

Whodunit? Syllabus

Day 1: Monday June 27th:

Morning Session:

1st section:

- Icebreaker game—2 truths and a lie
- Discussion of class rules and policies
- Go over all elements of the syllabus with class
- Discussion of the overall goals of the course and of the different units within the course
- Discussion of preconceptions of crime fiction
- Create a working definition of what constitutes crime fiction to be written on poster board and displayed in the classroom

2nd section:

- Discussion of concept of “close reading”—what it is, how one accomplishes it, its benefits, different styles and methods of close reading
- Read Edgar Allan Poe’s “Tell Tale Heart” aloud
- Go over the different elements within it
- Go over the in-class writing assignment that students will be doing during the evening session

3rd Section:

- Pass out journal handout and discussion of how the journal will work
- Group Work: In groups of three, students will be handed a list of stereotypical character names and stereotypical roles found in detective stories. As a group, they will come up with character descriptions and the roles that these characters would play in a “typical” detective story. Then, each group will read aloud the different character descriptions that they have created and explain why. We will then discuss and compare as a class the different characters developed by each group.
- Individual work: students will create a setting, background, and basic story for the characters developed in their groups that they will then storyboard.

Afternoon Session:

- Short lecture on what constitutes good analytical writing with provided handout. Discuss how to analyze stories and what elements to focus on in a piece of literature when preparing to write on it.
- We will discuss the diagnostic essay assignment, and students will read the short story that they will write about in their diagnostic essay.
- Once they have finished the story, students will begin prewriting for this essay with the help of a prewriting worksheet that I will pass out.
- Work on stories from the morning

Evening Session:

1st section:

- Write first in-class essay assignment over short story in analytical format

2nd section:

- Begin reading Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Red-Headed League" and Poe's "Murders in the Rue Morgue"
- Write a one page journal response to each which we will be discussing during the next morning session

Day 2: Tuesday June 28th:**Morning Session:***1st section:*

- Short lecture with accompanying handout over the history and development of crime fiction, with particular focus on the differences between the development in Britain and in the US
- Discussion comparing Doyle's "The Red-Headed League" and Poe's "Murder's in the Rue Morgue" looking in particular at the differences between the two authors and how their influence has created the major differences between American and British crime fiction

2nd section:

- Discuss 2nd analytical paper assignment in detail going back over many of the crucial elements that must be present in an analytical essay
- Analytical essay critique: Each student will be given two short analytical essays which they must critique and write a short response laying out what they perceive as the greatest strengths and weaknesses of the essay and then decide which essay they think is the strongest and why.

3rd section:

- Discussion of the two essays as a class in order to show the class how I critique and to establish a norm for the class as a whole
- Short lecture over film noir with accompanying handout
- Discussion over the basic elements that are used in film analysis
- Short introduction to Howard Hawks' film of Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep*
Begin *The Big Sleep*

Afternoon Session:

- Watch *The Big Sleep*

Evening Session:*1st section:*

- Have the students write a one page journal response in which they explore how *The Big Sleep* fits into the category of film noir.

2nd section:

- Have the students read the short story that they have chosen from our weekly list and begin brainstorming on essay ideas for their 2nd analytical essay.
- Have the students read William Faulkner's "An Error in Chemistry" and write a one page journal response

Day 3: Wednesday June 29th:**Morning Session:***1st section:*

- Discussion over *The Big Sleep*, including how it fits into film noir, its similarities and differences from *written* crime fiction, if it is too dated for a modern day audience, etc.

- Discussion over the role that nationality plays in literature and why literature is often divided by nationalities—discussion of the division between US and Britain even though the language is the same and whether readers can usually easily divine the nationality of an author through that author’s works. Discussion of how nationality is portrayed in literature versus film and the benefits and drawbacks of both genres in conjunction with portraying nationality. Discuss language and its role.
- Group work: Each group will be given a particular region, and they will need to come up with a list of ways that a writer could effectively portray a character from that particular region. Students then create a rough character sketch of a character from that region. (Texas, California, New York, France, Ethiopia, Iraq, Spain, Mexico, Japan)

2nd section:

- Discussion over the character sketches created by the students and how to portray people from different areas without resorting to stereotypes. Discussion of the negativity of stereotypes and how to avoid them.
- Individual work: Have students do a self-analysis of themselves in the major 3 roles and any minor roles (assistant, witnesses, etc) where they list their perceived strengths and weaknesses, including an explanation of the types of crimes they would most like to specialize in as a crime solver (i.e. theft, murder, psychological, technological, white collar, etc).

3rd section:

- Have the students individually read Chandler’s “I’ll Be Waiting” and write a one page journal response
- Class time to work on 2nd analytical paper—continue brainstorming and outlining and perhaps start rough draft

Afternoon Session:

- Discussion of Faulkner and Chandler stories and if/why these two short stories should be classified as particularly “American” stories even though they deal less with “American” issues than Doyle’s tale
- Short lecture on “hard boiled” crime fiction and discussion over which of the stories that we have read fit particularly nicely into this subgenre and why this subgenre seems to be particularly popular with Americans

Evening Session:

1st section:

- Work on 2nd analytical paper—time to be completing their rough draft of the essay

2nd section:

- Have the students silently read Dorothy Sayers’ “Murder at Pentecost” and write a one page journal response

Day 4: Thursday June 30th:

Morning Session:

1st section:

- Pass back 1st analytical paper assignment and, in a private conference with each student, go over the paper with each student individually discussing the particular strengths and

weaknesses that I noted in each student's writing and giving each student a list of individual goals to work on as the session progresses

- Individual work: Give each student a name of a particular villain in a piece that we have read/watched so far this session (there will be overlapping). Each student will then be given a poster board and markers in order to create a wanted poster that includes a reward, a realistic evaluation of the person's level of dangerousness to society at large, an accurate description of the criminal and the crime, and a rough picture of the person in question. Each student will then have to write out a one page essay in which he or she gives a character analysis of his or her character and describes the particular punishment that he or she thinks could best be meted out to the criminal in question and whether the justice system is the best place to mete out this particular justice.

2nd section:

- Finish rough draft of second analytical essay

3rd section:

- Discussion of "Murder at Pentecost"
- Do a character analysis of each of the characters in the stories on the board. Discuss the role they play, their stereotypical/nonstereotypical character traits, how realistic they are, etc. Compare the character types and look in particular for traits that indicate a British nationality.
- Discuss the differences in writing, particularly in conjunction with the gender of the two authors.

Afternoon Session:

- Peer review for 2nd analytical paper

Evening Session:

1st section:

- In class time to work on revisions from peer review session

2nd section:

- Read aloud Doyle's "The Five Orange Pips" pausing periodically to discuss the case and the writing style and to make predictions and share insights
- Write a one page journal response to "The Five Orange Pips" and your evaluation of its treatment of the issue of the KKK.

Day 5: Friday July 1st:

Morning Session:

1st section:

- Discussion over "The Five Orange Pips" and how the story would have been different if it had been written by an American
- Discussion over our American reaction to the British telling of a story involving one of the darker elements of American history

2nd section:

- Group work: Each team will be given a particular American historical event (bombing of Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, Civil War in Georgia, Great Depression in Chicago, the Alamo in Texas, September 11th in NYC). Each team will then have to create a crime story that involves its

specific American event with the emphasis placed on choosing a crime to suit the event and to try to create a sense of authenticity about that event within each group's crime story (can't have DNA testing done in a story that occurred during the bombing of Pearl Harbor, for instance), etc.

- Time in the computer lab to research their particular historical event

3rd section:

- Work on storyboarding the stories that the groups created in the first section. They will need a cast of characters, a crime, a motive, and a successful detective who solves the crime in the end using means that are not anachronistic to his/her time period.
- Discussion over how nationality fits into the creation of their stories

Afternoon Session:

- Time to finish final changes to analytical paper and to write final draft of assignment
- Analytical paper #2 due
- Do wrap-up discussion on nationality and crime fiction. Create a finalized list of the major differences between the way Americans and the British view and create crime fiction.

Sunday Evening Session:

1st section:

- Extra-long Sunday night site meeting

2nd section:

- Have them individually read the 1st section of Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None*
- Have them write a one page journal response on first section—prime suspects, what they think of Christie's technique, things that the student is picking up on in the novel, etc.
- Have them read Doyle's "A Scandal in Bohemia"

Day 6: Monday July 4th:

Morning Session:

1st section:

- Go over the analytical essays that they turned in, giving each student individualized feedback on the major strengths and weaknesses of their papers.
- Pass out revision guidelines and go over them with the class
- Short lecture on gender and literature moving into gender in crime fiction
- Discussion on the roles that we have seen gender play throughout the course so far and if gender is handled differently in British and American crime fiction

2nd section:

- Pass out second formal essay assignment and discuss in depth the requirements for the essay
- Discussion on first section of *And Then There Were None*
- Discuss which genders they see as most likely to commit which crimes and for which motives and why
- Have the students draw 3 slips of paper out of a hat—one listing a gender, one a motive, and one a crime; have them create a short story using the three elements that they drew out of the hat (the gender of the criminal—not the victim or detective)

3rd section:

- Discuss “A Scandal in Bohemia” and the gender conceptions that Doyle brings to that story and Holmes’ view of women in particular
- Class time to work on analytic essay revision

Afternoon Session:

- Individually read Sue Grafton’s “The Parker Shotgun” and write a one page journal response
- Discussion of “The Parker Shotgun”: Discuss the role of gender, both the author’s and within the story. Discuss the difference between this much more contemporary author and the earlier authors such as Poe and Doyle whom we’ve been studying.
- Group activity: Put the class into four groups of four and have them create a list of the major differences between male and female detectives and why they think these differences exist and then compare their answers as a class.
- Assign characters for “How to Host a Murder” event

Evening Session:*1st section:*

- Read second section of *And Then There Were None*
- Have students write a one page journal response on second section—new suspects, things that the student is picking up on in the novel, etc.
- Allow students time to continue working on the short story they were developing in the morning session

2nd section:

- Give them time in class to begin their revision of their first essay
- Have them read Marcia Muller’s “Benny’s Space” and write a one page journal response

Day 7: Tuesday July 5th:**Morning Session:***1st section:*

- Class time to work on first analytic revision
- Discussion of second section of *And Then There Were None*

2nd section:

- Discussion of third section of *And Then There Were None*
- Group work: As a team students will begin work on creating a play that uses symbolic names and gender stereotypes in which each gender will be required to play the other—not in an attempt at mockery but to see if they can conform to the gender requirements imposed on the opposite gender

3rd section:

- Discussion of “Benny’s Space”
Continue working on skits

Afternoon Session:

- Discussion over Hitchcock and gender
- Watch Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo*

Evening Session:

- In class time to work on second analytic essay
- Finish *Vertigo*
- Begin third section of *And Then There Were None*

Day 8: Wednesday July 6th:**Morning Session:***1st section:*

- Discussion of the film and of the incredible ways gender stereotyping is employed throughout this film and the implications of gender throughout the film
- Have students individually write a one page journal response to the film
- Finish analytical revision and turn it in

2nd section:

- Finish third section of *And Then There Were None*
- Have students write a one page journal response on second section—new suspects, things that the student is picking up on in the novel, etc.
- Discussion over third section of the novel
- Time to work on skits

3rd section:

- Read aloud Robert Browning's "Porphyria's Lover" in sections stopping to analyze each section and to make sure the students understand before moving on
- Discuss Browning's poem in relation to both gender stereotypes within the poem and how it relates to whether a poem can be considered crime fiction. Discuss how crime fiction changes according to genre
- Class time to work on second analytic essay

Afternoon Session:

- Work on skits
- Time to prepare for "How to host a Murder" Dinner Party

Evening Session:

- "How to Host a Murder" Dinner Party!!!

Day 9: Thursday July 7th:**Morning Session:***1st section:*

- Time to work on skits—including dress rehearsal

2nd and 3rd sections:

- Individually read final section of *And Then There Were None*

- Discussion of the novel: Discuss its tricks, its character stereotypes, symbolic names, if gender stereotyping is done in this novel—if so, how? How might gender stereotyping be changed because the author is a female?
- Put the students into groups of 3 and assign them two characters whom they have to create a gender profile of, explaining how these characters' gender might be related to their individual weaknesses, their specific crimes, how they got caught. Have them create two murderer profiles for the murders committed explaining why/if any good PI could conjecture the correct gender of the murderer (criminal) based solely on the crime itself (including possible evidence/motive conjectures).
- Discuss gender and crime in general and if each gender is more predisposed to commit certain crimes in particular ways.

Afternoon Session:

- Each group is to be given time to finalize and prepare their skits.
- All groups perform their skits.
- Discussion of the different stereotypes employed, the ability of each gender to accurately portray the stereotypical roles of the other gender
- Discussion of how to move beyond stereotypes and if stereotyping gender is a negative in terms of crime fiction
- Each team has time to write a finalized version of their script to be turned into me.

Evening Session:

1st section:

- Continue working on rough draft of second analytic essay

2nd section:

- Have the students individually read Ruth Rendell's "Thornapple" and write a one page journal response

Day 10: Friday July 8th:

Morning Session:

1st and 2nd sections:

- Watch Jonathan Lynn's *Clue*

3rd section:

- Discussion of *Clue* versus *And Then There Were None* and versus film noir
- Discussion over Rendell's "Thornapple"

Afternoon Session:

- Skit preparation

Sunday Evening Session:

1st section:

- Skit preparation

2nd section:

- Sunday night all-site session with skit performance

Day 11: Monday July 11th:**Morning Session:***1st section:*

- Have students finish rough drafts of their second essay
- Pass out and go back over first essay revision—taking time to discuss with each student individually the major strengths and weaknesses of the paper
- Short lecture on genres and the importance of understanding the peculiarities of each genre when trying to understand a particular work

2nd section:

- Read the first section of James M. Cain's *Double Indemnity* aloud and do journal response
- Finish Rendell's "Thornapple"

3rd section:

- Peer review for second essay
- Discussion over Thornapple
- Work on short stories

Afternoon Session:

- Begin watching a *CSI* episode pausing to discuss television as the newest and most popular genre for crime fiction and the particular strengths and weaknesses of television and this particular show.
- Time to work on final draft of second essay in class

Evening Session:*1st section:*

- Continue reading *Double Indemnity* as a class

2nd section:

- Finish final copy of second essay and turn it in
- Work on short stories

Day 12: Tuesday July 12th**Morning Session:***1st section:*

- Continue reading *Double Indemnity*

2nd section:

- Have students finish their first short story
- Once they are done, have them create yellow pages ads of themselves as investigators on poster board to be displayed around the room.

Afternoon Session:

- Collaborate with chemistry class to solve a "crime mystery"

Evening Session:

- Collaborate with chemistry class to finish solving “crime mystery”
- Write a two page journal response to the crime mystery activity

Day 13: Wednesday July 13th**Morning Session:***1st section:*

- Pass back final draft of second essay with comments and discuss them individually with the students.
- Have students prepare their lists of strengths and weaknesses and begin their revision. Go to Great Cases classroom for the grand jury’s verdict over yesterday’s case.
- Discussion of the crime solving activity from the day before
- Discussion of the differences between solving a crime and trying someone for the crime
Continue reading *Double Indemnity* as a class

2nd and 3rd sections:

- Explain *Trifles* trial assignment
- Assign different parts
- Defense and Prosecution teams/Witnesses read the play aloud
- Jury works with TA on group work: As a group students will serve as employers of a publishing house in 2050 who have been assigned the task of revolutionizing crime fiction and making it more technologically prepared for the age. Their responsibility is to bring the TA and me (the CEOs of the corporation) a proposal as to the best new method/genre for crime fiction and how we should market it. The group with the strongest proposal will be immediately promoted to Vice Presidents of the corporation, etc.
- Preparation for the trial

Afternoon Session:

- Commencement and completion of the trial
- Jury deliberation and announcement of the verdict
- Discussion of the trial—deliberation on the verdict given by the jury and why this particular verdict was handed down
Deliberation on the differences between oral and written argumentation and the strengths and weaknesses of each

Evening Session:*1st section:*

- Read Glaspell’s “A Jury of Her Peers”

2nd section:

- Finish reading *Double Indemnity* as a class
- Have students work on their revisions of their second essay

Day 14: Thursday July 14th:**Morning Session:***1st section:*

- Wrap-up discussion on *Double Indemnity*
- Watch Billy Wilder's film version of *Double Indemnity*

2nd section:

- Discussion of the film
- Comparison of the two versions of the main story
- Comparison of these two versions of a story with the different versions of the Glaspell play
- Comparison of play and film versions of crime fiction

3rd section:

- Discuss the differences between the play and short story version of Glaspell's narrative.
- Discuss how the strengths and weaknesses of each genre are highlighted by reading the same story by the same author but as a different genre.
- Have students complete their journal assignments for the *Trifles* trial along with their character analysis/jury analysis/or opening and closing statements and trial questions.

Afternoon Session:

- Short lecture to tie up the things we learned in the class and to bring a sense of closure
- Students make final revisions to their second essay
Students rewrite their final revised drafts of their second essay and turn in clean copies at the end of the session
- Do post assessment test

Day 15: Friday July 15th

- Watch Rene Clair's *And Then There Were None*