

# Crime and Detection in World Literature

**Course Designation:** Comparative Literature (100-level)

**Credit Hours:** 3

**Semester/Term:**

**Meeting Days/Time/Location:**

## Instructor Information

**Instructor:** Katherine Kerschen

**Email:**

**Office Phone:**

**Office:**

**Office Hours:**

## Course Description

What is the 'Age of Goethe'? Roughly, this descriptor applies to the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, corresponding to the decades in which Goethe and his contemporaries were producing literary and philosophical writings that would inform Western European literature and humanities for the next two centuries, indeed up to the present day. This course studies the origins and development of crime and detective literature from an international and interdisciplinary perspective. The course traces literature's responses to and entanglements with crime, violence, detection, forensics, and social justice through a variety of historical and cultural contexts. Some of the questions addressed may include myths about law and order; the rise of urban societies and mass culture; the construction of the figures of detective, witness, criminal, and victim as models of subjectivity; issues of racial, class, gender, and sexual violence; and shifting ideals of justice.

Students will learn about the history of the idea of crime and its relationship with literary form. They will develop an awareness of the contribution of literary thinking to ideas of social justice, as well as a theory of genre and its development over time. They will recognize regional, cultural, and historical differences that affect the intellectual development of literature and detection alike. Finally, a major theme will be learning to relate the practice of detection to both literary analysis and a critical analysis of many contemporary problems, from cancel culture and doxing to fake news stories and conspiracy theories.

This course fulfills the General Education Humanities requirement or the International Cultures requirement.

## Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify the key components of detective fiction
- Understand the intercultural and global context of crime and detective fiction
- Analyze clues and patterns in texts to find trends and meanings
- Critically evaluate how the cultural and political environment shaping a literary text impacts the representation of crime, violence, and justice
- Develop logical and compelling arguments about literary texts
- Clearly and effectively communicate observations, opinions, and analysis about literature in discussion and in written assignments

## Required Materials

In this course we will mostly read short stories, which will be made available to you in electronic form on our CANVAS site. However, you are required to purchase the following two novels:

- Arjouni, Jakob. *Happy Birthday, Turk!* Melville International Crime. 2011. ISBN-13: 978-1935554202 (\*Other versions available, but this is the one I will be using).
- Ngũgĩ, Mũkoma wa. *Nairobi Heat*. Melville International Crime. 2011. ISBN-13: 978-1935554646

## Course Requirements and Evaluation

### Active Participation – 10%

This is a discussion-based course, which means that consistent, active participation is required. You'll receive a participation grade each week based on the following rubric:

5 points	Frequent, substantial, and consistent verbal participation that demonstrates a good grasp of the reading. This includes asking questions as well as taking part in group activities.
3-4	Occasional, inconsistent, or only superficial verbal participation. This includes demonstrating some grasp of the reading but failing to contribute to class discussion and/or group activities.
1-2	Infrequent, inconsistent, or superficial verbal participation. This includes rarely if ever answering or asking questions, failure to engage with the reading or participate in group activities.
0	Very poor or no participation; weak or no grasp of the readings; disruptive, disengaged, or uncooperative behavior.

### Homework / Short Assignments – 15%

Periodically you will be required to complete short homework assignments, which may take the form of worksheets, discussion posts, or Canvas quizzes. There will also be some graded in-class activities, such as peer reviews.

### Mini Presentation (class kick-off) – 5%

Once during the semester you will do a mini presentation to “kick off” the class session. You will have 5-10 minutes to provide a summary/analysis of the reading for that day and guide class discussion. You will choose your presentation date during the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of class. Further details and a grading rubric will be on Canvas.

### Reading Response Worksheets – 20%

These are short, written exercises (400-600 words) in which you respond to and discuss an assigned reading. There are 7 assigned throughout the semester; **you are required to complete 4 out of 7**. If desired, you can complete up to 5 and then drop the one with the lowest score. Please note that these assignments must **be turned in by 9:30am** on the day they are due so that I can review them before class. See Canvas for further details.

### Creative Assignments – 20%

There will be two creative assignments during the semester. At the semester’s start, you will submit a “two-minute mystery” of your own creation based on the samples we read in class (400-600 words), along with appended notes/analysis (200-300 words). In the middle of the semester, students will submit another “two-minute mystery” of their own creation along with notes/analysis. In-class peer review workshops will be conducted for these assignments. Further details and a grading rubric on Canvas.

### Final Paper / Project – 30%

In place of a final exam, you will choose from one of two options for a final paper or project, due **Tuesday, May 4, 2021 by 11:59pm**.

- **Option 1:** Write a paper comparing two or more class texts (or outside texts, with my prior approval) within a theme of interest to you. Your paper should have a clearly defined thesis (argumentative point of view), and use textual analysis and evidence to support this argument. You must use at least 3 outside sources from scholarly books or peer-reviewed journals. The paper must be 2000-2750 words long—approximately 7-9 pages double-spaced—formatted in MLA style, and

include a works cited page (which is not included in the word count). A more thorough rubric and guidelines will be provided later in the semester.

- **Option 2:** Write your own short crime/detective fiction story. This can be an expansion or re-working of one of your “two-minute mysteries” but must be substantially longer—aim for a minimum of 2500 words. The story must be self-contained, meaning not a rough draft or a chapter from a longer work. In addition to the story itself, you must write a minimum of two pages (double-spaced) of notes/analysis explaining how the readings and topics from the course influenced your artistic choices, and incorporating at least 1 scholarly source.

For both options, you must complete several intermediary steps, such as writing drafts of your thesis and paper outline, participating in a library research session, and taking part in a peer-review workshop. These elements will contribute to your final grade.

### Extra-credit Work

There will be several ways to earn extra credit in this course, some strictly related to the topic of the course and some that focus on learning about literature and culture in contexts beyond the classroom. In total, you can earn up to 4% extra credit on your final grade. The due dates for extra credit work are non-negotiable; late work will not be accepted under any circumstances. The two main ways to earn extra credit are:

1. Complete specific assignments related to the readings and topics in our course. Typically, these will involve watching a film adaptation of a text we read or reading an additional text by the same author and then writing a short response (300-400 words). The specifics of each EC assignment as well as the due dates will be posted on Canvas. A good-quality response will earn 1% extra credit, and you may complete a maximum of two assignments during the semester (*Total potential credit: 2%*)
2. Attend university-sponsored talks on topics related to our class or to the study of literature generally (one option would be to attend any of the lectures in the Comparative Literature Luncheon series, which takes place on Mondays; see Canvas for details). You must write a short report or reaction paper (300-400 words) and submit it by the next class period after the talk. A good-quality report will earn 1% extra credit, and you may attend a maximum of two talks during the semester (for EC, you're welcome to attend more for your own sake). (*Total potential credit 2%*)

# Weekly Schedule and Readings

Week 1	
1/19	<b>Topic:</b> Introduction, "Two Minute Mysteries" (Sobol) <b>Read:</b> N/A <b>Due:</b> N/A
1/21	<b>Topic:</b> "Two Minute Mysteries" (Sobol) <b>Read:</b> The rest of Sobol's "Two Minute Mysteries" <b>Due:</b> Your own original two-minute mystery to share and read during peer review
<i>Regular drop deadline: Sunday, January 24 at 11:59pm</i>	
Week 2	
1/26	<b>Topic:</b> The Origins of Detective Fiction <b>Read:</b> Poe, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841); Poe, "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt" (1842); Judith Flanders, "The Creation of the Police and the Rise of Detective Fiction" (2014) <b>Due:</b> Reading Response #1 (due by 9:30am); Syllabus quiz on Canvas (by 11:59pm)
1/28	<b>Topic:</b> The Origins of Detective Fiction <b>Read:</b> Poe, "The Purloined Letter" (1844); Stephen Rachman, "Poe and the Origins of Detective Fiction" (2010) <b>Due:</b> Submit your revised story (Creative Assignment #1)
Week 3	
2/2	<b>Topic:</b> Ratiocination and the Classical Detective <b>Read:</b> Conan Doyle, "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" (1882); Dickson, "An Introduction to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle" (OPTIONAL); Halttunen, "The Construction of Murder as Mystery" (1998) <b>Due:</b> Finish close reading from class on 1/28
2/4	<b>Topic:</b> Ratiocination and the Classical Detective <b>Read:</b> Cheng Xiaqing, "The Other Photograph" (ca. 1920); Edogawa Ranpo, "The Case of the Murder on D Hill" (1925) <b>Due:</b> Close reading assignment; Reading Response #2 (due by 9:30am)
Week 4	
2/9	Wellness Day – NO CLASS
2/11	<b>Topic:</b> The 'Golden Age' of Mystery: The Puzzle Story and the Rules of Fair Play <b>Read:</b> Agatha Christie, "The Witness for the Prosecution" (1933); Ellery Queen, "My Queer Dean!" (1955); G.K. Chesterton, "A Defense of Detection Stories" (1902) <b>Due:</b> Discussion Board assignment
Week 5	
2/16	<b>Topic:</b> The Golden Age and Puzzle Mysteries – Part 2

	<p><b>Read:</b> Keikichi Osaka, "The Cold Night's Clearing" (1936); re-read "A Defence of Detection Stories"</p> <p><b>Due:</b></p>
2/18	<p><b>Topic:</b> Hardboiled Detectives and American Noir</p> <p><b>Read:</b> Chandler, "The Curtain" (1936); Chandler, "The Simple Art of Murder" (1944/1950); Chandler, <i>The Big Sleep</i> (1946 film – OPTIONAL)</p> <p><b>Due:</b> Reading Response #3 (due by 9:30am)</p>
<b>Week 6</b>	
2/23	<p><b>Topic:</b> Hardboiled Detectives and Social Critique</p> <p><b>Read:</b> Walter Mosley, "Smoke" (2002); Lock, "Invisible Detection: The Case of Walter Mosley" (2001); Mosley, "Black Dog" (1997 – OPTIONAL)</p> <p><b>Due:</b> Detective Fiction &amp; Gender assignment</p>
2/25	<p><b>Topic:</b> Hardboiled Detectives beyond America</p> <p><b>Read:</b> Paco Ignacio Taibo II, "The Corner" (2010); Arjouni, <i>Happy Birthday, Turk!</i> (1985) (pp. 1-39: 'Day 1 – chapters 1-4')</p> <p><b>Due:</b> Reading Response #4 (due by 9:30am)</p>
<b>Week 7</b>	
3/2	<p><b>Topic:</b> "Ethnic" Detectives and Questions of Identity</p> <p><b>Read:</b> Arjouni, <i>Happy Birthday, Turk!</i> (pp. 39-121: rest of 'Day 1' and all of 'Day 2'); Cohen, "The Detective as Other: the Detective <i>versus</i> the Other" (1999)</p> <p><b>Due:</b> Detective Fiction &amp; Race assignment</p>
3/4	<p><b>Topic:</b> Expanding Definitions of Detective Fiction</p> <p><b>Read:</b> Arjouni, <i>Happy Birthday, Turk!</i> (pp. 121-end: 'Day 3'); Todorov "The Typology of Detective Fiction" (1966)</p> <p><b>Due:</b> Summary writing assignment</p>
<b>Week 8</b>	
3/9	<p><b>Topic:</b> Film Screening <i>Rashomon</i> (1950)</p> <p><b>Reading:</b> N/A</p> <p><b>Due:</b> N/A (work on Creative Assignment #2)</p>
3/11	Wellness Day – NO CLASS
<b>Week 9</b>	
3/16	<p><b>Topic:</b> Truth and Interpretation</p> <p><b>Read:</b> Akutagawa "In a Grove" (1922), review Todorov's "Typology of Detective Fiction"</p> <p><b>Due:</b> N/A</p>
3/18	<p><b>Topic:</b> The Search for Meaning</p> <p><b>Read:</b> Borges, "Death and the Compass" (1944); Bennett, "The Detective Fiction of Poe and Borges" (1983)</p> <p><b>Due:</b> First draft of Creative Assignment #2 (for peer review)</p>
<b>Week 10</b>	
3/23	<p><b>Topic:</b> What is Justice?</p> <p><b>Read:</b> Borges, "Emma Zunz" (1948); Glaspell, "A Jury of Her Peers" (1917)</p> <p><b>Due:</b> Reading Response #5 (due by 9:30am)</p>

3/25	<p><b>Topic:</b> Ideology, Crime, and Detection</p> <p><b>Read:</b> Paretsky, "Skin Deep" (1987) OR Grafton, "The Parker Shotgun" (1986); Nickerson, "Murder as Social Criticism" (1997)</p> <p><b>Due:</b> Revised draft of Creative Assignment #2; Reading Response #6 (due by 9:30am)</p>
<b>Week 11</b>	
3/30	<p><b>Topic:</b> What is the Law?</p> <p><b>Read:</b> Video: "Police as Protagonist"</p> <p><b>Due:</b> Police procedural viewing assignment</p>
4/1	<p><b>Topic:</b> Guest Lecture by Jooyeon Rhee: "Korean Colonial Detective Fiction"</p> <p><b>Read:</b> Rhee, "The Development of Detective Fiction in Korea" (2020)</p> <p><b>Due:</b> N/A</p>
<b>Week 12</b>	
4/6	<p><b>Topic:</b> Crime, Colonialism, and Post-Colonialism</p> <p><b>Read:</b> Jude Dibia, "What They Did That Night" and Chris Abani, "Killer Ape" from <i>Lagos Noir</i> (2018)</p> <p><b>Due:</b> Reading Response #7 (due by 9:30am)</p>
4/8	<p><b>Topic:</b> Crimes of War &amp; Genocide</p> <p><b>Read:</b> Ngugi, <i>Nairobi Heat</i> (2011) (pp. 1-52)</p> <p><b>Due:</b> Deadline to confirm final paper topic with instructor; Close Reading Assignment #2</p>
<i>Late drop deadline: Friday, April 9 at 11:59pm</i>	
<b>Week 13</b>	
4/13	<p><b>Topic:</b> Library Research Session</p> <p><b>Read:</b> Ngugi, <i>Nairobi Heat</i> (pp. 53-101)</p> <p><b>Due:</b> A first draft of your thesis statement</p>
4/15	<p><b>Topic:</b> Crimes of War &amp; Genocide</p> <p><b>Read:</b> Ngugi, <i>Nairobi Heat</i> (pp. 103-153)</p> <p><b>Due:</b> A first draft of your introduction paragraph</p>
<b>Week 14</b>	
4/20	<p><b>Topic:</b> Transnational Crime Fiction</p> <p><b>Read:</b> Ngugi, <i>Nairobi Heat</i> (pp. 155-204)</p> <p><b>Due:</b> N/A</p>
4/22	<p><b>Topic:</b> Final Paper Workshop / Peer Review</p> <p><b>Read:</b> N/A</p> <p><b>Due:</b> A revised draft of your thesis and introduction plus an outline of your paper</p> <p><b>Due 4/25 by midnight:</b> Submit thesis, intro, and outline to instructor, along with a reference list with three scholarly sources</p>
<b>Week 15</b>	
4/27	<p><b>Topic:</b> Digital Detectives: Who solves crimes?</p> <p><b>Read:</b> Episodes from <i>Crime Junkies</i> podcast</p>

	<b>Due:</b> N/A
4/29	<p><b>Topic:</b> Social Media, Cancel Culture, and the Puzzle Story: All the clues are there (but is justice?)</p> <p><b>Read:</b> Articles on justice/accountability and social media:  <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/09/opinion/this-you-black-twitter.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/09/opinion/this-you-black-twitter.html</a> and  <a href="https://www.pdxmonthly.com/news-and-city-life/2020/06/the-role-of-social-media-in-social-movements">https://www.pdxmonthly.com/news-and-city-life/2020/06/the-role-of-social-media-in-social-movements</a></p> <p><b>Due:</b> Deadline for Extra Credit work</p>
<b>Week 16</b>	<b>FINALS WEEK</b>
5/4	Final papers/projects due on TUESDAY, May 4 <sup>th</sup> by 11:59pm