

English 2307: Introduction to Fiction
Hard-Boiled Crime Fiction
Texas Tech University
Fall 2019

Section H01: MWF 10:00am-10:50am

Fulfills TTU's Multicultural Requirement.

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This section of 2307 will introduce students to fiction's generic conventions, and to strategies for critical interpretation, by exploring one of the most distinctly American literary genres: hard-boiled crime fiction. Beginning with the foundational *Black Mask* school of crime writers, we will cover a wide historical range of hard-boiled writers, with attention to their influences, their artistic innovations, and their stylistic departures from the mystery and crime writers who preceded them. As we move forward chronologically, we will also pay attention to significant revisions to hard-boiled crime's signature characteristics by more contemporary American practitioners of the form. Students will leave the course with an understanding of fiction's key characteristics (including for instance, plot, narrative voice, setting, and dialogue) and will develop this understanding through extensive critical writing, including three formal papers.

TTU MULTICULTURAL STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- Students will demonstrate intercultural awareness, knowledge and skills in written, verbal, and behavioral activities (e.g., service-learning, co-curricular and similar experiences).
- Students will exhibit the ability to engage constructively with individuals and groups, across diverse social contexts.
- Students will appraise privilege relationships at different levels (interpersonal, local, regional, national, and international) and explain how these relationships affect the sociocultural status of individuals and groups. Assessments used:

For Outcome 1: Formal interpretive essays and in-class discussion in which students are tasked with understanding how differences in identity and perspective produce diverse effects across a range of writers representing differences in race, gender, class, and sexual identity.

For Outcome 2: Ongoing in-class discussion about how works of fiction narrate experiential differences differently across diverse identities.

For Outcome 3: Formal interpretive essays and in-class discussion in which students are tasked with explaining the various ways that different writers depict or critique white supremacy, patriarchy, heteronormativity, and/or class privilege, in their representation of varied political, economic, and cultural contexts.

Course Goals, Expected Outcomes, and Methods of Assessments:

The objective of the humanities in a core curriculum is to expand the students' knowledge of the human condition and human cultures, especially in relation to behaviors, ideas, and values expressed in works of human imagination and thought. Through study in disciplines such as literature and philosophy, students will engage in critical analysis and develop an appreciation of the humanities as fundamental to the health and survival of any society.

With that in mind, these are our learning objectives:

- To obtain familiarity with the stylistic conventions of fiction, including, among others, point-of-view, voice, dialogue, setting, and conflict.
- To obtain familiarity with different critical approaches to interpreting fiction, including a formalist focus, and more politicized perspectives like Marxist and feminist criticism.
- To craft interpretive essays about fiction based on a clear thesis statement and developing an argument through close reading of course texts.

The following are our expected outcomes, all of which will be assessed through students' formal and informal writing assignments, quizzes, contributions to class discussion, and final examination:

- The teaching and evaluation of "Critical Thinking Skills" (including "creative thinking, innovation, evaluation, and synthesis of information");
- "Communication Skills": (including "effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication");
- "Teamwork" (including "the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal");
- "Personal Responsibility" (including "the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making");
- "Social Responsibility" (including "intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities");

Humanities Competency Statement:

"Students graduating from Texas Tech University should be able to think critically and demonstrate an understanding of the possibility of multiple interpretations, cultural contexts, and values."

Required Texts:

Dashiell Hammett, *The Maltese Falcon* (1930)

James M. Cain, *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1934)

Raymond Chandler, *Farewell, My Lovely* (1940)

Patricia Highsmith, *Strangers on a Train* (1950)

Jim Thompson, *The Killer Inside Me* (1952)

Dorothy Hughes, *The Expendable Man* (1963)

James Ellroy, *The Black Dahlia* (1987)
Walter Mosley, *Devil in a Blue Dress* (1990)
Christa Faust, *Money Shot* (2008)

Course Work and Distribution of Term Marks:

Short paper 1 (500 words)	10%	due 2 October
Short paper 2 (500 words)	10%	due 4 November
Research paper (1200 words)	20%	due 4 December
In-class leading of discussion	10%	sign up for date
Informed participation in class discussion	20%	
Reading quizzes on novels	10%	see reading list for dates
Midterm examination	20%	on 21 October

You are required to write three formal papers for this course: **two short critical papers**, each approximately 500 words in length, and **one critical research paper** approximately 1200 words in length. The research paper must make extensive use of at least **three** secondary sources. In addition, you can expect to do many informal, reflective writing exercises in class for which individual grades will not be assigned. These informal writing exercises will hopefully stimulate your contributions to class discussions, though, and so might be considered as figuring into your participation grade.

Each **short paper** invites you to consider a brief section of a work from our reading list and articulate an argument about that section's thematic or contextual significance, in relation to either the rest of the work or the course reading list more broadly. **I will offer you a list of assigned passages for each of these short papers well in advance of their due dates.** Please note that though you may touch on points raised in class discussion, you are required to **go beyond** mere paraphrasing in each short paper. Instead, I expect these to be **argumentative**, centered around a distinct thesis statement that articulates your own position on a particular issue. Do **not** focus your remarks on purely emotional responses or issues of taste. (e.g. "I did not like this text, because I found it unpleasant to read...") Also, these are **not** research papers and I do **not** expect you to use secondary sources for these assignments. Rather, I wish to see only your own ideas and critical thinking.

The **research paper** allows you to engage in critical debates on a topic through sustained analysis of one or more literary texts. Your paper should focus on one of the "big" ideas that stretch across different texts and periods from our reading list. Again, though, think of the research paper as an argumentative exercise, organized around a clear thesis statement, and intended to persuade a reader to adopt your position on a critical issue in the study of American crime literature. For the research paper, I expect to see a **thoughtful and considered engagement with at least three secondary sources** rather than a superficial citing of materials from your bibliography. I want you to decide on your own topic for the research paper, but I also suggest that you do so in conversation with me to ensure that the scope and subject matter of your paper are both manageable and appropriate for the course. Because this is a substantial assignment, I encourage you to begin thinking about topics early and to schedule a meeting with me to discuss your topic well in advance of the deadline.

Beginning with our consideration of *The Maltese Falcon* on **16 September**, each of you will be expected to lead a brief discussion on one of the class texts. (You may sign up for the text

for which you want to lead on a first-come, first-served basis.) My expectation is that on the date for which you sign up you will a) offer a five-minute, informal discussion of your own interpretation and understanding of the text; and b) present to the class 3-4 questions for discussion by your peers. Given that there are more students enrolled than there are class texts, it is a given that there will be more than one discussion leader for most texts. **All students must sign up for a discussion session by 6 September.**

The **mid-term examination** (scheduled for **21 October**) will ask you to formulate and articulate your own conclusions about the various critical issues with which we have engaged to that point in the course. You will be define critical terms we have learned relevant to the study of fiction and discuss their significance in context, and complete one essay (from a choice of three) about major themes that our discussions followed. This examination will cover all course readings to that point in the semester.

Informed participation assumes that you will not only read all assigned texts in time for their discussion in class, but also consider that material carefully and be prepared to contribute to our collective contemplation of them. I suggest that you take notes as you read each text, and be careful to record your observations as you move through material. Pay attention to connections between texts. Take note of how works correspond to contextual issues that I introduce in class. Make a list of questions that arise when you read the material. All of these approaches will be beneficial to our discussions as a group.

There will be in-class **quizzes** for each of the novels on the course. These quizzes will be fairly straightforward—10 questions about specific details from the text—and are to ensure that you have completed reading each of these works by the first day we discuss it in class. These are easy marks to get, especially since they only ask you to do what you are supposed to be doing anyway: reading course material.

Course Policies:

Grades and Written Assignments:

1. Grades will be assigned as percentage scores (0-100) throughout the term. Ultimately, your final grade will be converted to the university's letter grade system using this scale:

A+= 97-100	A=94-96	A-=90-93
B+=87-89	B=84-86	B-=80-83
C+=77-79	C=74-76	C-=70-73
D+=67-69	D=63-66	F=62 or below

Please note that I reserve A-range marks for work of superior quality. Marks in the A-range are by no means the default grade for completing all the assignments in this course.

2. You must complete **all** of the formal writing assignments (both response papers and the research paper) as well as the **final exam** to pass this course.
3. Papers are to be handed in at the beginning of the class on which they are due.

4. Late papers will be penalized with a **10%** deduction for each day they are handed in after the due date, including weekend days. Even after deductions have guaranteed that a paper will receive a failing grade, you **must** still submit that paper to pass the course.
5. If extenuating circumstances will prevent you from handing a paper in on time, talk to me **before** the paper is due. I am not likely to make allowances after the deadline has come and gone.
6. All papers are to be typed (in a font no bigger than 12-point), double-spaced, and printed on one side of the paper. Please adhere to MLA guidelines for formatting and bibliographical citations.
7. I do **not** accept email submissions of written assignments.

Plagiarism and Cheating:

I expect you to adhere to the highest standard of honesty and academic integrity. All work that you complete in this course—from quizzes to formal papers—**must** be your own. You may not have any notes, texts, or electronic devices in open view during quizzes or the final examination. If you fail to comply with this request, you will **automatically** open yourself up to a charge of cheating and I will assign you a failing grade on the quiz or exam.

All written work must be organized around your own ideas and arguments. (In the interest of aiding the resolution of any potential disputes about plagiarism, I encourage you to retain all drafts of your work until the completion of the course.) When you introduce any ideas or quotations that are not your own in an essay, you must **cite explicitly** the source of that material according to MLA citation practice. To repeat, **any** material that is not your own—including verbatim quotations from outside work or paraphrases of other writers' ideas or arguments—must be referenced explicitly. If you have any questions about whether or not you have used a source properly on a given assignment, I encourage you to discuss the issue with me **before** you hand that assignment in. Because academic dishonesty constitutes a grave breach of trust between instructor and student, and diminishes the value of honest students' work, I take all plagiarism cases very seriously. **Plagiarizing materials will warrant an immediate failing grade in the course overall.**

Absences:

I will allow each student **three** absences without penalty. Each class that you miss after three absences will warrant a reduction of your **overall** course grade by 10%. I do not designate between excused or unexcused absences, except for those designated as excused according to university policy. **That is, if you miss a class because of illness or a car accident or a job interview or a hangover or anything else, you have used up one of your three absences. (Do not bring me documentation, as I will not remove the absence from your record.)** Because you only have three classes you can afford to miss without penalty, I encourage you to manage your attendance wisely, reserving those three absences for emergencies when you need them. For an explanation of university-approved absences, consult your student handbook. **Also, I expect you to know how many classes you have missed throughout the term. You may confer with me at various points in the term about how many absences I have recorded, but please also manage your own attendance record.**

Withdrawal Policy:

Students may drop a class online on or prior to **11 September**. The full regulation appears in OP 34.05 and can be viewed at <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/opmanual/OP34.05.pdf> and page 49-50 of the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalog and can be viewed at <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/officialpublications/catalog/>

The grade of “I” is given only when a student’s work is satisfactory but due to reasons beyond his or her control, cannot not be completed. It is not given in lieu of an “F” or “W”. The instructor assigning the grade will stipulate in writing at the time the grade is given the conditions under which the “I” may be removed. The assigned work and a change of grade must be recorded within one calendar year from the date of the “I”. Failure to do so results in an “F” for that course.

Classroom Civility and Access:

I expect each of you to assist in creating and maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. At the bottom level, this assumes that you will always be respectful to me and to your fellow classmates. Our classroom space will be open to differences of opinion and ideology, and accessible to all students without regard to gender, race, ethnicity, creed, sexual orientation, or physical limitation. I will **not tolerate** the use of any derogatory or demeaning language. Always extend the same courtesy to other members of the class that you wish to see extended to you. Listen quietly when others are speaking; raise your hand to ask questions or introduce new points; do not have side conversations apart from our main discussion. I encourage dissent in discussion, but insist that you articulate your ideas in a respectful manner. You are welcome to bring food and drink to class provided that your consumption of them is not a distraction. (Watch those crunchy foods and noisy wrappers.) If you are a cellular phone user, always **make sure** that your phone is silenced before class begins.

ADA Statement:

Any student who, because of a disability, may require special arrangements in order to meet the course requirements should contact the instructor as possible to make necessary arrangements. Students must present appropriate verification from Student Disability Services during the instructor’s office hours. Please note that instructors are not allowed to provide classroom accommodation to a student until appropriate verification from Student Disability Services has been provided. For additional information, please contact Student Disability Services office in 335 West Hall or call 806-742-2405. I am happy to accommodate in any way I can, but the burden is on you to provide the necessary paperwork. That is, self-diagnosis of ADHD, is not acceptable to receive assistance or special arrangements.

TTU Resources for Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Violence

Texas Tech University is committed to providing and strengthening an educational, working, and living environment where students, faculty, staff, and visitors are free from gender and/or sex discrimination of any kind. Sexual assault, discrimination, harassment, and other **Title IX violations** are not tolerated by the University. Report any incidents to the *Office for Student Rights & Resolution*, (806)-742-SAFE (7233) or file a report online at titleix.ttu.edu/students. Faculty and staff members at TTU are committed to connecting you to resources on campus. Some of these available resources are: **TTU Student Counseling Center**, 806-742-3674, <https://www.depts.ttu.edu/scc/> (*Provides confidential support on campus.*) **TTU Student Counseling Center 24-hour Helpline**, 806-742-5555, (*Assists students who are experiencing a mental health or interpersonal violence crisis. If you call the*

helpline, you will speak with a mental health counselor.) **Voice of Hope Lubbock Rape Crisis Center**, 806-763-7273, voiceofhopelubbock.org (24-hour hotline that provides support for survivors of sexual violence.) **The Risk, Intervention, Safety and Education (RISE) Office**, 806-742-2110, rise.ttu.edu (Provides a range of resources and support options focused on prevention education and student wellness.) **Texas Tech Police Department**, 806-742-3931, <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/ttpd/> (To report criminal activity that occurs on or near Texas Tech campus.)

Student Support:

Texas Tech University has many available options if you need additional assistance in this course. You should first come see me during office hours. Other options include the University Writing Center: The UWC is open for the fall term. Its hours are Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. They are located in RM.175 of the English/Philosophy Building. To set up an appointment, call (806) 742-2476. Additionally, there is The Learning Center located in Room 80 at Holden Hall. You might also get acquainted with a classmate or two to share notes, form a writing group, and/or make yourself accountable in the course. And, of course, come see me during office hours or make an appointment.

Tentative Schedule of Readings and Lectures:

WEEK ONE:

26 August: Introduction to course
28 August: Class discussion: "Why do we study stories?"
30 August: Lecture/Discussion: Conventions of fiction, Part I.

WEEK TWO:

2 September: **No class, Labor Day**
4 September: Lecture/Discussion: Conventions of fiction, Part II.
6 September: Lecture/Discussion: Conventions of fiction, Part III.

WEEK THREE:

9 September: Lecture/Discussion: The History of Crime Fiction
11 September: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, "A Scandal in Bohemia." (available online on the course Blackboard)
13 September: Doyle, "A Scandal in Bohemia"

WEEK FOUR:

16 September: **Quiz 1**; Dashiell Hammett, *The Maltese Falcon*
18 September: Hammett, *The Maltese Falcon*
20 September: Hammett, *The Maltese Falcon*

WEEK FIVE:

23 September: **Quiz 2**; James M. Cain, *The Postman Always Rings Twice*
25 September: Cain, *The Postman Always Rings Twice*
27 September: **No class, instructor away**

WEEK SIX:

30 September: **No class, instructor away**
2 October: **Quiz 3; Short Paper 1 Due**; Raymond Chandler, *Farewell, My Lovely*

4 October: Chandler, *Farewell, My Lovely*

WEEK SEVEN:

7 October: Chandler, *Farewell, My Lovely*

9 October: **Quiz 4**; Patricia Highsmith, *Strangers on a Train*

11 October: Highsmith, *Strangers on a Train*

WEEK EIGHT:

14 October: Highsmith, *Strangers on a Train*

16 October: Highsmith, *Strangers on a Train*

18 October: **Library Tour.**

WEEK NINE:

21 October: **Midterm examination.**

23 October: **Quiz 5**; Jim Thompson, *The Killer Inside Me*

25 October: Thompson, *The Killer Inside Me*

WEEK TEN:

28 October: Jim Thompson, *The Killer Inside Me*

30 October: **Quiz 6**; Dorothy Hughes, *The Expendable Man*

1 November: Hughes, *The Expendable Man*

WEEK ELEVEN:

4 November: **Short Paper 2 Due**; Hughes, *The Expendable Man*

6 November: **Quiz 7**; James Ellroy, *The Black Dablia*

8 November: Ellroy, *The Black Dablia*

WEEK TWELVE:

11 November: **No class, instructor away.**

13 November: Ellroy, *The Black Dablia*

15 November: **Quiz 8**; Walter Mosley, *Devil in a Blue Dress*

WEEK THIRTEEN:

18 November: Mosley, *Devil in a Blue Dress*

20 November: Mosley, *Devil in a Blue Dress*

22 November: **Quiz 9**; Christa Faust, *Money Shot*

WEEK FOURTEEN:

26 November: Faust, *Money Shot*

27 November: **No class, Thanksgiving.**

29 November: **No class, Thanksgiving.**

WEEK FIFTEEN:

2 December: Faust, *Money Shot*.

4 December: **Research papers due**; conclusions.

Note: You are responsible for finding out about any changes that I make to this schedule of readings while you are away from class