ENGLISH 208K: DETECTIVE FICTION

Fall Term, Sept. – Dec., 2008
T/R 11:30 a.m. – 12:50 p.m., Phys 313

Kathryn McArthur
HH 262
519-888-4567, x33398
E-mail: kmearthu@artsservices.uwaterloo.ca
Office Hours: M/T/W 1:00 – 2:00 p.m.

Judy Langill
HH 262
416-951-6787 (cell)
E-mail: dlangill@sympatico.ca or jllangil@artsservices.uwaterloo.ca
Office Hours: T/R 1:00 – 2:00 p.m.

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
Islandbridge
Excursion To Tindari
The Narrows
December Heat
The Lighthouse
Firewall
Hide and Seek
Have Mercy On Us All
Menace

Recommended:

Aaron and McArthur
The Little, Brown Compact Handbook,
3rd 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, October 28, 2008, covering course material from Poe through Connelly. 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 (11:30 a.m.) on Thursday, November 6, 2008. Worth 40% of the final grade.

Final Examination:

A two and one-half 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.

Avoidance of Academic Offenses:

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

“Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 – Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4, http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offenses, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offense, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offenses (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to
Policy 71 – Student Discipline,

**Appeals:** A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under Policy 70 – Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or Policy 71 – Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read Policy 72 – Student Appeals, http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm.”

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, using laptop computers appropriately, not creating a disturbance in class, and/or not distracting your fellow students with talk or other matters).

**Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:**

“The Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD), located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the OPD at the beginning of each academic term.”
ENGLISH 208K: DETECTIVE FICTION
ESSAY GUIDELINES

DUE: Thursday, November 6, 2008 (11:30 a.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. Both the MLA and Little, Brown Handbooks are available online and in the library for reference.

Essays should be handed in at the beginning of class (11:30 a.m.) on November 6, 2008. 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 11, 2008) – 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, October 30, 2008. 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 6 will receive a grade only. Essays received between November 6 and November 11, for which prior extension approval was not obtained, will be subject to a five (5%) per day penalty (including weekends) and no essays (or creative projects) will be accepted after November 11, 2008.

When writing your essay, begin with an imaginative or intriguing title; then concentrate on 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/08

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 the works of two of the following: Brady, Conan Doyle, Rankin, Wright or Connelly.

3. Discuss how two of the authors studied generate a sense of mystery or suspense using setting, atmosphere, characterization or plot construction as the basis for your discussion.

4. How does the construction of personality, perspective and approach in the detective figures of two of the following - Connelly, James, Wright, Rankin, Vargas or Mankell – express their differing worldviews?

5. Explore how the cultural context in two of Vargas, Garcia-Roza, 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.