

Fall 2024

## HSS 404-109: Mystery Writers on Screen

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Syllabus: READ AND KEEP!

HSS 403-009

(Thursdays 6:00-9:00pm)

MURDER, THEY WROTE:

Class will meet in CKB 212

5 Sept 2024– 5 Dec 2024

MODERN MYSTERY WRITERS on PAGE, STAGE & SCREEN

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The class will meet once a week on Thursday evenings. We will be expected to maintain the pace, examining the works and authors outlined below. Most of the works we will be examining and discussing have been converted to MP4 and posted in a 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. You are expected to **PREPARE FOR CLASS by screening the scheduled works IN ADVANCE and be prepared to discuss them**. The class will be more useful if you do some light research on each of the authors/directors in advance to contribute to the discussion.

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 and discuss a *part* of that week's subject matter, the elements which make it distinctive, the influences which went into its creation and how it influenced later work. To repeat, 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 Mysteriosa* 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 Sept. 4.

There will be two **RESEARCH** papers required, the first (7-10 pages) due on Friday, October 4, on a subject to be assigned in the second class; the second (10-20 pages) due Friday, November 15, 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) [Thanksgiving Break]

Week Fourteen – Dec. 5 – Literacy vs. Box Office?

THE HONEY POT (1967) / THE LAST OF SHEILA (1973)

Week Fifteen – Dec. 12?

TBA (Currently scheduled as a reading day)

Final Grades Due – Dec. 21

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

The first paper will count for a third of students' final grade, and the final paper will count for an additional third. Regularly scheduled quizzes taken together with any pop quizzes, class participation (including Moodle Discussions) and other projects will count a final third. 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 – 10%

Second Paper – 25%

Quizzes – 50%

Attendance, Participation, etc. – 15%

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 either in class or to my mail box in the Humanities Office (4th floor Cullimore Hall). **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 both in hard copy and open-able e-form (the latter is to facilitate regular Department Readings - I strongly prefer to grade from hard copies).

#### **FURTHER IMPORTANT POINTS TO KEEP IN MIND:**

Both for the above 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](http://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/>

**When I have more than one section of this class I include Class Rosters for all the sections to aid you in finding study partners. In any case, I strongly recommend that you form a study group of three to five members for each of your classes. Using these friends to review for quizzes and proofread papers can make a real difference in grades!**

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