

ENGLISH 4205: WOMEN AND DETECTIVE FICTION

To Sherlock Holmes, she was always *the* woman.
—Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, “A Scandal in Bohemia”

At least since Irene Adler beat Sherlock Holmes at his own game, women have had a complicated relationship with both detectives and detective fiction. Though often depicted as either victims or *femmes fatales* in early detective stories, women characters did frequently have central roles, and even before Agatha Christie’s Miss Marple appeared in 1930, they did their share of crime-solving too. Women writers have also been prominent in the field from its early days: Christie, Dorothy Sayers, and Ngaio Marsh were major figures in the ‘Golden Age’ of detective fiction in the 1920s and 1930s, for instance, and P. D. James, Sue Grafton, and Sara Paretsky are only a few of the many women whose crime fiction tops today’s best-seller lists. In this course we will read a sampling of mystery writing by women featuring female investigators, paying particular attention to the different things our readings suggest about women’s relationships to crime, law, justice, morality, knowledge, and power.

READING LIST

Stories (Poe, Doyle, Hammett, Wilkins, Glaspell)
Agatha Christie, *Thirteen Problems*
Dorothy L. Sayers, *Gaudy Night*
Carolyn Keene, *Nancy Drew: The Secret of the Old Clock*
P. D. James, *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman*
Amanda Cross, *Death in a Tenured Position*
Sue Grafton, *A is for Alibi*
Sara Paretsky, *Indemnity Only*
DVD: LaPlante/Mirren, *Prime Suspect I*

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Discussion Questions	1 set	@ 5%	5%
Responses	4	@ 5%	20%
Seminar Presentation	1	@ 25%	25%
Proposal & Essay	1	@ 40%	40%
Attendance / Participation		10%	10%

ABOUT THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS COURSE

Discussion Questions: Once this term you will be responsible for posting a set of 3-5 discussion questions to the designated bulletin board on our Blackboard site. Questions must be posted by **noon the day before** the relevant class meeting. This arrangement gives your classmates time to consider your questions as they do the reading, and to prepare Responses if they choose to do so (see below). Questions should be specific

and pointed, designed to focus our attention on particularly interesting aspects of the reading assigned for the day and to help generate class discussion. They should be clearly written and carefully proofread.

Responses: Four times this term you must post a thoughtful, well-crafted response to our bulletin boards, either to one of the current discussion questions or to a response to them already posted by one of your classmates. In either case, use the 'reply' option to the relevant question set so that your Response is easily spotted and recorded.

Responses should not exceed 300 words. You may submit Responses on the dates of your choice, but be aware that you may not submit more than one per week or any in response to your own questions; do not put off doing these until the end of term. It's a good idea to label your Responses #1 of 4, #2 of 4, etc.

Seminar Presentations: Once this term, you will work with a small group to prepare a 45-minute seminar presentation on one of our authors. Each presentation must include some specific elements; detailed guidelines are posted on Blackboard and should be studied carefully as you plan and prepare. Tasks may be divided up as you see fit within the group, but except in extraordinary circumstances, all members of a group will receive the same grade. At least 24 hours advance notice is required for A/V equipment.

Paper Proposals and Papers: Specific guidelines and topics for the papers will be distributed later this term.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS

Date	Topic / Reading	Assignment
F September 10	Introduction to English 4205	
M September 13	Introductory Lecture: Women and Detective Fiction	
W September 15	Poe, "The Purloined Letter"; Doyle, "A Scandal in Bohemia" (e-texts); Hammett, "The House on Turk Street" (Xerox)	Questions: R. Maitzen
F September 17	Wilkins, "The Long Arm"; Glaspell, "A Jury of Her Peers" (e-texts)	Questions: _____
M September 20	Christie, "The Tuesday Night Club," "The Blood-Stained Pavement," "The Blue Geranium"	Questions: _____
W September 22	Christie, "The Companion," "The Affair at the Bungalow," "Death by Drowning"	Questions: _____
F September 24	Presentation: Agatha Christie	Presentation: _____

M September 27	Keene, <i>The Secret of the Old Clock</i> (Chapters I-IX)	Questions: _____
W September 29	<i>The Secret of the Old Clock</i> (all)	Questions: _____
F October 1	Presentation: Nancy Drew	Presentation: _____
M October 4	Sayers, <i>Gaudy Night</i> (Chapters 1-6)	Questions: _____
W October 6	<i>Gaudy Night</i> (Chapters 1-11)	Questions: _____
F October 8	<i>Gaudy Night</i> (Chapters 1-16)	Questions: _____
M October 11	THANKSGIVING	NO CLASS
W October 13	<i>Gaudy Night</i> (all)	Questions: _____
F October 15	Presentation: Dorothy Sayers	Presentation: _____
M October 18	James, <i>An Unsuitable Job for a Woman</i> (Chapters 1-2)	Questions: _____
W October 20	<i>Unsuitable Job</i> (Chapters 1-4)	Questions: _____
F October 22	<i>Unsuitable Job</i> (all)	Questions: _____
M October 25	Presentation: P. D. James	Presentation: _____
W October 27	Cross, <i>Death in a Tenured Position</i> (Prologue; Chapters 1-4)	Questions: _____
F October 29	<i>Death in a Tenured Position</i> (Chapters 1-8)	Questions: _____
M November 1	<i>Death in a Tenured Position</i> (all)	Questions: _____
W November 3	Presentation: Amanda Cross	Presentation: _____

F November 5	Grafton, <i>'A' is for Alibi</i> (Chapters 1-9)	Questions: _____
M November 8	<i>'A' is for Alibi</i> (Chapters 1-19)	Questions: _____
W November 10	<i>'A' is for Alibi</i> (all)	Questions: _____
F November 12	Study Day—No Classes	
M November 15	Presentation: Sue Grafton	Presentation: _____
W November 17	Paretsky, <i>Indemnity Only</i> (Chapters 1-6)	Questions: _____
F November 19	<i>Indemnity Only</i> (Chapters 1-12)	Paper Proposals Due by 4:00 Questions: _____
M November 22	<i>Indemnity Only</i> (all)	Questions: _____
W November 24	Presentation: Sara Paretsky	Presentation: _____
F November 26	<i>Prime Suspect I</i> (The Case and the Players)	Questions: _____
M November 29	<i>Prime Suspect I</i> (The Investigation)	Questions: _____
W December 1	<i>Prime Suspect I</i> (The Solution)	Questions: _____
F December 3	Presentation: <i>Prime Suspect I</i>	Presentation: _____
M December 6	Conference Day: No seminar meeting	Office Hours 10:00-12:00
T December 7		Term Papers Due by 4:00

ENGLISH 4205 RESERVE LIST

Gill, Gillian. *Agatha Christie: The Woman and Her Mysteries*. PR 6005 H66 Z655 1990.

Heilbrun, Carolyn G. *Hamlet's Mother and Other Women*. PR 111 H45 1990.

Hitchman, Janet. *Such a Strange Lady: An Introduction to Dorothy L. Sayers*. PR 6037 A95 Z7.

Irons, Glenwood. *Feminism in Women's Detective Fiction*. PN 3448 D4 F45 1995.

James, P. D. *Time to Be in Earnest: A Fragment of an Autobiography*. PR 6060 A467 Z468 2000.

Kenney, Catherine. *The Remarkable Case of Dorothy L. Sayers*. PR 6037 A95 Z74 1990.

Klein, Kathleen Gregory. *The Woman Detective: Gender and Genre*. PR 830 D4 K58 1995.

Knight, Stephen. *Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction*. PS 374 D4 K5.

Maida, Patricia. *Murder She Wrote: Agatha Christie's Detective Fiction*. PR 6005 H66 Z74 1982.

Priestman, Martin. *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*. PR 830 D4 C36 2003 (also available as an electronic resource).

Reddy, Maureen. *Sisters in Crime: Feminism and the Crime Novel*. PS 374 D4 R4 1988.

Symons, Julian. *Bloody Murder: from the Detective Story to the Crime Novel*. PN 3448 D4 S87.

The Oxford Companion to Crime and Mystery Writing. PN 3448 D4 O94 1999.

ENGLISH 4205 BINDER

1. Heilbrun, Carolyn G. "The Detective Novel of Manners," "Gender and Detective Fiction," and "Sayers, Lord Peter, and Harriet Vane at Oxford." from *Hamlet's Mother and Other Women*. NY: Columbia UP, 1990, 231-59.
2. Heilbrun, Carolyn G. "Books: The Women of Mystery." *Ms* (March/April 1991) 62-63.
3. Hubbell, Gary. "All You Have Left in the End: Conclusions and the Series Character in Sue Grafton's 'Alphabet Series.'" *Clues: A Journal of Detection* 18:1 (1997) 15-23.
4. Humm, Maggie. "Feminist Detective Fiction." *Twentieth-Century Suspense: the Thriller Comes of Age*, ed. Clive Bloom. NY: St. Martin's, 1990, 237-54.
5. Jansson, Siv. "The Difference of Viewing: Female Detectives in Fiction and on Film." *Sisterhoods: Across the Literature/Media Divide*, ed. Deborah Cartmell, I. Q. Hunter, Heidi Kaye, and Imelda Whelehan. London: Pluto Press, 1998, 149-66.
6. Kenney, Catherine. "Gaudy Night and the Mystery of the Human Heart." *The Remarkable Case of Dorothy L. Sayers*. Kent OH: Kent State UP, 81-119.

7. Klein, Kathleen Gregory. "An Unsuitable Job for a Feminist?" from *The Woman Detective: Gender and Genre*. Chicago: U Illinois P, 1988, 200-222.
8. Matthews, Anne. "Rage in a Tenured Position." *New York Times* November 8, 1992.
9. Rabinowitz, Peter J. "'Reader, I blew him away': Convention and Transgression in Sue Grafton." *Famous Last Words: Changes in Gender and Narrative Closure*, ed. Alison Booth. Charlottesville: Virginia UP, 1993, 326-44.
10. Reddy, Maureen T. "The Feminist Counter-Tradition in Crime: Cross, Grafton, Paretsky, and Wilson." *The Cunning Craft: Original Essays on Detective Fiction and Contemporary Literary Theory*, ed. Ronald G. Walker and June Frazer. Macomb: Western Illinois UP, 1990, 174-87.
11. Sayers, Dorothy L. "Gaudy Night." *The Art of the Mystery Story: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Howard Haycraft. NY: Biblo and Tannen, 1976, 208-21.
12. Sherlock, Diane. "Remarkable Acts: A Conversation with Carolyn G. Heilbrun BI '77." *Radcliffe Quarterly* (Winter 1998)
13. Stein, Thomas Michael. "University Detective Fiction Then and Now: Dorothy L. Sayers's *Gaudy Night* and Amanda Cross's *Death in a Tenured Position*." *Seven: an Anglo-American Literary Review* 10 (1993) 31-42.
14. Steinem, Gloria. "Dearest Carolyn." *Ms* (Winter 2003/2004) 78-79.
15. Tasker, Yvonne. "Investigating Women: Work, criminality and sexuality," from *Working Girls: Gender and sexuality in popular cinema*. London & NY: Routledge, 1998, 91-113.
16. Thornham, Sue. "Feminist Interventions: *Prime Suspect I*." *Critical Survey* 6:2 (1994) 226-33.
17. Trembley, Elizabeth A. "'Collaring the Other Fellows's Property': Feminism Reads Dorothy L. Sayers." *Women Times Three: Writers, Detectives, Readers*, ed. Kathleen Gregory Klein. Bowling Green OH: Bowling Green State U Popular Press, 1995, 81-99.
18. Walton, Priscilla L. "'E' is for En/Gendering Readings: Sue Grafton's Kinsey Millhone." *Women Times Three: Writers, Detectives, Readers*, ed. Kathleen Gregory Klein. Bowling Green OH: Bowling Green State U Popular Press, 1995, 101-15.
19. Wolcott, James. "An Appreciation." *Helen Mirren / Prime Suspect: A Celebration*, ed. Amy Rennert. San Francisco: KQED Books, 1995, 14-29.
20. Yarbrough, Trisha. "The Achievement of Amanda Cross." *Clues: A Journal of Detection* 15:1 (1994) 93-104.