

## ENG 129, Mystery, Murder, and Detectives in Literature

Spring 2016

Instructor: Audrey Le

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Office hours: By appointment

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**Course Description:** ENG 129, Mystery, Murder, and Detectives in Literature, is an examination of the literature that tempts our fascination with murder mysteries and the detectives who solve them. The course will focus on developing students' understanding of texts that fall within the genre of mystery and detective fiction; the texts offered in the course reflect the century from 1841, the beginning of the genre, through WWII. We will focus on close literary analysis of the fiction of the time period and work with historical contexts so that students have a better understanding of the literature and the social and cultural influences of the period.

### **Required Texts:**

Edgar Allan Poe	<i>Complete Tales and Poems</i>	ISBN: 978-0-7858-1453
Arthur Conan Doyle	<i>Complete Novels &amp; Stories, Vol.I</i>	978-0-553-21241-9
Oscar Wilde	<i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i> , Norton Critical Edition	978-0-393-92754-2
Graham Greene	<i>Brighton Rock</i>	978-0-14-243797-1
P.D. James	<i>Talking about Detective Fiction</i>	978-0-307-74313-8

\*All books will be available at the U Maine bookstore listed as ENG129 (Le)

**Purchase your books before class begins.**

### **Excerpted Readings (Available on our conference as PDF files)**

"Introduction to Detective Fiction" *Longman Anthology* Kelley & Marchino  
"Ye Poisoning of Sir Thomas Overbury" *Elements of Murder* John Elmsley

### **Audio/Video clips:**

*Guy Noir* (audio clips from *Prairie Home Companion*: "Snow Job" "Missing Fish")

### **Learning Outcomes:**

With a backdrop of historical and cultural events, students will learn about various literary trends, including detective and mystery fiction, as well as cultural influences of dominant middle class Victorian and early turn-of-the-20<sup>th</sup> century norms. Students will learn close reading and analysis; evaluation and synthesis of texts, and will have exposure to literary criticism about the chosen texts.

### **Technology Requirements:**

The course will be conducted on First Class. You will also need Real Player and Quick Time Player to access archived movies and audio clips.

Please contact CED Tech Help with any questions: 1-877-947-HELP (4357) or 581-4591.

**Time Management: The class will be fast-paced. Students should plan on being in the class (on-line) every day.** The coursework reflects the standard university ratio of course work: 2 hours outside the class for every hour of "class time." On average, there will be approximately 100 pages of reading each week. In addition to the readings and critical written responses, students can expect to spend approximately five-to-six hours.

each week on-line, including initial critical essays and subsequent discussions and contributions.

**Structure of Class:** Although this is an asynchronous course, there is a very specific weekly schedule. Students may contribute to the conference at any time during the day or night, but it is important to stay in step with the conferences we're working with each day.

Students will be responsible for and prepared to discuss (write) about the assigned reading for each text. The course is demanding in both the reading and the writing, and on-line discussions will be devoted to

a detailed discussion of the literary works. Students are expected to expand upon the topic of conversation; the goal is for students to engage in "close reading" and apply those techniques to other literary texts. **The ability to write coherently about literature is a crucial gauge of your mastery of the course objectives.**

1. Students are expected to read the assigned texts. **Critical, active reading** is central to this course; students should annotate texts, marking significant quotations and specific scenes. Keeping notes helps students significantly during the writing assignments.
2. For each reading, students will post a **Written Critical Response** to a prompt—or series of prompts—that will generate ideas about the literature. Assignments will be clearly posted. Students' in-depth written critical responses to the prompts generally will generate equivalent to 3-4 pages of (double spaced) typewritten pages *per* assignment, unless otherwise indicated.
3. Students will be expected to use their texts to quote specific passages from the texts and to expand upon the discussion prompts and topic of conversation; the goal is for students to engage in close reading and literary analysis.

Students are expected to read ALL of the instructor's lectures and posts.

Students are expected to read at least five other students' posts, though it's best if students read all posts to prevent repetition in discussions.

6. Students are expected to **respond to at least two other students' posts** on the conference as part of class discussion and engagement each week. Students have freedom of choice of the number and selection of emails to respond, but remember: keep up with the work, read the conference daily, and respond with insightful comments and additional ideas. Responses to other students should include further quotations from the text to respectfully help support (or refute) claims made by others.

If students pace themselves, follow the syllabus as scheduled, and write well, the grade will reflect the outstanding work.

#### **On-Line Writing for the course:**

The on-line writing—written critical responses as well as general discussion—is an opportunity for students to explore the implications and interpretations of the literature, and prove their understanding of the texts. If students have read the texts and have been engaged in on-line discussions throughout the semester, their writing will reveal the level of understanding of the texts.

### **Quality of Critical Written Responses:**

Each initial written critical response should be well-analyzed and use quotations from the text. Students much approach the material as an academic argument. Written critical responses should be in essay form with an introduction, analytical body paragraphs, generally about seven-to-ten quotations from the text, and a conclusion, unless the assignment specifies otherwise. Body paragraphs of each essay should present ideas with unity and coherence, and conclusions should be just that: your conclusion (rather than a mere restatement) of your ideas about the literature.

**Class Discussion and Engagement:** After students have posted their initial written critical response (with quotations from the text and a list of works cited in MLA format), there must be discussion responses to *at least* two other students' responses. Discussion responses should generate more analysis and argumentation about the text. If a student's response to others' written work is basic ("I agree" or "I liked that one, too"), the student will receive a zero for the discussion assignment. The discussion/engagement is a *significant* part of the overall grade. Students should engage in discussions and let ideas flow~

**MLA Documentation:** Students are expected to follow the MLA style of documentation on all contributions and essays, using in-text citations and a list of works cited. For MLA format information, refer to our Rules for Writers conference, in which you will find Diana Hacker's *Rules for Writers*. You may also go to the On-Line Writing Lab at Purdue University: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/> Refer to the MLA formatting information whenever necessary.

**Respect:** I do my best to treat every class member with respect. I ask that students do the same to me and to each other. This means allowing others to express their ideas and responding with respectful comments or questions. Ask questions and be prepared to research answers as others ask engaging questions. I always do my best to guide students in this learning process.

**Plagiarism & Academic Integrity:** Academic honesty is vital to an intellectual experience, especially when the instruction is on-line. Remember that there are plenty of ways for instructors to find the same information that students can find and, although the Internet can illuminate, it can also be a place to get caught in the Web of deceit. Plagiarism will result in failure for the assignment and can result in failure for the course. The simplest way to avoid problems is to **credit the author for his or her research, ideas and/or quotations**; if it's not the student's idea, students must cite the information by using MLA format. Information is on the conference entitled Writers' Reference; students may also refer to the on-line OWL at Purdue citation guide.

**Due Dates:** Critical Written Responses are due each week by Friday at the latest. Responses to other students and all other discussion must be completed by Sundays at midnight. Any work submitted after Sunday will be marked as late and downgraded.

**Responses from your instructor:** On most days, I will respond to your questions are within just a few hours; I will respond within 24 hours at most. If several students ask the same question, I will post an answer with "FAQ" in the subject line.

I often "reply with quote" for further illumination of a topic. If I am particularly concerned about the quality or quantity of your work, I will contact you directly on First Class.

### **Response time from your professor:**

On most days, I will respond to your questions are within just a few hours; I will always respond within 24 hours. If several students ask the same question, I will post an answer with "FAQ" in the subject line.

Also, if I am concerned about the quality or quantity of your work, I will contact you directly on First Class. If you do not hear from me at all, you can assume that your work is fine.

### **Final Exam:**

The final exam prompt will be posted during the last week of class, Friday, April 29<sup>th</sup>. The final is due on or before on May 6th, by midnight.

**Disabilities:**

Students with disabilities who may need services or accommodations to participate fully in this class should contact Ann Smith, Director of Disability Services in 121 East Annex,(voice) 581-2319, (TTY) 581-2325, as early as possible in the semester.

**Assessment:**

50% Initial Critical Written Responses

30% on-line discussion, regular class participation, and engagement in the topic

20% Final exam

**Weekly Schedule:**

**REFER TO THIS WEEKLY SYLLABUS FREQUENTLY** Although it is subject to change, we can assume that the schedule will be as listed below. All discussion questions will be posted on the first day of the assignment.

**WEEKLY SCHEDULE will be posted on the first day of classes on the course conference**