ENGLISH 208K: DETECTIVE FICTION

Fall Term, Sept. – Dec., 2005
T/R 1:00 – 2:20 p.m., RCH 306

Kathryn McArthur
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W 10am-12pm

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Murder and mayhem with an international flair! This course will look beyond the “formula” as we study detective fiction from around the world and examine certain critical approaches to the forms of the genre. We will be reading works from both classic and contemporary authors and, in particular, will examine the ways in which national cultures, social conventions and worldviews influence individual authors and inform the fiction they produce. Included in the course will be selections from North America, Great Britain, Brazil, Sweden, France, and Italy.

TEXTS:

Required reading:

Courseware
John Brady
Andrea Camilleri
Michael Connelly
Luiz Alfredo Garcia-Roza
P. D. James
Henning Mankell
Ian Rankin
Fred Vargas
L. R. Wright

Various Authors
A Stone of the Heart
Excursion To Tindari
The Narrows
December Heat
Death of an Expert Witness
Firewall
Hide and Seek
Have Mercy On Us All
Menace

Recommended:

Aaron and McArthur
The Little, Brown Compact Handbook,
2nd Canadian Edition

(Royalties from the purchase of this book go to an English Department Scholarship Fund)
COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Mid-Term Examination:

Students will be required to write an in-class, mid-term exam on Tuesday November 1, 2005, covering course material from Poe through Rankin. Worth 20% of the final grade.

Essay:

Students will be required to hand in a 1250 – 1750 word essay (approx. 5 – 7 typed, double-spaced pages), on a topic arising from a list of suggestions or a creative project with permission from the instructors. As this course is offered through the English Department, the essay will be marked for the quality of the writing and for the quality of the literary analysis. The essay (or project) is due at the beginning of class (1:00 pm) on Thursday, November 10, 2005. Worth 40% of the final grade.

Final Examination:

A three-hour final examination will be written in the official examination period and will cover the required readings and lecture material from the entire course. Worth 40% of the final grade.

The Dean of Arts Office requires the inclusion of the following statement on all undergraduate course outlines:

“Note on avoidance of academic offences: All students registered in the courses of the Faculty of Arts are expected to know what constitutes an academic offence, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for their academic actions. When the commission of an offence is established, disciplinary penalties will be imposed in accord with Policy #71 (Student Academic Discipline). For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students are directed to consult the summary of Policy #71 (Student Academic Discipline) which is supplied in the Undergraduate Calendar (P. 1:II). If you need help in learning how to avoid offences such as plagiarism, cheating and double submission, or if you need clarification of aspects of the discipline policy, ask your course instructor for guidance. Other resources regarding the discipline policy are your academic advisor and the Undergraduate Associate Dean.”

Note: Undergraduate Calendar, p. 1:II is also available at http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infocus/UW/policy_71.html

Further to the above, we expect that you will observe all the conventions of reasonable and professional behaviour (i.e. turning off all cell phones, not creating a disturbance in class, distracting your fellow students with talk or other matters).
ENGLISH 208K: DETECTIVE FICTION
ESSAY GUIDELINES

DUE: Thursday, November 10, 2005 (1:00 p.m.)
LENGTH: 1250 – 1750 words (approx. 5 – 7 typed, double-spaced pages)
WEIGHT: 40% of the final grade

All students should carefully review the plagiarism guidelines handed out with the syllabus material. Please note that the primary texts forming the basis of your essay discussion must come from the course reading list, while secondary sources used to support your arguments may come from non-assigned readings. You must ensure that all primary and secondary sources, whether quoted, paraphrased, or otherwise influential, are properly documented according to the MLA system with page or line references as well as complete bibliographical information. This list includes the assigned texts and/or Internet sources. Copies of both the MLA Handbook and the Little, Brown Handbook are available at the library for reference.

Essays should be handed in at the beginning of class on November 10, 2005. Do not fax essays to the University or send them by e-mail. Always keep a copy! Extensions will be granted for a maximum of five (5) days (until November 15, 2005) – no explanation is required and no penalty will be levied – but you must request (and have confirmation of) the extension by e-mail no later than Thursday, November 3, 2005. Please note that essays received by the due date and time will receive a grade and full explanatory remarks; those received after class on November 10 will receive a grade only. Essays received between November 10 and November 15, for which prior extension approval was not obtained, will be subject to a two per cent (2%) per day penalty (including weekends) and no essays (or creative projects) will be accepted after November 15, 2005.

When writing your essay, concentrate on developing a strong opening paragraph that clearly identifies your argument and the way in which you intend to develop your paper. The thesis statement in the first paragraph is probably the most important part of the essay; leave yourself time to revise it, as necessary. Secondary sources, while not required, are often very helpful in developing your argument. Just a note of caution, though: don’t let your research overwhelm your paper or make your argument for you. Use it sparingly to illustrate specific points. Please note that grammar and punctuation will be marked, so proofread carefully!!

Students who wish to prepare a creative project must first obtain permission from the instructors and must include two or three pages of detailed analysis with their work, indicating the strategies which form the basis of the project, the relevance to the subject matter of the course, etc. Fictional short stories must conform to the essay length guidelines and creative analysis requirements.

Please feel free to contact either of us to discuss your essay topic or specific problems you might encounter during the writing process. We will be happy to meet with you during office hours or by appointment, if necessary. Just telephone or e-mail either of us to arrange a convenient time.
ENGLISH 208K: DETECTIVE FICTION
ESSAY TOPICS – Fall/05

Your essay topic may come from the following suggestions, may be a topic of your own choosing, or may be a “creative” project. If you choose to do either of the last two, you must consult with either one of us well before the due date.

1. Discuss the debt of any of the later writers on the course to Poe or Conan Doyle.

2. Discuss the role of narrative perspective/point of view in two of Conan Doyle, Vargas, Rankin, Wright or Connelly.

3. Discuss how one of the following – setting, atmosphere, characterization or plot construction – assists in generating a sense of mystery or suspense in two of the novels studied.

4. Compare and contrast the detective figures of two of the following: Connelly, James, Wright, Brady or Mankell. Do the personalities, perspectives, approaches of these characters express something about differing worldviews?

5. Explore how the cultural context in two of Vargas, Garcia-Roza, Rankin, Camilleri or Mankell shapes or informs the narrative.

6. Using at least two of the authors we have studied this term, discuss the ways in which contemporary mystery writers have advanced the conventions of the genre (through, for example, more complex characterization and/or narrative structure, psychological aspects, social relevance, theological resonance, etc.).


8. A “creative” project, i.e. a short detective story or a chapter from a projected novel. If you choose this option, you will be bound by the essay length, (5-7 typed, double-spaced pages) and you must include, in addition, 2 – 3 pages of critical, literary analysis of your own work. Please consult.
ENGLISH 208K: DETECTIVE FICTION
SCHEDULE

September 13 & 15:
Introduction/Overview of the genre
Critical approaches to the genre/The “Formula” defined

September 20 & 22:
Poe and Dupin (CourseWare)
Conan Doyle and Holmes

September 27 & 29 – England:
Death of an Expert Witness (P. D. James)

October 4 - Canada:
Menace (L. R. Wright)

October 6, 11 & 13 – United States:
The Narrows (Michael Connelly)

October 18 & 20 - Ireland:
A Stone of the Heart (John Brady)

October 25 & 27 - Scotland:
Hide and Seek (Ian Rankin)

November 1: Mid-term Examination

November 3: Essay Writing Tips
Review of MLA Guidelines

November 8 – Italy:
Excursion to Tindari (Andrea Camilleri)

November 10 & 15 – Brazil:
December Heat (Luiz Alfredo Garcia-Roza)

Note: Essay Due Thursday, November 10, 2005 – 1:00 p.m.

November 17 & 22 – Sweden:
Firewall (Henning Mankell)

November 24 & 29 - France:
Have Mercy On Us All (Fred Vargas)

December 1: Course Review