

Fall 8-15-2003

## ENG 3504-001: Film and Literature

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3504-001

## English 3504, Film and Literature: Film and Roman (novel) Noir

Dr. Robin L. Murray

Fall 2003, Thursday, 6:30-9

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### Course Description:

According to Katz's *Film Encyclopedia*, film noir is "a term coined by French critics to describe a type of film that is characterized by its dark, somber tone and cynical, pessimistic mood. Literally meaning 'dark (or 'black') film,' the term is derived from *roman noir*, 'black novel.'" (456). Film noir typically refers to Hollywood films of the 1940s and 1950s, which reflect the mood and tone of the black novel, but films continue to be made in the noir style and reflect cultural changes, resulting in Blaxploitation films and feminist noir. This course will explore the noir style in both film and literature and, I hope, complicate visions of the genre.

### Texts:

Chandler, Raymond. *The Maltese Falcon*

Grant, Barry Keith, Editor. *Film Genre Reader II*

Hemingway, Ernest. *Short Stories*.

For Reference: *The Film/Cinema Movie*

Group novel

### Course Requirements:

- 1. Weekly Responses and Participation:** Responses are about two pages typed and reflect careful reading and synthesis of course materials and/or films. Your responses will serve as a source for discussion in class as a whole or in small groups so are part of your participation grade. Responses should analyze, critique, argue for or against, or evaluate—they should not summarize except to make the writer's point(s). You must be in class to receive credit for your response or for any in-class work.
- 2. Midterm Exam:** This exam will provide an opportunity to internalize material all students read for class and to carefully read the first four films in the class.
- 3. Group Novel Teaching and Presentation:** Because so few Roman Noir are available in textbook rental, members of five different groups will each read a different novel and be responsible for teaching it to the rest of the class (with my help).
- 4. Final Exam:** This exam will not be cumulative. It will provide an opportunity to internalize material read for class as a group and as a class from Midterm forward and carefully to read the last three films in the class.
- 5. Final Paper and Presentation:** This paper will expand on the best thoughts of your response to your chosen group's novel. I will provide a handout to clarify requirements for this paper and comments on your response to help stimulate best

idea development. Presentations will give you the opportunity to share your thoughts with your classmates.

**Grades:** Grades will be determined as follows for a total of 100%:

<b>Weekly Responses and Participation</b> -----	<b>20%</b>
<b>Midterm</b> -----	<b>20%</b>
<b>Group Teaching/Presentation</b> -----	<b>20%</b>
<b>Final Exam</b> -----	<b>20%</b>
<b>Final Paper</b> -----	<b>20%</b>

**Grading of Responses, Presentation, and Paper:**

Response grades will be based on analytical complexity. Each will be worth twenty points. If a response only summarizes a film or novel, the response gets only half credit. Adequate analysis (or argument or critique) will result in 14 points (C level). Good analysis, etc., in 16 points (B level). Great analysis, etc., from 18-20 points, depending on clarity, precision, and sense of voice.

Paper grades will be based on the following areas: Audience awareness, organization, development, sentence structure, word choice, grammar/usage/mechanics. The first three areas will be weighted more heavily than the second three (60% vs. 40%). I will also distribute the English Department's grade analysis in class.

Presentations will be evaluated according to a rubric I will distribute in class. Groups should also turn in any class handouts or visuals with novel responses.

**Students with Disabilities:** If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

**Plagiarism:** The English Department states, "Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism -- 'The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's original work' -- has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of "F" in the course."

**Electronic Writing Portfolio:** This class is a writing intensive class, so you may submit your paper as a writing portfolio sample, following the instructions on the CASL Website. Submissions must be made during the course of the class to receive my approval. Please note that the Writing Center is available for help with all writing assignments, as well. Take advantage of this free service.

## Tentative Course Calendar: Subject to Change

### August

28 Introduction to the course, to film studies and to film noir—*Citizen Kane* as example. Read *The Maltese Falcon* for September 4 and write a response.

### September

4 Respond to novel, *The Maltese Falcon* by Dashell Hammett and watch the film in Coleman Auditorium—**Response Due**. Read “Notes on Film Noir” in FGR for next week. Group I—read *Double Indemnity* for 9/11 and be prepared to work with class 9/11 and 9/18. (see handout)

11 **Response to film due—does it meet the definition of film noir in fgr?. *Double Indemnity*** and film noir discussion.

18 **Group I—Response due.** *Double Indemnity* in Coleman Auditorium (based on novel by James M. Cain—screenplay by Billy Wilder and Raymond Chandler). Read “Genre” and “The Idea of Genre in the American Theatre” for 9/25. Group II, Read *Mildred Pierce* for 9/25 and be prepared to work with class 9/25 and 10/2.

25 **Response to film and reading due.** *Mildred Pierce* and genre discussion.

### October

2 **Group II—Response due.** View *Mildred Pierce* in Coleman Auditorium (based on novel by James M. Cain—screenplay by Ranald MacDougall). Discussion. Read “A Semantic/Syntactic Approach,” “Genre Films and Status Quo” and “Social Implications...” for 10/9. Write a response.

9 **Response to film due.** Read “The Killers” for next week and write a response.

16 **Response due.** *The Killers* (based on the Hemingway story—screenplay by Anthony Veiller). Study for midterm. Group III, read *In a Lonely Place* and be prepared to discuss it 10/30 and 11/6.

23 Midterm

30 **Group III—Response due.** *In a Lonely Place* (based on the novel by Dorothy Hughes—Screenplay by Andrew Solt, adapted by Edmund H. North). View film and discuss differences from novel. Continue discussion next week. Read “Ideology, Genre, Auteur” and “Cinema/Ideology/Criticism...” for 11/6 and write a response. Group IV read *Badge of Evil* for 11/6.

## November

6      **Response to film—genre readings—due.** Group III discussion continued. Group IV, begin discussion of *Badge of Evil*.

13      **Group IV—Response due.** *Touch of Evil* (based on the novel, *Badge of Evil* by Whit Masterson—Screenplay by Orson Welles). Read “The Structural Influence” and “Genre Film: A Classical Experience” and Group V read *Odds Against Tomorrow* for 11/20.

20      Group V discussion, *Odds Against Tomorrow*. Discuss FGR essays. Read “Genre and Performance...,” “Film Bodies...,” and “Questions of Genre” for 12/4.

27      No Class: Thanksgiving Break

## December

4      **Group V—Response due.** *Odds Against Tomorrow* (based on the novel by William P. McGivern—Screenplay by John O. Killens and Nelson Gidding). Group V discussion, continued. Discuss genre essays. Work on papers for next week—expand group novel response.

11      Presentations of final papers—**Final Papers Due**

18      Final Exam