ENG 399: American Detective Fiction  
Course Syllabus  
Fall 2013  
CRN 17871  
MWF 1:00-1:50 p.m.  
195 Anstett Hall  
Instructor: Kathleen O'Fallon  
Office: 256 PLC  
Hours: MW 2:00-3:30 p.m. and by appointment  
Phone: 346-0994  
E-mail: kofallon@uoregon.edu  

Course Description  

The “hard-boiled” tradition of American detective fiction was established during Prohibition, an era that turned the average citizen into a lawbreaker and fostered the growth of organized crime. The works of Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, and Ross Macdonald defined and popularized this genre of fiction, so this course covers a substantial selection of these authors’ novels. In addition, the course examines the novels of contemporary writers—with an emphasis on women and minority writers—which works build on the “hard-boiled detective” tradition while simultaneously critiquing it.  

As the American detective hero negotiates the “mean streets” peopled by criminals and their victims, he reveals and (sometimes) challenges prevailing societal mores. “Pop” fiction is literally defined by its popularity, so it partakes in the attitudes of its time regarding honor, fairness, legality, violence and the role of policing in our day-to-day lives. Moreover, it reveals prevailing opinions regarding gender, race and class. This course will explore the thematic, narrative and stylistic choices of the authors on the reading list and discuss their importance within the genre of detective fiction and in the American literary canon as a whole.  

Required Texts  

Dashiell Hammett  
*The Maltese Falcon*  
1929/1930  
“Samuel Spade’s jaw was long and bony, his chin a jutting v under the more flexible v of his mouth.”  

Dashiell Hammett  
*Red Harvest*  
1929  
“I first heard Personville called Poisonville by a red-haired mucker named Hickey Dewey in the Big Ship in Butte.”  

Raymond Chandler  
*The Big Sleep*  
1939  
“It was about eleven o’clock in the morning, mid October, with the sun not shining and a look of hard wet rain in the clearness of the foothills.”
Ross Macdonald  
*The Galton Case*  
1959  
"The law offices of Wellesley and Sable were over a savings bank  
on the main street of Santa Teresa."

Chester Himes  
*A Rage in Harlem*  
1957  
"Hank counted the stack of money."

Sara Paretsky  
*Indemnity Only*  
1982  
"The night air was thick and damp."

Paula L. Woods  
*Inner City Blues*  
1999  
"Twelve years, eleven months, and fifteen days into living out my *Top Cop*  
fantasies—Christy Love with a better hairdo—my Nubian brothers down on  
Florence and Normandie had to go and pitch a serious bitch and mess up  
my cha-cha."

Michael Connelly  
*Black Echo*  
1992  
"The boy couldn’t see in the dark, but he didn’t need to."

**Course Requirements**

1. Reading of all assigned texts, to be completed by the second day each appears  
on the schedule. (First day discussion will avoid plot points, so as to avoid  
ruining the ending for those not finished, but no such courtesy will be extended  
on the second day.)

2. Prompt and regular attendance and participation in class discussion.  
Students are expected to BE PRESENT, both physically and mentally. This  
means tuning in to discussion, taking notes regarding important concepts, and  
offering commentary on assigned novels that is backed up by textual evidence.  
ALL ELECTRONIC DEVICES MUST BE TURNED OFF AND PUT AWAY BY  
THE TIME CLASS BEGINS.

3. Regular reading quizzes on the second day of discussing a novel. The lowest  
quiz grade will be dropped in figuring your final grade.

4. One final GROUP ORAL PRESENTATION. Details of this assignment will be  
presented during Week 6.

5. Two 3-4 page essays, one of which will be a stylistic analysis of one novel, and  
one of which will be a comparison between two novels. You can choose the order  
in which you wish to write the essays. They will be due as noted in the schedule.  
Detailed instructions regarding the essays will be given during the REQUIRED  
WRITING WORKSHOP ON OCT. 11. Students who fail to attend the workshop  
cannot expect a grade higher than "B" on the two required essays.
Grades

20% Attendance and participation
20% Reading quizzes
40% Essays (each essay counts 20%)
20% Final oral presentation

Policy on Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty

All work submitted for this course must be your own and must be written exclusively for this course. Any borrowing of ideas or words from assigned texts or outside sources—whether it be in the form of quotations, summaries or paraphrases—must be clearly documented. For a further definition of plagiarism and information on documentation, refer to the summary of the Code of Student Conduct in the Schedule of Classes. Any student who violates this policy can expect, at the very least, to fail this class.

Policy on Access for Students with Disabilities

If you have a disability (physical or learning) which you think may affect your performance in this class, please see me during the first day of the term so we can make arrangements, if necessary, for your full access to all classroom activities.

SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

Week 1: September 30-October 4

Monday
Introduction: Why Study Detective Fiction?
Background lecture: Beginnings
   Placing American detective fiction in context with French and English influences
   Early American practitioners (A.K. Green, E.A. Poe)

Wednesday
The “Hard-boiled Dick”
Film: Documentary on The Maltese Falcon

Friday
Background lecture: Hammett
Begin discussion of The Maltese Falcon, with emphasis on writing style

Week 2: October 7-11

Monday
Continue discussion of The Maltese Falcon
QUIZ
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Finish discussion of <em>The Maltese Falcon</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>REQUIRED WRITING WORKSHOP</td>
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**Week 3: October 14-18**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Background lecture: The Pinkerton Detective Agency and the Continental Op</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Begin discussion of <em>Red Harvest</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Continue Discussion of <em>Red Harvest</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>QUIZ</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Finish discussion of <em>Red Harvest</em></td>
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**Week 4: October 21-25**

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<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Background lecture: Chandler</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>Begin discussion of <em>The Big Sleep</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Continue discussion of <em>The Big Sleep</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>QUIZ</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Finish discussion of <em>The Big Sleep</em></td>
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**Week 5: October 28-November 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Background lecture: Macdonald and Freud</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Begin discussion of <em>The Galton Case</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Continue discussion of <em>The Galton Case</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>QUIZ</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Finish discussion of <em>The Galton Case</em></td>
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<td>FIRST ESSAY DUE</td>
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**Week 6: November 4-8**

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<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>The “noir” genre and the detective on the radio</th>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>The “noir” genre and the detective on film</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Preparation for final oral presentations</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Week 7: November 11-15

Monday  
Background lecture: A minority report  
Begin discussion of *A Rage in Harlem*

Wednesday  
Continue discussion of *A Rage in Harlem*  
QUIZ

Friday  
Finish discussion *A Rage in Harlem*

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Week 8: November 18-22

Monday  
*Femme Fatale* to Female Dick: Feminist challenges to the “hard-boiled” tradition  
Begin discussion of *Indemnity Only*

Wednesday  
Continue discussion of *Indemnity Only*  
QUIZ

Friday  
Finish discussion of *Indemnity Only*  
Begin discussion of *Inner City Blues*

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Week 9: November 25-29

Monday  
Continue discussion of *Inner City Blues*  
QUIZ

Wednesday  
Finish discussion of *Inner City Blues*

Friday  
THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

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Week 10: December 2-6 ("Dead Week")

Monday  
Begin discussion of *Black Echo*

Wednesday  
Continue discussion of *Black Echo*  
QUIZ

Friday  
Finish discussion of *Black Echo*  
SECOND ESSAY DUE

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Finals Week: December 9-13

Wednesday  
Final Exam period 10:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m.  
ORAL PRESENTATIONS
# University of Oregon
## Department of English
## Undergraduate Grading Policies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Course Grade</th>
<th>Holistic Performance in Class</th>
<th>Engagement with Course Materials and Participation</th>
<th>Essay Writing</th>
<th>Exams</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+/A/A+*</td>
<td>Excellent, exceeds expectations</td>
<td>Reads texts or images closely and carefully, incorporates this consideration of the assigned material into thoughtful contributions to class discussion.</td>
<td>Makes an original argument supported by a clear line of reasoning and analysis of textual evidence. Allows the scholarly community to conceive of the question at issue in a new way. No errors in grammar, style, or mechanics. Exceeds expectations. Revises.</td>
<td>Demonstrates a clear, comprehensive understanding of all material covered in the class, including lectures, in-class discussion, and readings. Answers all questions completely and exceeds expectations. Has mastered the material and met all course objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-/B/B+</td>
<td>Good, meets expectations and occasionally exceeds some expectations</td>
<td>Reads texts or images carefully. Listens to fellow students and instructor and contributes occasionally to class discussion.</td>
<td>Makes an original argument about a text. Textual analysis supports a line of reasoning. Few errors. Revises.</td>
<td>Understands all material covered in the course. Answers questions completely and meets expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-/C/C+</td>
<td>Adequate, meets but does not exceed expectations</td>
<td>Has read or viewed course materials and actively listens.</td>
<td>Makes an argument. Some reasoning supports main argument. Textual evidence is present. Some errors.</td>
<td>Understands most material covered. Answers questions completely but makes some mistakes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-/D/D+</td>
<td>Poor, fails to meet some expectations</td>
<td>Has put minimal effort into preparation for class. Fails to participate constructively in class discussion.</td>
<td>No clear main argument. Errors are such that meaning is obscured. Some reference to text in question, but no textual evidence. Does not meet expectations for assignment.</td>
<td>Understands only some of the material or has a superficial grasp of the material. Answers some questions completely but not all. Makes mistakes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failing Grade</td>
<td>Does not meet expectations</td>
<td>Unprepared for class. No class participation.</td>
<td>Essay does not meet assignment expectations. No argument, no line of reasoning or original thought expressed.</td>
<td>Does not understand course material. Many mistakes.</td>
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*Note: the grade of A+ is rare in English courses, especially on interpretive, analytical, and argumentative writing assignments. An A+ denotes not only "excellence" but "mastery" of all aspects of course material and performance.*