time to be prepared and willing to speak. If at any point a student is not able to participate in an adequate manner or is unprepared for the class, they will be counted as absent for that session.

• Essay 1	1200 words	15%
• Essay 2	1200 words	15%
• Proposal & Annotated Bibliography	4-6 pages	10%
• Extended Essay	3000 words	25%
• Final Exam		10%
• Participation		15%
• Quizzes		10%

PLEASE NOTE: You will not receive a passing grade unless you submit all written assignments.

A word to the wise: there is a substantial amount of reading for this class – important, worthwhile, and required, of course – and you need plan for it. I expect everyone to reach the points in the novel that I specify in advance of the class. If you think you might have trouble meeting this requirement, you should think carefully about the course now. I will also have a series of brief factual reading quizzes which will comprise 10 percent of the final grade. These will be impromptu, but should be easy to complete if you are reading attentively.

Attendance Policy:

You are expected to be in class everyday. This means that you will be present, fully awake, prepared and ready to contribute to class activities. Failure to meet the terms of that definition may result in a student being marked absent. You may miss three classes in the term without

penalty (for illness, sickness, religious holidays or other absences). Given that we follow a T/Th schedule, this is generous, and further absences will result in your final grade for the entire course being lowered a third of a point (i.e. From B+ to B, from B- to C+). More than six absences will result in failure of the course.

Honor Code:

Please make sure you are absolutely clear about the terms of the honor code. All written work must be your own. Under no circumstances will any form of intellectual dishonesty be tolerated. You should be aware that the consequences are severe. If you are ever unsure whether you might be violating the code, please contact me or another professor to find out.

Disabilities

If you have a disability, please contact me in advance of the class to discuss any additional requirements you may have, such as large print handouts or extra time in assessments.

Email

Please check your email **each day** for notices about the course. This is the easiest way for us to communicate. On several occasions in the class, I might post a question on email to the whole group, which may ask for electronic responses from you. In all email communications, please remember appropriate formal protocols for addressing a faculty member and your colleagues in the class.

Grading Scale

Essays and the final grade are calculated on scale from A-F, including pluses and minuses in between. You will have an opportunity to ask questions about criteria in detail before each assignment. A grade of 'A' indicates excellent and outstanding work; 'B' is a good grade and, in the case of B+, a very good grade; 'C' is a passing grade and indicates **satisfactory** work; 'D' indicates poor or shoddy work; 'F' is a failing grade.

COURSE SCHEDULE
Subject to Revision

Date:	Text	Writing Due:
Thursday 10 Jan	Introduction to the Syllabus: “The Macbeth Murder Mystery”	
Tuesday 15	<u>The Private Memoirs and Confessions of A Justified Sinner</u> pp.1-93	
Thursday 17	<u>Justified Sinner</u> 94-147	
Tuesday 22	<u>Justified Sinner</u> 147-end	
Thursday 24	<u>Justified Sinner /Presentations</u>	
Tuesday 29	<u>Victorian Detective Fiction: ‘The Purloined Letter’</u> Edgar Allan Poe	
Thursday 31	‘The Murdered Cousin’ – Sheridan LeFanu (folder) “Hunted Down” – Charles Dickens	
Tuesday 5 Feb	“The Lost Special” Arthur Conan Doyle “Who Killed Zebedee?”: Wilkie Collins (folder)	
Tuesday 5 Feb	Film Screening: Law and Order	7.30pm BARRET 34
Thursday 7	Discussion of Film and nineteenth century short fictions	
FRIDAY 8		Paper 1 due
Tuesday 12	<u>The Moonstone</u> (1-94)	
Thursday 14	<u>The Moonstone</u> (95-190)	
Tuesday 19	<u>The Moonstone</u> (191-392)	
Thursday 21	<u>The Moonstone</u> (392-466)	
Tuesday 26	<u>The Picture of Dorian Gray</u> chaps 1-8 (1-98)	
Thursday 28	<u>The Picture of Dorian Gray</u> chaps 9-20 (99-180)	
Tuesday 4 March	SPRING BREAK	
Thursday 6	SPRING BREAK	
Tuesday 11	<u>The Picture of Dorian Gray</u> (181-298)	Paper 2 due
Thursday 13	<u>The Maltese Falcon</u> (1-82) chaps1-8	
Tuesday 18	<u>The Maltese Falcon</u> (82-217) chaps 9-20	
Tuesday 18	Film Screening: The Maltese Falcon	7.30pm BARRET 34
Thursday 20	EASTER	
Tuesday 25	Film Noir – <u>Maltese Falcon</u> Discussion of Film Text	
Thursday 27	<u>An Unsuitable Job for a Woman</u> (1-150)	
Tuesday 1 April	<u>An Unsuitable Job for a Woman</u> (150-250)	
Thursday 3	<u>The New York Trilogy</u> 1-71	
Tuesday 8	<u>The New York Trilogy</u> 71-192	
Thursday 10	<u>The New York Trilogy</u> 195-308	
Tuesday 15	<u>The New York Trilogy</u> / Review	Annotated Bibliography & Proposal Due
Thursday 17	<u>Student Consultations/ Class cancelled</u>	
Tuesday 20	<u>Student Consultations/ Class cancelled</u>	
Thursday 24	Class review	Final Exam
Monday 28 April		Paper 3 Due

Department of English Expectations and Policies

A college course is more than simply a set of assignments; it is an intellectual process, one which requires active engagement from beginning to end in order to achieve its intended results. With this in mind, the Department of English has formulated a number of expectations and the policies that support them. If you have questions about how these policies relate to the syllabus for a particular course, you should address them to the instructor.

Attendance: The success of a course depends to a significant extent upon the presence of students alert and prepared to address the subject under discussion. Unavoidable absences should be discussed with the instructor, ideally before they occur. Excessive absences will result in a lowering of grade, in some cases to an F.

Deadlines: Writing assignments, tests, etc., are carefully scheduled as stages toward the fulfilment of the course's goals and cannot be indefinitely deferred without frustrating those goals. Brief extensions for good reasons may be permissible with the instructor's prior approval; otherwise, late assignments will be penalized and may result in their not being accepted for credit.

Submission of all work: All major assignments are integral to the goals of the course. Failure to complete any major assignment will result in a grade of F for the course.

Intellectual honesty: All work is assumed to be the student's own and produced exclusively for the course in which it is submitted. Papers written for one course, even if revised, are not to be submitted in another without the instructor's prior approval. Borrowing of ideas or language from other sources (including published material, other student papers, the internet or other electronic resources, etc.) must be carefully documented. Students are advised against posting their work on the internet since doing so may lead to suspicion of plagiarism. Students are advised to maintain drafts of their work to verify its originality. Cases of suspected plagiarism will be referred to the Honor Council, and the student if convicted will receive a grade of F in the course in addition to sanctions assigned by the Council. Carelessness in documenting sources, even if not technically plagiarism, will be penalized as the instructor deems appropriate. If you are uncertain about how or whether to document sources, consult your teacher.