

## ENGLISH 200: DETECTIVE FICTION SPRING 2011

Instructor: Dr. Casey A. Cothran

Class: English 200-002

Section: 21235, 12:30-1:45 MW (Kinard 201)

Credits: 3

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Office Hours: 9:00-12:00 TR (and by appointment)

Turnitin.com Information: Class ID (3718498) Password (ilovepapers)

### TEXTS:

Christie, Agatha. *Murder at the Vicarage*. New York: Signet, 2000.

Collins, Wilkie. *The Moonstone*. New York, NY: Penguin Classics, 1999.

Cornwell, Patricia. *The Body Farm*. New York: Berkley Books, 2007.

Doyle, Arthur Conan. *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Mineola, NY: Dover, 1994.

Mansfield-Kelley, Deane and Lois A. Marchino. *The Longman Anthology of Detective Fiction*.  
New York: Pearson, Longman, 2005.

### COURSE DESCRIPTION:

English 200 is a 3 credit course that focuses on specific literary genres. In particular, this class will look at the mystery/detective fiction genre, exploring how past and present authors have struggled to write stories that address the chaotic and frightening conditions of death and loss. The class will address questions such as: Does solving a murder mystery make a death seem more acceptable and understandable? How has the detective novel changed over the past 160 years? Do we still believe in the existence of a Sherlock Holmes – a brilliant policeman who can solve any problem and discover any wickedness? What do we fear? How complex do we understand crimes and criminals to be? How do we define “crime”? How have advances in modern science affected the content and structure of the detective novel? How do novels merge together scientific ideas and literary tropes? How do these novels play on the fact that many readers see the “different” bodies of foreigners and handicapped people as frightening? How does a novel about crime address the strengths and weaknesses of society? Can all crimes be solved? If so, can the damage inflicted by crime/violence ever truly be overcome?

In class, we will explore texts that arise from different cultures and from different historical periods, and that take the form of either novel, short story, or film (WU English Department Goal 1). Additionally, papers and exams will aid students in their quests to become better readers, writers, and critical thinkers (WU English Department Goal 3). Hopefully you will enjoy the topic and thus approach both the class discussion and the written assignments with enthusiasm!

This course fulfills Touchstone Goals:

1.1 Read, write, and speak standard English.

1.2 Analyze written, spoken, and nonverbal messages from a variety of disciplines.

- 2.2 Analyze and use a variety of information gathering techniques
- 2.3 Conduct independent research
- 2.5 Use the library and other information sources competently
- 4.1 Analyze diverse cultures, historical periods and artistic expressions
- 4.2 Understand cultures in their own terms and in terms of the diversity of ideas, institutions, philosophies, moral codes, and ethical principles.

#### STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

##### Learning Objectives Related to the Humanities and Arts Perspective

1. Demonstrate knowledge of and appreciation for diverse intellectual and/or cultural viewpoints
2. Critically evaluate diverse intellectual and/or cultural viewpoints
3. Critically evaluate aesthetic process and/or performance
4. Demonstrate knowledge of creative process and aesthetic values
5. Engage in the creative process through composition and/or performance
6. Demonstrate knowledge of the history of the arts
7. Demonstrate understanding of the relationships among various art forms within their socio-historical contexts
8. Demonstrate knowledge of and appreciation for diverse values and beliefs
9. Critically evaluate those values and beliefs
10. Examine their own values and beliefs
11. Critically evaluate material in a variety of formats (e.g. written, aural, visual, etc.)
12. Gather information and to develop and effectively communicate ideas in Standard English
13. Conduct independent research and/or analysis
14. Discriminate among information sources (e.g. print sources, visual media, internet sources, performances and exhibitions, interviews, etc.)

Knowledge: By the end of the semester, students will be able to

- **Identify** how mystery and detective fiction can function both as a cultural artifact and as a work of art/literature (Humanities LO 3, 6, 7)
- **Identify** the role that literature plays in the development and understanding of human cultures (Humanities LO 7, 8, 9)
- **Describe** how the selected readings reflect and reinforce “the diversity of ideas, institutions, philosophies, moral codes, and ethical principles” (Touchstone Goal #4, Humanities LO 2, 8, 9, 10)

Skills: By the end of the semester, students will be able to

- **Demonstrate** their ability to read critically and to write analytically (through successful completion of tests, papers, and other graded work) (Humanities LO 12)
- **Demonstrate** a basic understanding of the processes appropriate to composing in a variety of forms and for a variety of audiences and purposes (Humanities LO 12)

- **Apply** the skills of literary research, including MLA documentation and research sources (Humanities LO 13, 14)
- **Incorporate** appropriate literary terminology in discussions of assigned works

Attitudes: By the end of the semester, students will be able to

- **Recognize** literature as a source of wonder and insight (Humanities LO 3, 4, 9, 10)

**Writing Component:** Students will write three short responses (2-3 pp each) and a 4-6 page research paper, as well as essay questions on exams.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

This class is reading intensive. However, I do believe the reading is manageable, especially if you can train yourself to read a little bit each night, instead of trying to cram each day’s homework into one reading session. *The Moonstone* is the most historic piece we will read; for this novel, you will be assigned 25 pages a day. As we take on more recent novels, the pace will increase, but you should still be able to complete the assigned reading in the time allotted. Indeed, I hope you will be inspired to sit down and devour the modern bestseller (by Patricia Cornwell) in just a few sittings!

Over the course of the semester, you will write three short papers (2-3 pages each), one longer essay based on reading and research you will conduct outside of class (4-6 pages), and you will be asked to complete 2 exams (both with writing components). Your final grade will also take into account how consistently you pass quizzes on your reading homework.

Response 1, Nineteenth-Century People and Ideas	10%
Response 2, The Character of the Detective	10%
Response 3, Crime Stories vs. Parlor Mysteries	10%
Essay on Independent Reading/Viewing	20%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	20%
Daily Quiz Grade and Class Participation	10%

**GRADING STANDARDS**

Numerically, grades are as follows:

93-100	A	73-76	C
90-92	A-	70-72	C-
87-89	B+	67-69	D+
83-86	B	63-66	D
80-82	B-	60-62	D-
77-79	C+	59 and below	F

**PLAGIARISM POLICY**

All work in this class that uses outside sources must be documented correctly in the MLA documentation style. Please review the English Department’s policy on Using Borrowed

Information at <http://www.winthrop.edu/english/plagiarism.htm>. You are responsible for reviewing the Code of Student Conduct in your *Student Handbook* and the description of plagiarism in *The Prentice-Hall Reference Guide to Grammar and Usage* and handling source materials correctly. If you turn in plagiarized work, I reserve the right to assign you a failing grade for the course. The University Policy on Plagiarism is explained at <http://www.winthrop.edu/studentaffairs/Judicial/judcode.htm> under section V, “Academic Misconduct.”

We will be using [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com) this semester. Your turnitin.com Class ID is 3718498, our class name is ENGL 200: Detective S11, and the class password is ilovepapers. Be sure to sign up soon! Papers not submitted to [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com) will not be graded.

**Student Conduct Code:** As noted in the Student Conduct Code: “Responsibility for good conduct rests with students as adult individuals.” The policy on student academic misconduct is outlined in the “Student Conduct Code Academic Misconduct Policy” in the online *Student Handbook* (<http://www2.winthrop.edu/studentaffairs/handbook/StudentHandbook.pdf>).

**Additionally, please refrain from texting during class.** Anyone caught texting, on Facebook, or generally playing with a phone or laptop may be thrown to the dragons, set upon by slaving wolves, or subject to the loss of points on his/her daily grade. Ouch!

#### ATTENDANCE POLICY

Winthrop policy is that students who miss more than 25% of the classes in a semester cannot receive credit for the course. Additionally, missing class or coming to class unprepared will damage your daily grade, which counts as a significant percentage of your final average.

#### LATE PAPER/ ASSIGNMENT POLICIES

Every day an assignment is late (including weekend days) is five points off the final grade. Generally, writing assignments may be turned in early, but not late, unless you have an amazing excuse.

#### ACCOMMODATIONS

Winthrop University is dedicated to providing access to education. If you have a disability and require specific accommodations to complete this course, contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 323-3290. Once you have your official notice of accommodations from Services for Students with Disabilities, please inform me as early as possible in the semester.

#### TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

I conduct most of my business with students using e-mail. If you do not have an e-mail account, go to 15 Tillman immediately to set it up. All class e-mail will be sent to your campus e-mail address, so make sure you set it to forward to any off-campus account you use (e.g. Comporium, AOL, Yahoo!, etc.) You must have a working Winthrop POBox e-mail address by the third day of class. All students must subscribe to the class listserve.

#### Syllabus Change Policy

Any changes made to course policies or reading and assignment schedules will be announced in class, announced through the class listserv, and posted on my web page. If you have any questions about the

current policies or reading schedule, please email me or consult my website or the updated schedule provided for you in class.

**You can find the syllabus and additional course materials on my website:**

**<http://faculty.winthrop.edu/cothranc>**

**CLASS SCHEDULE:**

Note: assignments are due on the days next to which they appear.

DATE	IN-CLASS DISCUSSION	HOMEWORK
Monday January 10	Introduction to Course	
Wednesday January 12	Seringapatam	<i>The Moonstone</i> First Period: Prologue – Chapter 8
Monday January 17	MLK Holiday – No Class	
Wednesday January 19	Her jewel is lost!	<i>The Moonstone</i> First Period: Chapters 9-15
Monday January 24	“People in high life” and “People in low life”	<i>The Moonstone</i> First Period: Chapters 16-23
Wednesday January 26	Christians and “Heathens”	<i>The Moonstone</i> Second Period: First Narrative
Monday January 31	“Behind your back, I loved you with all my heart and soul.”	<i>The Moonstone</i> Second Period: Second Narrative, Third Narrative through Chapter 5
Wednesday February 2	Ezra Jennings <b>Response 1 Due</b>	<i>The Moonstone</i> Second Period: Finish Third Narrative
Monday February 7	Mysteries Solved	<i>The Moonstone</i> (Finish book!)
Wednesday February 9	Supernatural Extravaganza In class: View excerpts of Jeremy Brett Holmes episodes	<i>The Hound of the Baskervilles</i> (Chapters 1-6)

Monday February 14	Watson Alone	<i>The Hound of the Baskervilles</i> (Chapters 7-10)
Wednesday February 16	The Chrysalis	<i>The Hound of the Baskervilles</i> (Finish book!)
Monday February 21	A Modern Sherlock Holmes In class: View episode of BBC's 2010 <i>Sherlock</i> series	
Wednesday February 23	Little Old Nosey Ladies	<i>Murder at the Vicarage</i> (1-62)
Monday February 28	Intuition <b>Response 2 Due</b>	<i>Murder at the Vicarage</i> (63-111)
Wednesday March 2	Masks and Motives In-class Marple film: <i>Nemesis</i>	<i>Murder at the Vicarage</i> (112-194)
Monday March 7	Elaborate Traps	<i>Murder at the Vicarage</i> (Finish book! 195-247)
Wednesday March 9	<b>MIDTERM EXAM</b>	
Monday March 14	SPRING BREAK	
Wednesday March 16	SPRING BREAK	
Monday March 21	The Morgue	<i>The Body Farm</i> (1-174)
Wednesday March 23	Graphic Violence and the Modern Reader	<i>The Body Farm</i> (175-276)
Monday March 28	Grief	<i>The Body Farm</i> (277-338)
Wednesday March 30	<b>Response 3 Due</b>	
Monday April 4	Locked-Room Puzzles (John Dickson Carr) Local Color (Margaret Maron)	LADF: "The House in Goblin Wood" (134-

		151), “Deborah’s Judgment” (156-172)
Wednesday April 6	Humor and Social Criticism (Sharyn McCrumb, Diane Mott Davidson, Jan Burke)	LADF: “Nine Lives to Live” (172-185), “Cold Turkey” (185-198), and “Revised Endings” (199-204)
Monday April 11	Hard-Boiled Private Investigators (Dashiell Hammett)	LADF: “The Gutting of Couffignal” (229-252),
Wednesday April 13	Different Voices: (Gar Anthony Haywood, Tony Hillerman)	LADF: “And Pray Nobody Sees You” (319-330), “Chee’s Witch”(411-418)
Monday April 18	The Police (Freeman Wills Crofts, Peter Robinson)	LADF: “The Hunt Ball” (364-372) and “Missing in Action” (457-474)
Wednesday April 20	Writing Workshop, Research and MLA Review	Bring a typed, completed Rough Draft to class
Monday April 25	Discuss Independent Readings/Viewings <b>Paper Due on Independent Reading or Viewing</b>	
<b>Monday May 2</b>	<b>FINAL EXAM 3:00 – 5:30 PM</b>	

### INDEPENDENT READING/VIEWING ASSIGNMENT

For this assignment I would like you to either 1) read a book, 2) watch a film, or 3) watch a series of television shows. The plots of the piece(s) you choose must be centered around characters who work to understand and solve crimes. You can read old or new texts (you might be interested in enjoying more Sherlock Holmes or Agatha Christie, or you may want to look at other current bestselling authors like Nora Roberts or Sue Grafton). If you choose a film, you may look for a classic like Bogart’s *The Maltese Falcon* or Hitchcock’s *Rear Window*, or you may choose a more modern work like *The Usual Suspects* or *Se7en*. If you are interested in film, you also may choose to watch one of the wonderful works on the PBS “Mystery” series. (Indeed, this show often presents pieces by authors we are reading for class; PBS has made movie versions of Christie’s Marple and Poirot novels and of Elizabeth George’s Lyndley books.) If you choose television media, you may want to watch 3-4 episodes (*CSI Miami* or *House* or *Law*

*and Order...* whatever you choose) so that you get a feel for the show's structure and for the characters of the detectives.

After you have read or viewed the material you have chosen, you will want to write a **4-6 page** (typed, double-spaced) paper that discusses it. Begin by briefly describing the plot and characters presented in the piece. Then analyze the work, developing an original thesis/conclusion about it as a piece of "genre art." Some questions you might consider: Does the work you have chosen fit into the mystery "tradition"? What does it do that is new? What makes it a valuable piece of art? (Or perhaps it is formulaic and unremarkable!) How is it designed to titillate and/or comfort readers/viewers? Is it successful? Too disturbing? Why or why not? Does it help us to understand some sort of higher truth about what it means to be human? If so, how?

Please feel free to quote from the work as you make your arguments. You also should include **quotes from or references to 1-2 research sources** in your discussion. Research sources might include book, movie, or television reviews, as well as critical articles on either the author, the piece, or the mystery genre itself. (You may look for critical articles in your Longman Anthology, in addition to works found in the library or online.) Be sure to quote properly and use MLA format. (Don't forget to include a Works Cited page!)