

ENG 368W: LITERATURE AND CULTURAL STUDIES
SPRING 2017

AMERICAN CRIME

Tu/Th 2:30pm-3:45pm Ignatius Few Bldg. 129

Instructor: Anthony Carlton Cooke/Office Hours: Th 4:00pm-5:00pm

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In this course we will consider two seemingly straightforward, yet contentious issues: who commits crimes and why they commit them. To address these inquiries, we will engage with representations of crime and criminals, both historical and contemporary, as a lens through which to explore popular beliefs regarding criminality. Our goal will be to synthesize popular and academic ideas to gain an informed perspective on the current debates surrounding nature of crime in the United States.

Course Objectives

To understand different subgenres of American crime fiction

To utilize literary, cinematic, and popular artifacts as a way to discuss crime and its causes

To apply the knowledge bases from students' majors or fields of interest to textual analysis and social critique

To continue building students' critical thinking and writing abilities

Required Texts

James M. Cain, *The Postman Always Rings Twice*

Patricia Cornwell, *Postmortem*

Chester Himes, *Cotton Comes to Harlem*

Stephen King, *Misery*

Frank Lucas, *Original Gangster*

Katherine Nickerson, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to American Crime Fiction*
Sophie Treadwell, *Machinal*

Supplementary readings available on Course Reserves

Raymond Chandler, "The Simple Art of Murder"

Sara Paretsky, "Skin Deep"

Articles, websites, and videos used or referenced during class

Recommended readings available on Course Reserves

"Capitalism as a Criminogenic Society," "The Sick Society," "Failed Socialization,"

"Patriarchy, Gender, and Crime," and "Criminal Minds" in *Essential Criminology*, by Desiré J.M. Anatasia, Stuart Henry, and Mark M. Lanier

Assignments

--Attendance and participation (20%): See below. Mandatory film screenings are included in this area.

--Short critical analysis paper (20%): Focused analysis of 1 theme, character, or issue from a text. 3 pages, no secondary sources required.

--Mid-length critical analysis and research paper (30%): Focused analysis of 1 theme, character, or issue from a text. 4 pages, six secondary sources minimum required.

--Final "contemporary issue" research paper (40%): Focused analysis of 1 crime-related social problem of your choice with at least 1 possible intervention proposed and defended. 7 pages, 9 secondary sources minimum required. Secondary sources and formatting style must be chosen from your major or a potential field of academic interest. We will discuss this more later.

All papers, with the exception of the final paper, are due at the beginning of class and should be formatted according to current MLA style guidelines. This is an upper-division course, so it is assumed that students have some experience with formatting, critical analysis of a focused topic, and academic writing style/research protocols (e.g., language, tone, structure, primary/secondary sources, appropriate source material, etc).

Late work is not accepted. Detailed assignment sheets will be distributed well in advance of paper due dates.

Attendance and Participation: Since this course is discussion-based, its success depends on your active participation and on your regular attendance, for which you are graded. "Participation" means having the appropriate texts on hand, being prepared to thoughtfully respond to assigned readings, and being responsive and respectful to your peers during class discussions. Read the assigned readings before you

come to class. You are expected to come to class on time. However, since many of you come from different areas of campus, and our classroom is sort of hard to find, there is a five-minute grace period after the beginning of class. If you arrive within the grace period you will be counted as having arrived on time. Seven or more unexcused absences will result in an "F" for the course. I take attendance every day. You are responsible for keeping up with your absences over the course of the semester. Meet with me if you feel your situation warrants an exception to this rule. Bring appropriate documentation to our meeting.

Schedule

Weather or other circumstances may necessitate schedule adjustments.

1/10 Introduction to the course

1/12: ACF: McCann, "The Hard-Boiled Novel"; Chandler, "The Simple Art of Murder"

1/17: Himes, *Cotton Comes to Harlem*, chs. 1-9; Reddy, "Race and American Crime Fiction"

1/19: *Cotton Comes to Harlem*, chs. 10-22

1/24: Treadwell, *Machinal*

1/26: ACF: Pepper, "The American Roman Noir"; Cain, *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, chs. 1-7

1/31: Cain, *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, chs. 8-16

2/2: King, *Misery*, Pt. 1, chs. 1-11
Paper 1 due

2/7: *Misery*, Pt. 1, chs. 12-36

2/9: *Misery*, Pt. 2, chs. 1-5

2/14: *Misery*, Pt. 2, chs. 6-15

2/16: *Misery*, Pt. 2, chs. 16-23

2/21: *Misery*, Pt. 3, chs. 1-10

2/23: *Misery*, Pt. 3, chs. 11-33

2/28: *Misery*, Pt. 3, chs. 34-38

3/2: *Misery*, Pt. 4, chs. 1-12

3/6-3/10 Spring Break

3/14: ACF: Gardaphe, "Mafia Stories and the American Gangster"; Browder, "True Crime"

3/16: Lucas, *Original Gangster*, chs. 1-5

3/21: *Original Gangster*, chs. 5-11

3/21: *Original Gangster*, chs. 12-20

3/23: Peer review for paper 2

3/28: *Original Gangster*, chs. 21-28

Paper 2 due

Screening: *American Gangster*

3/30: ACF: Kinsman, "Feminist Crime Fiction"; Paretsky, "Skin Deep"

4/4: Cornwell, *Postmortem*, chs. 1-4

4/6: *Postmortem*, chs. 5-9

4/11: *Postmortem*, chs. 10-14

4/13: *Postmortem*, chs. 15-16; ACF: Mueller, "The Police Procedural in Literature and on Television"

4/18: Peer review for paper 3

4/20: In-class screening: *American Crime*

5/8: Paper 3 due (email to instructor by 11:59pm)