

Fall 2023

HSS-404 (103): Literature Seminar: Mystery Writers on Screen

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Syllabus: READ AND KEEP!

HSS 404-103

(Tuesdays 6:00-9:00pm)

MURDER, THEY WROTE: Class will meet in CKB G-17A
MODERN MYSTERY WRITERS on PAGE, STAGE & SCREEN

05 Sept 2023 – 12 Dec 2023

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The class will meet once a week Tuesdays at 6pm. We will be expected to maintain the pace, examining the works and authors outlined below. I anticipate filming a portion of each class and will make these available on request to students who have had to miss the class for reasons beyond their control. Most of the films we will be examining in class will be accessible through Google Drive <<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1H-OZztHo5PvyAqpF2njUt5Mz42xJr6vu?usp=sharing>>. Please bookmark this site; it is different from the Google Drive site the university makes available to you for your personal use. You should be able to access these recordings (and other material we may be using) on your computer or smart phone as I have and plan to continue converting the files to MP4 format.

Four Quizzes will be held during the Semester as indicated in this Syllabus, but I will do my best not to have a new Quiz before I have returned the last one as ALL Quizzes (like life) are cumulative. We will start each class with a brief recap of the previous class's issues and how they lead into the chief work under examination in that class. We may then screen (in whole or part) and discuss a major work or part thereof, the elements which make it distinctive, the influences which went into its creation and how it influenced later work. It will be essential that the student research the writer to be under discussion AND screen the listed works in the Google Drive file *outside* class **BEFORE** the class to make the course effective. As a textbook/companion to the course I am using (it is out of print but good used copies are available very reasonably on Amazon and eBay) an excellent light reference called *The Encyclopedia Mysterosa* by William L. DeAndrea (any edition). I *may* be able to loan copies to the class either out of my office or the Humanities office starting September 6.

There will be two **RESEARCH** papers required, the first (7-10 pages) due on Tuesday, Oct 3, on a subject to be assigned in the second class; the second (10-15 pages) due Tuesday, Nov 14, analyzing the Broadway production of a *non-mystery* play (TBA) as to how it uses the *elements of mystery writing* we have discussed in class. I will advise the class on the best ways to get the best possible price on tickets and allow students to see the show at their convenience *OUTSIDE class hours* some time during the period from [Class 4] to [Class 9]. There will be **NO EXTENSIONS** on the final paper.

It is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to get notes and materials from classmates for any classes you have to miss. IF YOU KNOW you are going to miss a class, e-mail me ASAP (and NOT LATER than 24 hours after the class in question) and I will try to help. The films, plays and musicals which the classes will be built around, the general topics and deadlines currently anticipated are as follows:

Week One – Sept. 5 - Introduction / “Atmosphere” (the catch-all element)

MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS (1974); Agatha Christie, part 1

Week Two – Sept. 12 - Birth of modern genre, the “5 Elements” from Poe & early detectives

MURDER IN THE RUE MORGUE (1932)/THE BAT (1930)

Week Three – Sept. 19 - The classic case & the first disciple: Arthur Conan Doyle

THE ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES (1939)

Week Four – Sept. 26 - Serials and continuing characters in film and TV

(First Quiz)

SHERLOCK HOLMES (1939-46), CHARLIE CHAN (1929-49), etc. (start of "Play window")

Week Five – Oct. 3 - The "Hard Boiled" Detectives: Dashiell Hammett

(first paper due)

THE MALTESE FALCON (1931, 36 & 41!)

- Week Six – Oct 10 - Serials, part 2 (& Dashiell Hammett part 2 too!)
THE THIN MAN (1934)
- Week Seven – Oct 17 - Humor in the genre (Second Quiz)
WHO FRAMED (and "Who Censored") ROGER RABBIT? (1988)
- Week Eight – Oct 24 - Plot twists and variations - the "whodunWHAT " and the "Thriller"
DEATHTRAP (1982) [note SLEUTH (1972)]
also: hand out WITNESS FOR THE PROSECUTION short story (1924) & play (1954)
- Week Nine – Oct 31 - Building plot twists - Agatha Christie, part 2 (Third Quiz)
WITNESS FOR THE PROSECUTION (1957)
- Week Ten – Nov. 7 - The Director: Alfred Hitchcock
JUNO AND THE PAYCOCK (1930), TO CATCH A THIEF (1955), PSYCHO (1960)
- Week Eleven – Nov 14 – Style over substance #1 (film noir and its heirs) (Final Research Paper Due)
THE BIG SLEEP (1946)/THE USUAL SUSPECTS (1995)
- Week Twelve – Nov 21 - Musicals - The Toughest Option
MURDER AT THE VANITIES/REDHEAD/SOMETHING'S AFOOT/ ...EDWIN DROOD/
CITY OF ANGELS/CURTAINS/ A GENTLEMAN'S GUIDE...etc.
- Week Thirteen – Nov 28 – Style over substance #2 (TV & Cable adaptations #2) (Final Quiz)
REMINGTON STEELE (1982-1987) / PUSHING DAISYS (2007-2009)
- Week Fourteen – Dec 5 – Literacy vs. Box Office?
THE HONEY POT (1967) / THE LAST OF SHEILA (1973)
- Final Grades Due – Dec 23

GRADES, PAPERS, PORTFOLIOS & other submissions - book keeping matters

The first paper will count for a quarter of students' final grade, and the final paper will count for an additional quarter. Regularly scheduled quizzes taken together with any pop quizzes, class participation (including Canvas Discussions) and other projects will count a final fifty percent. The grading scale will require a minimum of a 94 for an A (90-93 = a B+), 84 for a B, 74 for a C and 60 will mark the bottom score necessary for a D. At the end of the Semester you will be required to submit a **HARD COPY PORTFOLIO** *and* a workable link to your e-Portfolio. **Failure to submit these portfolios will result in a grade of "F" being filed.**

Final Grades will be calculated as follows: First Paper – 25%
Second Paper – 25%
Quizzes & Attendance/Class Participation – 50%

Any papers or quizzes submitted must have the student's name and the full class number in the upper right hand corner of the first page. Unless specifically otherwise indicated, ALL class assignments will have to be submitted in hard copy on or before the due date in Class or to my mail box in the Humanities Office (4th floor Cullimore Hall) or the eye-level plastic tray outside my office **and** in digital form in Canvas. Any e-mail inquiries related to the class must have the full class number at the **start** of the subject line of the e-mail so that I can get to them ASAP from among the other things in my inbox.

All papers to be handed in (unless otherwise specified) are to be college level researched and cited papers: type

written, numbered by page, with citations to the research used in MLA format (parenthetical citations within the text linked to the alphabetical listing of those sources on the final reference page - not included in the page count). Research supporting your analysis will be expected to run a minimum of one “outside resource” (such as reviews and/or books and articles on the subject) per assigned page – the subject text/film or play to be included as a cited “resource.” Just as the proper presentation of your work and ideas is essential in the work world to ensure that they are received and evaluated properly, so it is in this class. Contractions, spelling errors, grammatical and punctuation errors will hurt your grade. Clearly identify all abbreviations and acronyms and keep them consistent. A standard 12 point font, double spaced to facilitate corrections and comments, will be expected. Similar care as to spelling, grammar and punctuation should be used in email communications. **DEADLINES ARE IMPORTANT - JUST LIKE AT WORK!** You must maintain a Portfolio of Quizzes and Papers to be submitted for final grade on the last class.

FURTHER IMPORTANT POINTS TO KEEP IN MIND:

Both for the following reason(s) and to protect yourself against computer crashes, I STRONGLY recommend that you maintain a hard copy *AND (if you don't already have one) e-Portfolio* (the university provides you ample free space for these OFF your personal hard drives!) during the semester and beyond. At each stage of drafting of major papers you should back them up to that e-Portfolio.

Access and proper use of these electronic resources is your responsibility. Their availability is constant, 24/7. If you discover any technical problems with the software or have any interface difficulties during the course, it is up to you to contact your professor or one of the IT/Help resources associated with the website as quickly as possible. I will be on hand for advice and guidance via either email or office hours every day.

At the end of the fall and spring semester, the Humanities Department may schedule an additional review of a selected sample of students' portfolios. The teachers will be told in advance which portfolios will be included in the review. The portfolios will be read by two instructors and given a holistic score based on a six-point scale. The assessment is based on three criteria:

- evidence of analytical and critical thinking
- drafting and successful revision of papers
- Demonstrated skill in citing and documenting sources using MLA style.

The Departmental portfolio review will be used to monitor the various writing programs. The group reading session is intended to develop a communal sense of the program's goals and to track writing achievements. This additional review will NOT directly affect your grade, but it is essential that you co-operate with it in order to keep NJIT's writing program as good as you deserve – it cannot function if YOU don't keep up your Portfolios as described above!

Academic Integrity

Any evidence of cheating in any form, including plagiarism and cutting & pasting from the Internet, will be dealt with according to the Academic Integrity Code of NJIT (course failure and suspension or expulsion). Please note that to detect plagiarism, submissions may be reviewed using www.turnitin.com. The full text of the NJIT's Academic Integrity Code is available for your review at <http://www.njit.edu/academics/integrity.php>

The Writing Center at NJIT

The Writing Center is available for one-hour individual and group appointments with professional writing tutors both onsite and online. This resource is intended to help you to improve your communication and writing skills and has proven extremely helpful to many of your peers in the past. Tutors can help with planning assignments, improving your writing, refining an essay or multimedia project, or other communication-based needs. Students will

most likely need to schedule one week in advance for appointments. For more information, please visit <https://www.njit.edu/writingcenter/>

I am including the Class Roster for the Section (as of 5 September 2023) to aid you in finding study partners:

[Orlando Abregu_oza2@njit.edu](mailto:Orlando.Abregu_oza2@njit.edu)

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