ENG 316: Women Writers/Forms
Nosey Spinsters & Tough Broads: Women Writers (Re)Invent the Detective

Summer 2017 (June 26-July 20)       CRN 40806       MTWH 12:00-1:50 p.m.
360 Condon Hall

Instructor: Dr. Kathleen O'Fallon
Office: 256 PLC        Phone: 346-0994        Email: kofallon@uoregon.edu
Office Hours: MTWH 11:00-11:45 a.m. and by appointment

Required Texts:

Agatha Christie  The Murder at the Vicarage (1930)
Louise Penny  Still Life (2005)
Dorothy Sayers  Strong Poison (1930)
Sara Paretsky  Indemnity Only (1982)
Paula L. Woods  Inner City Blues (1999)
Tana French  In the Woods (2007)

Please be aware: Detective fiction contains violence, and it often presents characters who do not represent the best humankind has to offer. You may find offensive language and biased attitudes toward groups of people. It is our business to confront those elements in these novels that sometimes make us uncomfortable even as they offer realistic pictures of the time in which they are set. If you have serious issues with any assigned texts, please see me to arrange a suitable alternative.

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 who began redefining the conventions of the mystery/detective fiction genre after 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 widely influential “Golden Age” works by Agatha Christie and Dorothy Sayers, and we will compare them to groundbreaking contemporary novels.

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. Three short (3-4 page max) essays on novels
Essay Assignment

I will not assign specific prompts for required essays. Instead, you should be alert to possible lines of inquiry that surface in class discussion and in your own reading of a text.

As part of our ongoing discussion, we will be considering the following issues:

- The conventions and tropes of detective fiction
- The effects of gender on the role of the detective
- The literary value of "pop" fiction
- Writing style
- Narrative point of view
- "Pop" fiction's function as cultural critique
- Importance of setting (especially rural vs. urban)
- The detective as a "hero"

This list is intended to give you some general direction, not to limit your creativity. Obviously, each paper needs to be focused on a particular issue in a single novel. Consult me if you have questions about choosing a topic.

Some Things to Remember When Writing Essays About Literature

1. You are writing an argument, not just cataloguing observations. If your essay could be titled “Some Stuff I Noticed About [fill in novel's title],” you've got some further thinking to do. Don't leave your reader asking, “So what?”

2. Don't begin an essay with sweeping generalizations or historical surveys. Such openings are marginally accurate and frequently boring. Instead, bring your reader right into the novel you're discussing and define the scope of your inquiry.

3. You will need a unifying thesis, and you should write toward the thesis, not away from it. Holding back your complete thesis statement until you state it in the conclusion gives your essay a sense of forward movement and also gives you a solid conclusion—one that is more effective than a simple restatement of the thesis as it appears in your introduction.

4. A good thesis statement contains both an assertion—a complete clause that states your position on the question at issue—and the main reason you intend to argue in your essay. In this thesis statement (an "enthymeme"), you will have two clauses connected by "because." EXAMPLE: In Moby-Dick, Melville's connecting of the characters Ahab and Third Mate Flask lends plausibility to the larger-than-life Ahab BECAUSE it shows how a young man's hunger for excitement and adventure can evolve into obsession and insanity.

5. Writing your thesis statement in the form of an enthymeme will allow you to check for its logical validity and the soundness of assumptions upon which it is based.

6. When deciding what evidence to use for supporting your argument, keep these limits in mind:
   a. Speculation about "what might have happened if..." or what the author intended to do or should have done (in your humble opinion) or about anything that you cannot find clear evidence for in the text cannot be part of your argument. The source of evidence must be a close reading of the text.
   b. Extensive summaries of plot are seldom useful. Assume that your reader knows the work you are discussing. Select details that clearly and concisely support your claims.
c. Quote directly from the text whenever the author’s words illuminate the point you’re trying to make. Quote only what is directly relevant in a passage—don’t make your reader hunt for one important phrase buried in a long block quotation.

7. Essays are assigned so you may continue your study of a text beyond what is discussed in class and so you may form your own conclusions from your reading independent of class discussion. After all, we never have the chance to say everything there is to say about a text, nor do we always say the most enlightening things about it. Therefore, an essay that does nothing but reiterate points made in class does not extend your learning. Furthermore, it’s likely to be boring. Your essay might begin with an issue raised in class, but it needs to go beyond what has already been said, both extending the discussion and questioning assumptions and conclusions. Your thesis, your reasoning process, and your choice of textual evidence make your essay unique.

8. Stop at the bottom of page 4. I will.

9. I recommend that you turn in previous drafts with the final version of your essay, so that I can assess your revision skills. Revision is more than tinkering with surface errors. It should involve taking a serious look at the way you have constructed your argument, the quantity and quality of evidence offered to support your claims, and the soundness of your conclusions. Students frequently claim that they “really worked hard” on an assignment. A previous draft that shows thoughtful revision is just about the only way to support such a claim.

10. NEVER, NEVER, NEVER BORE YOUR READER [Me]!

**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. Because you only have to write essays on three of the six assigned novels, you should be able to manage due dates fairly easily. Nevertheless, 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 (75%)
- Attendance and Participation (25%) [May include quizzes]

**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 two (the equivalent of four classes during a regular term) 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.

**This is neither an online class nor a private tutorial. If absences begin to pile up so much that you are missing out on the essential experience of participating in an intellectual community considering common texts, please consider dropping the class.**

**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.) It is relatively easy for me to tell when students are looking at something on the screen that does not relate to class, so please refrain from watching cat videos or playing Candy Crush.

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. We will take a five-minute break midway through each class.

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. DO NOT LEAVE THE CLASSROOM TO MAKE OR RECEIVE PHONE CALLS.

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.

Due to a recent change in policy, only certain designated staff, faculty and administrators are mandatory reporters. This means that if you tell me about a situation, I do not have to report the information to my supervisor or the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity. If you want me to report the situation, I will follow your wishes and do as much as I can to assist you. You will always 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**.

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**Schedule of Assignments:**

*All reading assignments are to be COMPLETED by the day they appear on the class schedule. Fridays are scheduled ONLY as days to turn in essays; class does not convene on those days.*

**Week One: June 26-30**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>M</th>
<th>Introductions; forming hypotheses about detectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>Lecture: History of Detective Fiction in the U.S. and U.K.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td><strong>Murder at the Vicarage,</strong> Chapters 1-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th</td>
<td><strong>Murder at the Vicarage,</strong> Chapters 11-end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td><strong>Essay on Murder at the Vicarage due in my office by 3:00 p.m.</strong></td>
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**Week Two: July 3-7**

| M       | **Still Life,** Chapters 6-end                              |
| Tu      | **Strong Poison,** Chapters 1-7                             |
| W       | **Strong Poison,** Chapters 8-15                            |
| Th      | **Strong Poison,** Chapters 16-23                           |
| F       | **Essay on Still Life due in my office by 3:00 p.m.**        |

**Week Three: July 10-14**

| M       | **Indemnity Only,** Chapters 1-9                            |
| Tu      | **Indemnity Only,** Chapters 10-18                          |
| W       | **Essay on Strong Poison due in class**                     |
| Th      | **Inner City Blues,** Chapters 1-5                          |
| F       | **Essay on Indemnity Only due in my office by 3:00 p.m.**    |

**Week Four: July 17-21**

| M       | **Inner City Blues,** Chapters 11-23                        |
Tu  In the Woods, Chapters 1-8
W  In the Woods, Chapters 9-17
Th In the Woods, Chapters 18-25
F Essay on Inner City Blues due in my office by 3:00 p.m.

Monday, July 24: Essay on In the Woods due in my office 3:00 p.m.