

**Optional Literature Module: The Art of Crime**

(7.5 credits)

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Module description

Everyone knows that stories are imaginary. Whatever effect they might have on us, we know they are not true, even when they tell us truths more important than the ones we find elsewhere.

Paul Auster *The Locked Room*

This module is generally built around the seminars in which I hope that we will have interesting and stimulating discussions about the literature and films we have engaged with before each occasion. I wish to stress the importance of coming to the seminars well prepared. All of the seminars are constructed in such a way that active participation is a requirement. We will discuss the module content both in smaller groups and in the whole class. There will be plenty of space for your individual performance, but you will also have to engage with the ideas and views of your teacher and your fellow students. We will focus on the theme of crime, but also on various sidetracks as they appear during the module's progression. The aim of this module is to examine the complicated relation between art and crime. There will be a historical dimension mirrored in the narratives selected, but there will also be aspects of the module that focus on crime in fiction as a philosophical issue and a mass culture phenomenon. We will read classics as well as less well known detective and crime fiction and we will also work with other media. Together we will explore different sides of the phenomenon and hopefully our joint efforts will enable us to discern patterns that lead us in various exciting directions. Please note that the module is designed to stimulate your own capacity to read, observe, argue, draw conclusions and form your own understanding by means of the module content. Key concepts and ideas will grow out of our seminar discussions. Your own creativity as readers and your ideas about art and crime will ultimately constitute the core of the module.

Intended learning outcomes

Upon completion of the module, students are expected to be able to:

- Account for the contents of the course literature;
- Display the ability to use basic theoretical concepts, analytical models and methods in the field;
- Apply these concepts to literary texts;
- Analyse literary texts from a relevant theoretical perspective;
- Motivate their own analyses in writing in a manner relevant to the field;
- Display a good understanding of written English;
- Express themselves in academic English.

Grading

The module adopts the 7-grade SU scale (A–F).

To receive a final grade, students must have completed all the examination assignments [not done all examination assignments=no grade].

To receive a passing grade (A to E), students must complete and pass all the examination assignments, and thus demonstrate that they achieved all the learning outcomes at least at the minimum level (see “Module grading” below).

Module activities

The module consists of the following activities:

- Seminars (pre-seminar instructions for each seminar will be posted on Athena);
- Before each seminar, students are expected to finish the assigned reading, do any accompanying tasks, and discuss the texts and tasks in groups. Students should be prepared to discuss the reading and tasks at the seminar;
- Students are expected to complete all the tasks assigned by the teacher.

Examination

Students are required to complete the following:

- Oral presentation: a structured presentation defining and applying central concepts to the course readings in a selection of works from the reading list: pass/fail grading. These presentations will be given by students in the seminars. The order will be decided at the start of the module.
- Analytical essay: a research-led argument essay of 2000-2500 words, which must make reference both to primary sources and to at least two secondary peer reviewed sources: A-F grading scale.
- The final grade will be the essay grade (A–F), but the student must also have a passing grade (P) for the oral presentation.

Module format

The module will take place in the form of seminars, where students will practise analysing literary texts in terms of the specific historical, generic and critical perspectives dealt with in the course, as well as develop their skills in providing textual support for their reading.

Seminars are intended to be active, hands-on opportunities for students to practice the skills they will learn throughout the module; for this reason, the students should bring the assigned text(s) with them to every seminar.

Required reading

American Psycho, 2000. Directed by Mary Harron.

Auster, Paul. *The New York Trilogy*. London: Faber and Faber, 2011.

Black, Benjamin. *Christine Falls*. London: Picador, 2011.

Bound, 1996. Directed by the Wachowski siblings.

Chandler, Raymond. *The Big Sleep*. London: Penguin, 2011.

Christie, Agatha. *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*. London: Harper/Collins, 2002.

Cornwell, Patricia. *Postmortem*. London: Sphere, 2007.

CSI Miami, 2002 (season 1, part 1). The first episode and another one of your own choice.

Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan. *The Sign of Four*. London: Penguin, 2005.

Poe, Edgar Allan. “The Purloined Letter” and “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” in *Selected Tales*, Oxford World’s Classics, 2008.

Scaggs, John. *Crime Fiction*. Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2005.

Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth* [Arden Shakespeare second series]. London: Methuen, 2003.

Sherlock (A New Sleuth for the 21st Century), 2010 (Series 1). Directed by Paul McGuigan.

Schedule

Deadline: The essay is due 250119 (resubmission 250223) by midnight.

Unit (Key concepts)	Set reading
1. Introduction	In class texts provided by the teacher.
2. Plot, suspense, the past	Poe: “The Murders in the Rue Morgue”; presentation Group A
3. Whodunnit, detective fiction, hardboiled detective fiction, motive, Gothic fiction	Ch. 1 in <i>Crime Fiction (CF)</i> , Shakespeare: <i>Macbeth</i> , Poe: “The Purloined Letter”, watch <i>American Psycho</i> ; presentation Group B
4. Setting, social order, deduction, writerly fiction, armchair detection	Ch. 2 in <i>CF</i> , Christie: <i>The Murder of Roger Ackroyd</i> , Doyle: <i>The Sign of (the) Four</i> , watch <i>Sherlock</i> , episode 1 “Study in Pink”; presentation group C
5. Ideology, gender, xenophobia, noir	Ch. 3 in <i>CF</i> , Chandler: <i>The Big Sleep</i> , watch <i>Bound</i> ; presentation Group D
6. Social placebo, the past, forensic technology	Ch. 4 in <i>CF</i> , Cornwell: <i>Postmortem</i> , watch <i>CSI</i> ; presentation Group E
7. Violence, metafiction, howdunnit, postmodernism, anti-detective fiction	Ch. 5 in <i>CF</i> , Auster: <i>The New York Trilogy</i> ; presentation Group F
8. Present–past, reality–fiction	Ch. 6 in <i>CF</i> , Black: <i>Christine Falls</i>

Please note that there may be occasional changes to seminar dates/times and rooms. Check Time Edit regularly for updates.

Module grading criteria

	A	B	C	D	E	F _x	F
	excellent skills in	very good skills in	good skills in	Satisfactory skills in	Adequate skills in		
Overview of material	accounting for the contents of the course literature	accounting for the contents of the course literature	accounting for the contents of the course literature	accounting for the contents of the course literature	accounting for the contents of the course literature	The student has displayed some, but not all, of the skills of the level of the criteria for E.	The student's work does not demonstrate the achievement of the course outcomes at a minimally adequate level.
Discussion	displaying the ability to use basic theoretical concepts, analytical models and methods in the field, and applying these concepts to literary texts	displaying the ability to use basic theoretical concepts, analytical models and methods in the field, and applying these concepts to literary texts	displaying the ability to use basic theoretical concepts, analytical models and methods in the field, and applying these concepts to literary texts	displaying the ability to use basic theoretical concepts, analytical models and methods in the field, and applying these concepts to literary texts	displaying the ability to use basic theoretical concepts, analytical models and methods in the field, and applying these concepts to literary texts		
Analysis	analysing literary texts from a relevant theoretical perspective critically, and motivating their own analyses in writing in a manner relevant to the field	analysing literary texts from a relevant theoretical perspective critically, and motivating their own analyses in writing in a manner relevant to the field	analysing literary texts from a relevant theoretical perspective critically, and motivating their own analyses in writing in a manner relevant to the field	analysing literary texts from a relevant theoretical perspective critically, and motivating their own analyses in writing in a manner relevant to the field	analysing literary texts from a relevant theoretical perspective critically, and motivating their own analyses in writing in a manner relevant to the field		
Comprehension	displaying a good understanding of written English	displaying a good understanding of written English	displaying a good understanding of written English	displaying a good understanding of written English	displaying a good understanding of written English		
Expression	expressing themselves in academic English	expressing themselves in academic English	expressing themselves in academic English	expressing themselves in academic English	expressing themselves in academic English		

Grading criteria: Oral presentation

Criteria	Pass	Fail
Content	The presentation introduces the topic of the presentation in a clear and concise manner demonstrating the student's understanding of the literary, historical and theoretical issues discussed. These issues are presented and discussed in a lucid manner.	In the presentation the student does not demonstrate a sufficient understanding of the literary, historical, and theoretical issues discussed. These issues are not presented and discussed in an adequate manner.
Organisation and language	The presentation is well structured and easy to follow. The language used is academic and does not contain any severe mistakes.	The organisation of the presentation is poor, and the language used contains several mistakes.