

AML 2410 – SPECIAL TOPICS IN AMERICAN LITERATURE (Sec. 4800), Spring 2018
“The Girl Detective”

Instructor Name: Rebecca McNulty

Course Meeting Times & Locations:

LIT 217: Tuesday, Periods 8-9, 3:00 p.m.- 4:55 p.m.; Thursday, period 9, 4:05-4:55

Office Location and Hours:

TUR 4212: Tuesday, period 7; and Thursday, period 8; or by appointment

Course Website: Canvas

Instructor Email: rlmcnulty@ufl.edu

Course Description:

The figure of the detective has existed in American literature since before there was an English word for this character. The detective investigates crimes that have disturbed the social order. Thus, by considering those events (and the investigator), we can also analyze the social norms that contribute to what is and is not a crime. This course will ask students to investigate the differences between a mystery and a crime, and how the detective must both judge and resolve that initial disturbance.

Notably, the genre defaults to male detectives in American literature, such as Edgar Allan Poe’s C. Auguste Dupin and Dashiell Hammett’s Sam Spade. When women occupy the role, it becomes the genre of the “Girl Detective,” regardless of their age. This course will consider the social norms and gender roles that contribute to the genre of the woman detective and the ways that she can explain social anxieties, social values, and the prejudices that inspire the two. From classics like Nancy Drew and Harriet the Spy to modern heroines like Sookie Stackhouse and Veronica Mars, the woman detective subverts gender roles by both inhabiting roles traditionally occupied by men and also delving into the crimes that have previously been seen as too “unsavory” for female eyes.

We will explore novels, movie adaptations, reboots, short fiction, television episodes, and video games. Students will consider the figure of the woman detective from first, second, and third-person perspectives to analyze how the detective genre includes the reader in its societal disturbance, mystery, and eventual closure.

Course texts will include Poe’s “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” Hammett’s *The Maltese Falcon*, Carolyn Keene’s *The Secret of the Old Clock*, Sara Paretsky’s *Indemnity Only*, and Charlaine Harris’s *Dead until Dark*, among others. Course assignments will include short response papers, a group presentation, a midterm essay, and an extended final research project.

Students will emerge from this class with:

- The ability to read and analyze fiction and criticism of various lengths
- The ability to define the detective story and its relationship to contemporary American fiction
- The ability to effectively create and shape arguments about literature
- The ability to work effectively through both group and individual settings and assignments
- Improved writing and research skills
- Improved presentation skills

General Education Objectives:

- This course confers General Education credit for either Composition (C) *or* Humanities (H). This course also fulfills 6,000 of the university’s 24,000-word writing requirement (WR).
- *Composition courses* provide instruction in the methods and conventions of standard written English (grammar, punctuation, usage), as well as the techniques that produce effective texts.

Composition courses are writing intensive. They require multiple drafts [of preliminary steps] submitted to your instructor for feedback before final submission.

- Course content should include multiple forms of effective writing, different writing styles, approaches and formats, and methods to adapt writing to different audiences, purposes and contexts. Students should learn to organize complex arguments in writing using thesis statements, claims and evidence, and to analyze writing for errors in logic.
- The University *Writing Requirement (WR)* ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. To receive Writing Requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course. This means that written assignments must meet minimum word requirements totaling 6000 words.

General Education Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the following learning outcomes in content, communication and critical thinking:

- **Content:** Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the academic discipline.
- **Communication:** Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline. Students will participate in class discussions throughout the semester to reflect on assigned readings.
- **Critical Thinking:** Students analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline-specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

Required Texts:

To Purchase:

Fitzhugh, Louise. *Harriet the Spy*. (1964)
Hammett, Dashiell. *The Maltese Falcon*. (1929)
Harris, Charlaine. *Dead until Dark*. (2001)
Hillerman, Tony. *The Oxford Book of the American Detective Stories*. (1997)
Keene, Carolyn. *The Secret of the Old Clock*. (1930)
Paretsky, Sara. *Indemnity Only*. (1982)

To Download:

Her Interactive: *The Ghost of Thornton Hall*. (PC/Mac/Android/iPad)

Please note: if students cannot access one of the above IOS platforms, an alternative assignment will be provided.

Available Online or Via Course Reserves:

Bloch, Ernst. "A Philosophical View of the Detective Novel" (1965)
English, Daylanne K. "Being Black There: Contemporary African American Detective Fiction." (2013)
Link, Kelly. "The Girl Detective." (1999)
Neely, Barbara. "Rosie and Me." (1981)
Harriet the Spy (1996)
Veronica Mars. *Pilot*. (2004)
Winks, Robin W. "American Detective Fiction." (1980)

Assignments (see below for Grading Rubric) 1000 possible points:

Class Participation: 100 pts

I judge class participation on the following criteria: being ready for class on time (notes out, ready to begin); paying attention during lectures and presentations; respectful participation in class; full engagement in class discussion, without texting, checking phone or email, or other digital distractions; staying awake in class!; etc. You begin class with all possible points and lose points for specific infractions. You are encouraged to check in with me if you ever have questions about ways to improve your participation.

Paragraph 50 pts

Students will write a complete paragraph describing a single theme, with a specific and focused topic sentence.

New Media Analysis (words) 100 pts

Students will play through *The Ghost of Thornton Hall* and write a reflective essay on the experience, paying particular attention to the translation of book characters to first person video game protagonists. This informal assignment will act as a written basis for our discussion of media adaptation throughout the course. No external research should be conducted for this assignment, beyond the primary source.

Please note that we will be reading *The Secret of the Old Clock* from 1930, instead of *Uncivil Acts* from 2005, on which *The Ghost of Thornton Hall* is loosely based. I will provide excerpts from *Uncivil Acts* to aid our discussion, but reflections will be a more general reflection of how Nancy Drew translates between media forms, rather than referring to actual instances from the loose inspiration.

If students are unable to play through the video game because of technological issues, an alternative YouTube viewing assignment will be provided, but the reflective essay will remain the same.

Presentation and Paper (750 words) 150 points: 50 pts for presentation; 100 pts for paper

Once during the semester, groups of two to three students will present on an assigned short story from the *Oxford Book of American Detective Stories*. (Groups, stories, and presentation-dates will be assigned via random.org.) Presentations will consist of an examination of the characters, setting, and narration of the short story accompanied by an analysis of how and why the story is considered “detective.” Please note that many of the short stories assigned will not feature female protagonists, although many are written by women. In these cases, note how women are portrayed (if at all) within the story itself and how that portrayal varies from the genre of the “girl detective” in a meaningful way. This assignment will help us to situate “the girl detective” in the larger genre of American Detective fiction. External research and materials are encouraged but not required for this assignment.

Presentation Papers will be due one week after the presentation date.

The Presentation Paper will most closely resemble a close reading assignment. Students will begin with one paragraph describing the group-work experience. Students will then pick a quote from the short story that they will analyze as a part of the whole. No external research is required for this assignment but is always welcome should students decide to do so.

Close Reading (750 words) 100 pts

Students will choose a passage from a novel or short story we have read in class to read closely. Students will then analyze the passage by paying close attention to its composition (diction, syntax, rhyme, rhythm,

meter) and will make an argument about the way in which the author's composition influences their thematic reading.

Critical Article Analysis (1000 words) 100 pts

For this essay, students will use an academic article related to one of the texts we have read this semester and write an essay in response to the author's argument. Students must provide a brief summary of the argument, as well as a detailed analysis of its effectiveness and validity.

Extended Close Reading (1500 words) 150 pts

This paper will consist of a thematic analysis of one of the texts we are reading for class. The essay will incorporate at least one critical source that speaks to similar issues and themes students are exploring on their own. Students will consider the ways in which criticism can help to build an original argument on the text. As always, students are encouraged to consult with me before beginning the writing process.

Annotated Bibliography, 50 pts

In this assignment, students will explore **AT LEAST** five sources that will be useful in establishing context for their final research paper. Students will both summarize the source but also, more importantly, critically examine the strengths and weaknesses of the text and explicate the ways the source will support your overall argument. Please note that these sources are not required to be included in your final paper. The goal of this assignment is to consider potential sources that

Final Paper (2000 words) 200 pts

In this essay, students will use the skills we have built throughout the course and in previous essays. This paper should have a strong, clear, and creative argument about a text of their choosing and should cite at least **three critical sources**. This assignment should not be a regurgitation of the issues, ideas, and themes we have discussed in class, but should instead be a result of the student's own critical thinking and understanding of "the girl detective."

Course Policies:

1. You must complete all *assignments* to receive credit for this course.
2. *Attendance:* After four 50-minute absences, students will lose 50 points from their final course grades per absence. After six 50-minute absences (two full weeks of class), students will automatically fail the course. Only those absences involving university-sponsored events, such as athletics and band, and religious holidays will be exempt from this policy. Absences related to university-sponsored events must be discussed with the instructor prior to the date that will be missed. Students are responsible for keeping track of their own attendance record. The instructor is not responsible for informing students of their attendance record; however, students are encouraged to ask the student for the number of absences they have accrued should they have any concerns. The instructor will consider documented extenuated circumstances, such as a major illness, on a case-by-case basis.

Please note that this is a Tuesday/Thursday class, so absences during the Tuesday double block will count for two 50-minute class periods.

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this class are consistent with university policies that can be found at

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Note: If students are absent, it is their responsibility to make themselves aware of all due dates. If absent due to a university-sponsored event, students are still responsible for turning assignments in on time.

3. *Tardiness:* Students who enter class after the start of class are late and are marked as tardy. Three instances of tardiness count as one absence. Additionally, if you arrive more than 15 minutes late to class, you will be counted as absent for that period. Tardiness disrupts the class and shows a disregard for your instructors and your classmates, so make it a habit to be in your seat when class begins.
4. *Paper Format & Submission:* Students will submit essays BOTH as a hardcopy in class and through Canvas.
Hardcopies must be stapled before submission. A full letter grade will be deducted from every unstapled paper (an A will become a B) and it is your responsibility to find a stapler before class; one will not be provided for you.
 - Because I use the reviewing feature in Microsoft Word, papers must be saved in a Word-compatible format, generally .doc or .docx, or .rtf.
 - Students should save your papers using your last name and the assignment name as the filename. For example: mcnultyexplication.doc
 - Submit through the assignment tab by attaching the document to the assignment page.
 - If you are experiencing technical difficulty with the website, print a hard copy of the paper and bring to class and/or email me your assignment. However, you will still need to attach the assignment once the website is running again.
5. *Paper Maintenance Responsibilities.* Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course. Save all returned, graded work until the semester is over.
6. *Academic Honesty and Definition of Plagiarism.* Plagiarism violates the Student Honor Code and requires reporting to the Dean of Students. All students must abide by the Student Honor Code: <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>.
7. *Grading and Course Credit Policies:* Grading for this course will be rigorous. If an assignment illustrates disregard for spelling, grammar, citation guidelines, or a general carelessness in the

writing, the assignment will be failed. Do not rely on your instructor for copyediting, even on drafts.

8. Students with *disabilities* who are requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/), which will provide appropriate documentation to give the instructor.
9. For information on UF Grading policies, see:
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>
10. *Grade Appeals*. In 1000- and 2000-level courses, students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant, in the Department office (4008 TUR). Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.
11. *Course Evaluations*. Toward the end of the semester, you will receive email messages asking you to go online and evaluate this course: <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals/Default.aspx>
12. Students who face difficulties completing the course or who are in need of counseling or urgent help may call the on-campus Counseling and Wellness Center (352) 392-1575, or contact them online: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>
13. Common courtesy is mandatory in our classroom. Silence all cell phones, pagers, alarms, and so on when you enter the classroom; unexpected noises interrupt everyone's concentration. Electronic copies of texts are allowed on a case-by-case basis, but misuse of electronic devices (off-task behavior) will result in an electronic-free classroom. Disciplinary action (dismissal from the classroom, grade deduction, and beyond) will be taken if a student disrupts the learning environment in any way.
14. *UF's policy on Harassment*: UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty:
<http://hr.ufl.edu/manager-resources/recruitment-staffing/institutional-equity-diversity/resources/harassment/>
15. Students who face difficulties completing the course or who are in need of counseling or urgent help may call the on-campus Counseling and Wellness Center (352) 392-1575, or contact them online: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx> (Links to an external site.)Links to an external site.
16. *UF's policy on Harassment*: UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty: <http://hr.ufl.edu/manager-resources/recruitment-staffing/institutional-equity-diversity/resources/harassment/>
17. *Policy on environmental sustainability*. Whenever possible, I will use paper-sparing electronic media to distribute our course materials. Consider purchasing electronic editions of assigned texts when they are available, or used copies of print texts. If you do not elect to keep your print books, consider sharing them with others after the semester ends. (For example, you could donate them to the Alachua County [Friends of the Library](#) (Links to an external site.) Links to an external site. annual book sale.)

SYLLABUS

Tentative Course Schedule (Readings are due on the day that they appear. Readings are subject to change.)

Week One: Introduction to The Girl Detective

1/9/18: Course introduction
Diagnostic Essay

1/11/18:
Read: Poe, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue"

Week Two:

1/16/18:
Read: Bloch, "A Philosophical View of the Detective Novel"
Assign: Paragraph

1/18/18:
Read: Link, "The Girl Detective"

Week Three:

1/23/18: Organizational techniques; Example presentation
Read: *The Secret of the Old Clock*. Pages TBA.

1/25/18:
Due: Paragraph
Download: *The Ghost of Thornton Hall*
Assign: New Media Analysis

Week Four:

1/30/18:
Due: Group One Presentation
Read: Green, "Missing: Page Thirteen"
Read: *The Secret of the Old Clock*. Pages TBA.

2/1/18:
Read: *The Secret of the Old Clock*. Pages TBA.

Week Five:

2/6/18:
Due: Group Two Presentation
Read: Glaspell, "A Jury of Her Peers"
Read: *The Secret of the Old Clock*. Pages TBA.

2/8/18
Due: New Media Analysis
Assign: Close Reading

Week Six:

2/13/18:

Due: Group Three Presentation

Read: Rinehart, "The Lipstick"

Read: *The Maltese Falcon*. Pages TBA.

2/15/18:

Read: *The Maltese Falcon*. Pages TBA.

Week Seven:

2/20/18:

Due: Group Four Presentation

Read: Macdonald, "Guilt-Edged Blonde."

Read: *The Maltese Falcon*. Pages TBA.

2/22/18:

Due: Close Reading

Assign: Critical Article Analysis

Week Eight:

2/27/18:

Due: Group Five Presentation

Read: Davis, "A Matter of Public Notice"

Read: Winks, Robin W. "American Detective Fiction." (1980)

3/1/18:

Read: *Harriet the Spy*. Pages TBA.

Week Nine: Spring Break!

3/6/18: No Class

3/8/18: No Class

Week Ten:

3/13/18: Due: Group Six Presentation

Read: Barnes, "Lucky Penny"

Read: *Harriet the Spy*. Pages TBA.

3/15/18: No Class Rebecca to ICFA

Week Eleven:

3/20/18:

Due: Critical Article Analysis

Assign: Extended Close Readings

Watch: *Harriet the Spy*

3/22/18:

Read: *Indemnity Only*. Pages TBA.

Week Twelve:

3/27/18:

Due: Group Seven Presentation

Read: Grafton, "The Parker Shotgun"

Read: *Indemnity Only*. Pages TBA.

3/29/18:

Read: *Indemnity Only*. Pages TBA.

Week Thirteen:

4/3/18:

Due: Group Eight Presentation

Read: Muller, "Benny's Space"

Read: *Indemnity Only*. Pages TBA.

4/5/18:

Due: Extended Close Readings

Assign: Final Papers

Read: *Dead until Dark*. Pages TBA.

Week Fourteen:

4/10/18:

Due: Group Nine Presentation

Read: Queen, "The Adventure of Abraham Lincoln's Clue"

Read: *Dead until Dark*. Pages TBA.

4/12/18:

Due: Annotated Bibliography

Due: Final Paper Proposals

Week Fifteen:

4/17/18:

Due: Group Ten Presentation

Read: Hillerman, "Chee's Witch"

Read: *Dead until Dark*. Pages TBA.

4/19/18:

Read: Neely, "Rosie and Me"

Read: English, Daylanne K. "Being Black There: Contemporary African American Detective Fiction." (2013)

Week Sixteen:

4/24/18: Final Thoughts

Watch: *Veronica Mars Pilot*

Final Papers Due Monday, April 30 by Noon

Grading and Course Credit Policies

Grading for this course will be rigorous. If an assignment illustrates disregard for spelling, grammar, citation guidelines, or a general carelessness in the writing, the assignment will be failed. Do not rely on your instructor for copyediting, even on drafts.

The writing assignments for this course are designed to meet the minimum requirements of the University Writing Requirement credit. To satisfy this requirement, **every** assignment's word count must be fulfilled. **Submitted assignments short of the minimum word count will receive a major point deduction.** Students may exceed the word count by up to 50 words, without permission.

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	GPA	Percentage (Point %)
A	4.0	93–100 (95)
A-	3.67	90–92 (92)
B+	3.33	87–89 (88)
B	3.0	83–86 (85)
B-	2.67	80–82 (81)
C+	2.33	77–79 (79)
C	2.0	73–76 (75)
C-	1.67	70–72 (71)
D+	1.33	67–69 (68)
D	1.0	63–66 (65)
D-	0.67	60–62 (61)
E	0.00	0–59 (0)

Grade Meanings

- A Student did what the assignment asked at a high quality level, meeting all of the composition objectives required of the assignment. Additionally, his or her work shows originality, creativity, and demonstrates that the student took extra steps to be original or creative in developing content, solving a problem, or developing a style. Since careful editing and proofreading are essential in writing, papers in the A range must be free of typos and grammatical or mechanical errors.
- B Student did what the assignment asked at a quality level, meeting most of the composition objectives required of the assignment. Work in this range needs revision; however, it is complete in content, is organized well, and shows special attention to style.
- C Student did what the assignment asked, but overlooked some of the composition objectives. Work in this range needs significant revision, but it is complete in content and the organization is logical. The style is straightforward but unremarkable.
- D Student neglected some basic requirements of the assignment, and completed it at a poor quality level. Work in this range needs significant revision. The content is often incomplete and the organization is hard to discern. Attention to style is often nonexistent or chaotic.
- E An E is usually reserved for students who do not do the work or do not come to class.

However, if work is shoddy, shows little understanding of the needs of the assignment, and/or an inability to meet the composition objectives, he or she will receive a failing grade