

**First-year Seminar**

**Theory and Praxis of Detective Fiction**

**Fall 2004**

**Instructors:**

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Office hours: Wed 12:30-2:30 p.m., Thurs 9:30-10:30 a.m.,  
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**Required Texts:**

Raymond Chandler, The Big Sleep  
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, The Hound of the Baskervilles  
Carl Hiaasen, Stormy Weather  
Chester Himes, Blind Man With a Pistol  
Denise Mina, Garnethill: a Novel of Crime  
Sara Paretsky, Bitter Medicine  
Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahloo, The Laughing Policeman  
JanWillem van de Wetering, The Streetbird

**Course Description:**

What could mystery novels set in Victorian England, 1930s California, 1950s Harlem, 1960s Stockholm, and 1970s Amsterdam have in common? How do they reflect or interrogate the cultures that produced them? Why did Conan Doyle set much of The Hound of the Baskervilles on remote Dartmoor? Why does Philip Marlowe constantly encounter sexual “deviancy” in The Big Sleep? What does Sjöwall and Wahloo’s The Laughing Policeman suggest about Swedish politics in the 1960s? What is van de Wetering saying about Holland’s colonial past in The Streetbird? These are some of the questions we will explore as we study one of the most popular forms of genre fiction: detective novels. We will also look at two or three film adaptations to see how a different medium transforms works of literature. Last, but not least, we’ll tackle the big question: just why have these sorts of novels remained so popular?

**Course Objectives:**

The overarching goal of this and other first-year seminars is to introduce you to important aspects of college-level academic work: critical thinking, effective writing, careful reading,

engaged discussion, and research skills. In reading, writing, and discussion, we will focus on the concept of argument and the construction and communication of effective arguments. We hope you will develop your ability to recognize and critique the arguments of others and to formulate and defend your own arguments on the basis of logical thinking and evidence. Though we hope you will find the subject matter of the seminar interesting, we are more interested in helping you develop the intellectual skills and habits of mind that will serve you well throughout your academic career at Dickinson and beyond.

### **Course Requirements and Grading:**

Your course grade will be determined by the following criteria:

Paper #1	15%
Paper #2	15%
Annotated Bibliography	20%
Paper #4	25%
Participation	25%

Each of the three papers will go through a drafting, feedback, and revising process. The grade on the final version of each paper will take into account the extent and effectiveness of your revision. Included in your participation grade are miscellaneous assignments such as reading responses, preparation of questions for class discussion, and research exercises, meeting deadlines, oral and written responses on classmates' drafts, and contribution to class discussion.

Paper topics and guidelines will be given to you as the semester progresses. For each paper, you will have ample time for writing the first version and for revising after receiving feedback on the draft. You are encouraged to visit the Writing Center, preferably with the tutors linked to our seminars, at any point in the writing process. You are required to meet with your linked tutor on at least one paper. The Writing Center tutor linked with Professor Gill's seminar is R. J. Long, a senior history major and education minor. The Writing Center tutor linked with Professor Winston's seminar is Dave Emerick, a senior English major and education minor. We encourage you to make use of their knowledge, expertise, and willingness to help you in this seminar with your research and writing.

All papers (first and final versions) must be word-processed and meet standard format practices: double-spaced; pages numbered, first page with title, your name, and date of submission; consistent citation and documentation style (MLA is the easiest). Late papers will not be accepted, and plagiarism will not be tolerated (see the [Student Handbook](#) for the definition of plagiarism). If you have any questions about citation (what should be cited and how), please ask us. You cannot pass the course unless you complete all the requirements

Christine Bombaro is our library liaison; she will meet with us once or twice during the semester to talk about research and resources available in the library and online.

## Accommodations for Students with Learning Disabilities:

In compliance with the Dickinson College policy and equal access laws, we are available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for students with disabilities. Requests for academic accommodations are to be made during the first three weeks of the semester, except for unusual circumstances, so arrangements can be made. Students are required to register with Learning Support Services located in Biddle House (contact [jervis@dickinson.edu](mailto:jervis@dickinson.edu)) to verify their eligibility for appropriate accommodations and complete an "Accommodation Letter."

## Seminar Schedule:

Friday, August 27	First meeting, 9-10:30 a.m.
Tuesday, August 31	Introduction: reading the syllabus Reading classic detective fiction: "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" < <a href="http://www.bakerstreet221b.de/canon/spec.htm">http://www.bakerstreet221b.de/canon/spec.htm</a> >
Thursday, September 2	Defending the Status Quo: Conan Doyle, <u>The Hound of the Baskervilles</u>
Tuesday, September 7	<u>The Hound of the Baskervilles</u>
Thursday, September 9	Paper workshop
Tuesday, September 14	Lecture: hard-boiled detective fiction Chandler, "The Simple Art of Murder" Classes will meet together in Althouse 108
Thursday, September 16	Detective Fiction and Social Criticism: Chandler, <u>The Big Sleep</u> Draft of paper #1 due
Tuesday, September 21	<u>The Big Sleep</u>
Thursday, September 23	Library research workshop Classes will meet together in the Information Commons Classroom on the lower level of the library
Tuesday, September 28	Detective Fiction and Race: Himes, <u>Blind Man With a Pistol</u>
Thursday, September 30	<u>Blind Man With a Pistol</u> Final version of paper #1 due
Tuesday, October 5	<u>Blind Man With a Pistol</u>

Thursday, October 7	Detective Fiction and Feminism: Paretsky, <u>Bitter Medicine</u>
Tuesday, October 12	<u>Bitter Medicine</u>
Thursday, October 14	Group advising workshop Draft of paper #2 due
Tuesday, October 19	Mid-term Pause
Thursday, October 21	Lecture: the police procedural Classes will meet together in Althouse 108
Tuesday, October 26	Workshop on the annotated bibliography Classes will meet together in Althouse 108
Thursday, October 28	Detective Fiction and Politics: Sjowall and Wahloo, <u>The Laughing Policeman</u> Final version of paper #2 due
Tuesday, November 2	<u>The Laughing Policeman</u>
Thursday, November 4	Detective Fiction and the Colonial Legacy: van de Wetering, <u>The Streetbird</u>
Tuesday, November 9	<u>The Streetbird</u>
Thursday, November 11	Detective Fiction as Satire: Hiaasen, <u>Stormy Weather</u>
Tuesday, November 16	<u>Stormy Weather</u>
Thursday, November 18	Workshop on draft of final paper
Tuesday, November 23	Workshop on draft of final paper
Thursday, November 25	Thanksgiving Vacation
Tuesday, November 30	Workshop on draft of final paper
Thursday, December 2	Workshop on draft of final paper Annotated bibliography due (paper #3) Course evaluation
Tuesday, December 7	Detective Fiction and the Contemporary: Mina, <u>Garnethill</u>
Thursday, December 9	<u>Garnethill</u> Final paper due

