

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film
Film Studies (FILM) 405-01
Advanced Topic in Film Genre: *Film Noir*
Block Week, Fall 2017
Tuesday, Sept. 5th – Saturday, Sept. 9th
9AM – 5PM SS203

Instructor: Dr. Lee Carruthers

Office Location: SS 232

Office Phone: 403-210-8858

E-Mail: lee.carruthers@ucalgary.ca

Web Page: D2L

Office Hours: Because this is a Block Week course, I will be available **by appointment only**. Please send me an email to arrange a meeting time. After the course ends, you can set a meeting with me during my regular office hours—just send me an email.

Course Description

This course engages the enduring appeal of *film noir*, taken as a complex filmic phenomenon that opens up questions of film aesthetics, theory, and history. Beginning with noir's iconic private eyes and *femmes fatales*, we examine the noir cycle produced in Hollywood during the 1940s and 1950s, working to discern its distinctive formal and thematic features. Next, we situate the films historically, analyzing the cycle's critical reception, literary materials, and cinematic antecedents, before turning to the contemporary iterations of 'neo-noir' within American and international contexts. Finally, a special emphasis of this course concerns the political dimensions of noir, reading the films as rich and ambivalent articulations of cultural anxieties— and thus as meaningful narratives for the present.

Additional Information

As you realize, this is a block week course. We will be in class from 9am-5pm Tuesday through Saturday, and **your attendance is required each day for the full session, including the daily screenings**. We will take attendance every morning and afternoon: please bring your student I.D. card for this purpose. Because the course is an intensive learning format, it will require your full attention. There will be assigned readings each night, so please do not plan any additional activities (work shifts, volunteer activities, etc.). Students should expect to spend approximately two hours each night during the week in preparation for the next day's class.

Objectives of the Course

This course has three main objectives:

- To develop a nuanced understanding of *film noir* that considers its historical significance and cultural relevance for the present
- To deploy nuanced film-analytical skills that allow us to approach these films as complex, aesthetic objects
- To recognize the ways that *film noir* is a protean critical construct that has meant different things to different people over time.

Textbooks and Readings

For purchase at the University Bookstore:

- James Naremore's *More Than Night: Film Noir in its Contexts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, Second Edition, Revised, 2008), noted as **MTN** on the schedule.
- **Additional required readings** will be posted on **D2L** and designated as such on the course schedule.

Internet and electronic communication device information

This course observes a **strict laptop and cell phone policy**. Laptops are for note-taking only: anyone found using their laptop for email, unauthorized browsing, etc. during class time will jeopardize their participation grade. Likewise, texting and cell phone use is not permitted: turn off these devices when you arrive at the classroom to avoid embarrassment, annoyance, and irreversible grade penalties.

Assignments and Evaluation

Reading Quizzes (daily, in-class) 5 total) These straightforward daily quizzes are designed to confirm your familiarity with the assigned readings, and are usually written at the beginning of class. They will cover the items listed on the schedule as required readings —so, <i>not</i> the readings indicated as 'In-class, for discussion,' or as 'Recommended.' NOTE: on the first day of class (Tuesday, September 5th), we will write an <i>open-book</i> reading quiz, to accommodate busy summer schedules. The remaining daily quizzes will be closed-book, and therefore require advance preparation. Please consult the schedule of readings below to know which readings to complete each day.	40%
Film Notes (daily, in-class, posted to D2L) Your observations and ideas about the films screened in class, responding to a daily prompt. Guidelines for writing a good film note will be provided both in-class and on the course D2L page. Your notes will be drafted during class time and posted to D2L thereafter.	15%
In-class participation (assessed daily) Informed contributions to discussion will support this part of your grade.	10%
Final Essay (to be submitted after the course ends) A paper that deploys the course literature and performs film-textual analysis, 2500 words in length, on one of the central films and/or issues of the course. A range of topics and detailed	35%

instructions for the successful completion of this essay will be provided on that last day of the course. Papers are due on September 26th 2017 : please submit them directly to my office (SS232) at the specified time. Late papers will be subjected to a grade penalty.	
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Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: NO.

All assignments and exams must be completed or a course grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

Submission of Assignments:

Essays should be submitted directly to the instructor. If it is not possible to do so, a daytime drop box is available in SS320; a date stamp is provided for your use. A night drop box is also available for after-hours submission. Assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, and placed in the instructor's mailbox. Please include your name and ID number on all assignments, and be prepared to provide picture ID to pick up assignments or look at marked final exams in SS 320. Personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. For more information, see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/legalservices/foip/foip-hia>

Note: It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that the proper version is submitted (particularly in courses requiring electronic submission). Including a version date in your file name may be useful.

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline will be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

Student Accommodations:

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/.

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.pdf>.

- Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should advise their instructors in advance if they will be missing quizzes, presentations, in-class assignments, or group meetings.
- When accommodations are granted, they may take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to another assignment or test.

- For information on Deferrals of Final Exams and Term Work, see sections G.6 and G.7 of the *University Calendar* at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html> and <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>

Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc) but also general clarity and organization. Sources used in research papers must be properly documented. If you need help with your writing, you may use the Writing Centre. Visit the website for more details:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support> .

Grading & Grade Scale of the Department of Communication, Media and Film

Final grades are reported as letter grades. Quizzes and film notes will be scored numerically; the final essay will receive a letter grade. The following chart outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. In calculating final grades in this course, letter grades will be converted to the midpoint of the percentage range, as shown in the final column of the table below.

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Dept of CMF grade scale equivalents*	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations* **
4.00	Outstanding	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent—superior performance, showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter.	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70		A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30		B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good--clearly above average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete.	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70		B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30		C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory—basic understanding of the subject matter.	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70		C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Minimal pass—marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00		D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Fail – unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements.	F	0- 49.99%	0%

* If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades.

** These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university. You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

For information on citation and documentation styles (including APA, Chicago, IEEE, MLA, and others), visit the links provided at <https://ucalgary.ca/ssc/resources/writing-support/436> . If you have questions about how to document sources, please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3rd Floor TFDL, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>).

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the University of Calgary Calendar at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Research Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants (e.g., surveys, interviews, or observations) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/resources/ethics>

Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (ASC)	SS 102 403-220-3580 artsads@ucalgary.ca
CAMPUS SECURITY • Calgary Police Service	http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/ 403-220-5333 403-266-1234 Emergency: call 911

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Text Messaging • Emergency Evacuation & Assembly • Safewalk Program 	http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints If you feel uncomfortable walking alone at any time, call Campus Security for an escort (220-5333). For more information, see http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/
DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT help line 	http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students 403-220-5555 or itsupport@ucalgary.ca
STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing Support Services • Student Services Mobile App 	http://ucalgary.ca/ssc http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents
STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty of Arts Reps • Student Ombudsman 	https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/ http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds
SU WELLNESS CENTRE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling Services • Health Services • Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE • Online resources and tips 	403-210-9355 (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health 403-266-HELP (4357) http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus If you're concerned about a friend or your own well-being, it is important to seek help early. Call or visit the SU Wellness Centre or the 24-hour crisis line.

Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

A schedule of the course screenings + readings is provided below, though small adjustments to these details may be announced when the course begins. **Pro tip:** pick up the course textbook, *More Than Night: Film Noir in its Contexts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, Second Edition, Revised, 2008) at the University Bookstore and get started reading pages 9-39. ☺

Day 1 September 5th — Defining Noir / The Noir Vernacular

Films:

Murder, My Sweet (Edward Dmytryk, USA, 1944)

Double Indemnity (Billy Wilder, USA, 1944)

Required Readings:

Open-book reading quiz, in class, covering the first chapter of the course textbook:

- MTN "The History of an Idea" pp. 9-39.

In-class, for discussion:

- Nino Frank, "The Crime Adventure Story: A New Kind of Detective Film" (1946), rpt. in *Perspectives on Film Noir*, pp. 21-24. **D2L**
- Sean McCann, "The Hard-Boiled Novel." In *The Cambridge Companion to American Crime Fiction*, edited by Catherine Ross Nickerson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006), pp. 42-57 **D2L**

Day 2 September 6th — Noir Style: The German Aesthetic

Films:

Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari (Robert Wiene, Germany, 1920), excerpt

The Big Combo (Joseph H. Lewis, USA, 1950)

The Killers (Robert Siodmak, USA 1946)

Required Readings:

- MTN "Old is New: Styles of Noir" pp.167-190
- Foster Hirsch, "The Crazy Mirror: Noir Stylistics," in *Film Noir: The Dark Side of the Screen* (New York: A.S. Barnes & Co., Ltd., 1981), pp. 71-111. **D2L**

In-class, for discussion:

John Alton, "Mystery Lighting," (1949) rpt. in *Painting with Light* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 44-56. **D2L**

Siegfried Kracauer, "Hollywood's Terror Films: Do They Reflect an American State of Mind?" In *New German Critique*, No. 89, Film and Exile (Spring - Summer, 2003), pp. 105-111. **D2L**

Day 3 September 7th — Noir Style: The City

Films:

DOA (Rudolph Maté, USA, 1950)

The Asphalt Jungle (John Huston, USA, 1950)

Required Readings:

Nicholas Christopher, "Night and the City." In *Somewhere in the Night: Film Noir and the American City* (New York: The Free Press, 1997), pp. 33-65. **D2L**

Edward Dimendberg, "Simultaneity, the Media Environment, and the End of Film Noir." In *Film Noir and the Spaces of Modernity* (Cambridge, Harvard U.P., 2004). Chapter excerpt, pages TBA. **D2L**

Day 4 September 8th — Cultural Anxieties

Films:

Gilda (Charles Vidor, USA, 1946)

Kiss Me Deadly (Robert Aldrich, USA, 1955)

Required Readings:

- Angela Martin, "'Gilda Didn't Do Any of Those Things You've Been Losing Sleep Over!': The Central Women of 40s Films Noirs," in *Women in Film Noir*, pp. 202-228. **D2L**
- Paul Arthur, *Film Noir and Cold War America, 1945-1957*. PhD dissertation, pp.160-173 **D2L**

In-class, for discussion:

- Pierre Duvillars, "She Kisses Him So He'll Kill" (1951), rpt. in *Perspectives on Film Noir*, pp. 30-32. **D**
- John Hersey, "Hiroshima." *The New Yorker* (Aug 31, 1946), pp.15-68 (excerpt, pages TBA).

Recommended:

Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", reprinted in *Film Theory & Criticism*, 4th edition. Edited by Gerald Mast, Marshall Cohen and Leo Braudy (New York: Oxford U.P., 1992) pp. 746-757. **D2L**

Day 5 September 9th — Neo-Noir + Global Noirs

Films:

Touch of Evil (Orson Welles, USA, 1958)

The Long Goodbye (Robert Altman, USA, 1973)

A Colt Is My Passport (Takashi Nomura, Japan, 1967), excerpts.

In-class today >> Info session on the course essay

Required Readings:

- MTN, pp. 220-233
- Richard T. Jameson, "Son of Noir," (1974), rpt. in *Film Noir Reader 2*, Limelight Edition (New York: Proscenium Publishers, 1999) pp. 196-205. **D2L**