

Lecturer: Rieke Jordan

Tuesdays 2 pm - 4 pm

Room: IG 0.251

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 4:15 pm – 5:15 pm

American Crimes

10/04 Introduction
Syllabus, Course Material, Credit Requirements

Let's Get Started: Edgar Allan Poe's Detective Mysteries

17/04 Poe: "The Murders in the Rue Morgue"

- Howard Haycraft, *Murder for Pleasure*, excerpts
- Maurice S Lee, "Edgar Allan Poe." In *A Companion to Crime Fiction*
- <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/poe/murders.html>

24/04 Poe: "The Purloined Letter" and "The Mystery of Marie Roget"

- http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/poe/m_roget.html
- <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/poe/purloine.html>
- Optional reading: Jacques Lacan, Lecture on Purloined Letter
<http://www.lacan.com/purloined.htm>

Hardboiled Fiction Spotlight: James M Cain

01/05 No Class

08/05 James M. Cain – *The Postman Always Rings Twice*

- Megan Abbot, *The Street was Mine*. excerpts
- Sean McCann, *Gumshoe America* excerpts
- **Homework:** group A) read up on Freud // group b) read up on the United States in 1930s

15/05 James M. Cain – *Double Indemnity*

- Raymond Chandler, "The Simple Art of Murder."

22/05 Screen Translation: Billy Wilder's *Double Indemnity*

- Material: *Double Indemnity* (1944)
- Paul Schrader, "Notes on Film Noir", in *The Film Genre Reader*
- Robert G. Porfirio, "No Way Out: Existential Motifs in *Film Noir*." In *Film Noir Reader*
- Adam Thomas, "I Killed Him for his Money" in *Opticon*

WRITING FELLOWS WEEK

29/05 Rethinking the Tradition: *The Last Seduction*

- Elizabeth Cowie, "Women and Film Noir", In *Shades of Noir*
- Homework: read up on "neo noir" by yourself and bring one source to class

True Crimes

- 05/06 Truman Capote – *In Cold Blood* #1 (Chapter 1&2)
- William Wiegand, “The Non-Fiction Novel.” In *New Mexico Quarterly*
- 12/06 Truman Capote – *In Cold Blood* #2 (Chapter 3&4)
- Material: Patrick Radden-Keefe, “Capote’s Co-Conspirators” In: *newyorker.com*
 - <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2009/nov/16/truman-capote-in-cold-blood>
 - <http://www.gctelegram.com/news/20171115/true-crime-story-endures>
- 19/06 American Crime Story: *The People vs. OJ Simpson*
- Watch first three episodes (available on *Netflix*)
 - Material: Jeffrey Toobin, “An Incendiary Defense”, In: *newyorker.com*
 - <http://www.latimes.com/local/la-oj-simpson-stories-storygallery.html>
 - <http://www.latimes.com/local/la-me-oj-simpsons-exwife-found-stabbed-to-death-story.html>
 - <http://timelines.latimes.com/oj-simpson-murder-trial/>
- 26/06 “Binge-Worthy Journalism” - *Serial* (Season 1)
- Acquaint yourself with the website and the information provided: <https://serialpodcast.org/season-one>
 - Podcast: listen to the first three episodes of the series (“The Alibi”; “The Breakup”; “Leakin Park”)
 - Homework: Read articles on news outlets such as Atlantic, New Yorker, New Yorker Times, Washington Post, Spiegel, etc. How is *Serial* discussed? Which reoccurring topics can we make out in journalistic covering?

WRITING FELLOWS WEEK

03/07 Open Session

10/07 Wrap up and Review

About this Class

This BA-level seminar looks at the representations of crime in American literature and culture. The class is particularly invested in the social figures and spaces crime is capable of producing and changing. By looking at thieves, con (wo)men, and crooks, but also detectives and the police force, we will consider themes such as social mobility, trust, race, class, and gender, as well as the crime-ridden city in American fiction. Readings will include Edgar Allan Poe’s Dupin mysteries, Truman Capote’s *In Cold Blood*, and the movie *The Last Seduction*, among others.

LEARNING GOALS:

- achieving grounding in cultural objects like movies, novels, podcasts, and tv series and interrogating their specificities through the lens of “American crime”
- using different lenses (i.e., gender, morale, the city) for a close reading of these texts
- developing skills for close reading and critical examination of cultural objects
- situating the objects into a broader context of American cultural and literary history
- employing these skills in written form in the final paper, independent study, and the writing fellow assignments

READING MATERIAL:

- the reader for the seminar will be available for purchase at Skript and Kopic (Wolfgangstraße) – texts not included in the seminar reader are indicated (online)
- please purchase:
 - Double Indemnity* by James M. Cain
 - The Postman Always Rings Twice* by James M. Cain
 - In Cold Blood* by Truman Capote