

ENG 316: Women Writers/Forms

Nosey Spinsters & Tough Broads: Women Writers (Re)Invent the Detective

Fall 2015

CRN 12111
300 Villard Hall

MWF 2:00-2:50 p.m.

Instructor: Dr. Kathleen O'Fallon

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Office Hours: MWF 11:00-11:50 a.m. and Tues. 11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Required Texts:

Susan Glaspell	"A Jury of Her Peers" (1917)*
Anna Katharine Green	<i>The Leavenworth Case</i> (1878)
Agatha Christie	<i>The Murder at the Vicarage</i> (1930)
Sarah Weinman, ed.	<i>Troubled Daughters, Twisted Wives</i>
Dorothy Sayers	<i>Strong Poison</i> (1930)
Sara Paretsky	<i>Indemnity Only</i> (1982)
Tana French	<i>In the Woods</i> (2007)

*A free pdf can be found at this link:

<http://www1.law.umkc.edu/Academic/Spring2011/assignments/MiniTerm/AJuryofHerPeers.pdf>

Course Description:

The names of male writers like Arthur Conan Doyle and Dashiell Hammett have long dominated the study of detective fiction, leaving the significant contributions of women writers to be marginalized and dismissed as formulaic, "cozy" or stylistically uninteresting. This course aims to question assumptions about female detectives and female writers of detective fiction by examining novels by women (and one man) who began defining the conventions of the mystery/detective fiction genre before Sherlock Holmes was created, who challenged established conventions, who created some of the genre's most memorable detectives, and who refused to be limited by common conceptions of what can be achieved in crime fiction. We will study groundbreaking works by A.K. Green, widely influential works by Agatha Christie and Dorothy Sayers, stories by largely forgotten authors, and contemporary works by Sara Paretsky and Tana French.

Requirements:

1. Regular and prompt attendance.
2. Close reading of all texts, completed by the day the assignment is listed on the schedule.

If it becomes clear that students are not keeping up with reading assignments, I reserve the right to give unannounced reading quizzes.

3. Active participation in class discussion.
4. Four short (3-4 page max) essays on assigned novels.
5. Group presentation on novels not assigned for class. (Details of assignment on separate handout)

6. Evaluation of group procedure and presentation.

Policy on Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty:

All work submitted in this course must be your own and must be written exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, and paraphrases) must be properly documented. Refer to the summary of the Code of Student Conduct in the *Schedule of Classes*. In cases where plagiarism has been clearly established, the award of an F for the final course grade is my standard practice. It is simple to discover if a paper has been “borrowed” from the online sources, so don’t underestimate my ability to spot plagiarism. Please talk to me if you have any questions about your use of sources *before* you turn in something that might be questionable.

Policy on Late Papers and Make-up Exams:

If exigent circumstances cause problems with the due date for the essays, you must discuss this with me BEFORE the deadline so that arrangements can be made. **Late work that is not cleared with the instructor prior to the due date will not be accepted.**

Policy on Disabilities:

Students with physical or learning disabilities should consult the instructor as soon as possible so accommodations can be made.

Learning Outcomes: The Department’s assessment procedure for the Undergraduate English Major is built around six desired learning outcomes. All assignments for this class are designed to help students achieve one or more of these learning outcomes, and grades will reflect students’ progress toward these goals. These outcomes are:

1. To read literary and cultural texts with discernment and comprehension and with an understanding of their conventions;
2. To draw on relevant cultural and/or historical information to situate texts within their cultural, political, and historical contexts;
3. To perform critical, formal analyses of literary, cinematic, and other cultural texts;
4. To write focused, analytical essays in clear, grammatical prose;
5. To employ logic, creativity, and interpretive skills to produce original, persuasive arguments;
6. To employ primary and/or secondary sources, with proper acknowledgment and citation, as they contribute to a critical essay’s thesis.

Grades:

Each of the following requirements has weight in determining your grade:

- ✓ Essays (70%)
- ✓ Attendance and Participation (10%)
- ✓ Group Presentation and Evaluation (20%)

Attendance and Participation:

Students are expected to be in class, on time, having read the materials assigned for that day and having done any required writing. Assignments are due when class begins.

Attendance will be taken every day. It is your responsibility to sign in on the attendance sheet *for yourself only*. More than three absences will result in a one-half grade penalty in the final course grade. **Attending class is a choice you have to make on your own, and that means you have to accept the consequences of that choice.**

I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences, except in two cases:

1. Illness so severe and prolonged that a doctor officially excuses you.
2. You are involved in a university-sanctioned activity.

Written proof of these excuses is required, but there is no need to explain your reasons for other absences. Emailing me that you are going to miss does not excuse you from class.

If you know you are going to miss a class, make advance arrangements with me to turn in any work that is due and/or to pick up handouts. Ask a classmate to catch you up on discussion that you will miss.

If you have an unplanned absence, see me *as soon as you return* to pick up missed handouts, and ask a classmate for any missed notes. If you have questions about material discussed while you were gone, come to my office hours. We will have carried on in your absence, so please don't be arrogant enough to ask *if* you missed anything. Of course, you did.

RULES OF CIVIL DISCOURSE FOR THE CLASSROOM

Do your homework, so you are adequately prepared for discussion.

Raise your hand politely (that is, don't wave it around like a first grader who needs to go to the bathroom or extend it aggressively when you hear something you disagree with) and wait to be recognized by the teacher before speaking.

Listen actively (but silently)—don't just wait for someone else to take a breath so you can jump in with your opinion.

Avoid interrupting others.

Don't assume that you need to add your "two cents' worth" on *every* aspect of discussion. You can learn by letting others take the lead sometimes.

State your ideas as concisely as possible, staying focused and avoiding repetition.

When you make strong claims, be ready to point to specific places in the text that back up your ideas.

Ask good questions, and remain as open-minded as possible.

Acknowledge other points of view even as you prepare to express your own opinion. (This shows that you have heard what the other person has said.)

Avoid one-on-one arguments that dominate the discussion without moving it forward. Keep discussion focused on ideas, not personalities.

... AND OBSERVE A FEW RULES OF SIMPLE COURTESY:

Turn off your cell phone and other electronic devices before class begins. (Exception: if you are using an electronic version of the text.)

Don't distract others by talking while someone else has the floor.

Be on time. If you must be late, be quiet and unobtrusive as you enter the classroom. Don't walk in front of the instructor while she is conducting the class.

Once you're in, stay in. Take care of getting snacks and using the restroom before class or during designated breaks.

If you absolutely cannot wait to use the restroom or get a drink of water, leave your cell phone in plain sight on your desk.

Statement Regarding Sexual Harassment

The UO is committed to providing an environment **free** of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence, and gender-based stalking. If you or someone you know has experienced or is currently experiencing gender-based violence (intimate partner violence, attempted or completed sexual assault, harassment, coercion, stalking, etc.), know that you are **not alone**. UO has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more.

Please be aware that all OU employees are required reporters. This means that if you tell me about a situation, I may have to report the information to my supervisor or the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity. Although I have to report the situation, you will still have options about how your case will be handled, including whether or not you wish to pursue a formal complaint. Our goal is to make sure that you are aware of the range of the options available to you and that you have access to the resources you need.

If you wish to speak to someone confidentially, you can call 541-346-SAFE, UO's 24-hour hotline or visit the website at safe.uoregon.edu.

Schedule of Assignments:

Week One: Sept. 28—Oct. 2

M	Introductions
W	Lecture: History of Detective Fiction in the U.S. and U.K.
F	"A Jury of Her Peers"—Are detective skills gendered?

Week Two: Oct. 5-9

M	<i>The Leavenworth Case</i> , Case Book I
W	<i>The Leavenworth Case</i> , Case Book II
F	<i>The Leavenworth Case</i> , Case Book III and IV

Week Three: Oct. 12-16

M	Excerpts from <i>That Affair Next Door</i> and "The Golden Slipper"
W	Conventions of Detective Fiction: Deducing a List "Sisters in Crime" groups assigned

F ***The Leavenworth Case* essay due**
Film: *The Mystery of Agatha Christie*

Week Four: Oct. 19-23

M Film: *The Mystery of Agatha Christie*
W *Murder at the Vicarage*, Chapters 1-10
F *Murder at the Vicarage*, Chapters 11-21

Week Five: Oct. 26-30

M *Murder at the Vicarage*, Chapters 22-32
W Introduction to Dorothy Sayers
***Murder at the Vicarage* essay due**
Group meetings
F *Strong Poison*, Chapters 1-7

Week Six: Nov. 2-6

M *Strong Poison*, Chapters 8-15
W *Strong Poison*, Chapters 16-23
F Women Detectives: The Missing Years
Group meetings

Week Seven: Nov. 9-13

M Holding, "The Stranger in the Car" in *Troubled Daughters, Twisted Wives*
W Caspary, "Sugar and Spice" in *Troubled Daughters, Twisted Wives*
F Millar, "The People Across the Canyon" in *Troubled Daughters, Twisted Wives*
Essay on any story from *Troubled Daughters, Twisted Wives* due

Week Eight: Nov. 16-20

M *Indemnity Only*, Chapters 1-6
W *Indemnity Only*, Chapters 7-13
F *Indemnity Only*, Chapters 14-18

Week Nine: Nov. 23-27

M ***Indemnity Only* essay due**; group meetings
W Group meetings
F THANKSGIVING OBSERVED; NO CLASS MEETING

Week Ten ("Dead Week"): Nov. 30-Dec. 4

M *In the Woods*, Chapters 1-8
W *In the Woods*, Chapters 9-17
F *In the Woods*, Chapters 18-25

Final Exam Period: Tuesday, Dec. 8, 2:45 p.m.
"Sisters in Crime" Presentations
***In the Woods* essay due**