

**B.A. Seminar
American Crime
HS 2016, Thur. 14.00-15.45
Prof. Elisabeth Bronfen**

A fascination with crime has inhabited the American cultural imaginary from its beginnings, speaking not only to the birth of the nation out of its war of independence, but also to its investment in the notion of regeneration through violence. At the same time, crime stories represent an extreme form of the American dream with its claim on radical personal self-definition, and, hence, they make up the genre in which personal obsessions with excess and guilt come to be negotiated. Crime, furthermore, can serve as *the* trope for engaging with the antagonisms at the heart of the public realm, but also for imagining subjectivity and for thinking about writing.

(0./ 22 Sep): no class

BEGINNING OF THE PSYCHOTHRIller

(1./ 29 Sep): Edgar Allan Poe, "Ligeia"* (1838), "The Black Cat"* (1843), "Berenice"* (1835)

CLASSIC AMERICAN NOIR IN LITERATURE AND FILM

(2./ 06 Oct): Dashiell Hammett, *Red Harvest* (1929)

(3./ 13 Oct): Ernest Hemingway, "The Killers"* (1927) and Robert Siodmak's film *The Killers* (1946)

(4./ 20 Oct): Jacques Tourneur, *Out of the Past* (1947)

(5./ 27 Oct): Raymond Chandler, *The Long Goodbye* (1953)

(6./ 03 Nov): Fritz Lang, *The Big Heat* (1953)

(7./ 10 Nov): Alfred Hitchcock, *Psycho* (1960)

FEMALE NOIR

(8./ 17 Nov): Dorothy Hughes, *In a Lonely Place* (1947)

(9./ 24 Nov): Elizabeth Sanxay Holding, *The Blank Wall* (1947)

(10./ 01 Dec): Margaret Millar, *The Fiend* (1964)

OPENING THE GENRE

(11./ 08 Dec): David Fincher, *Zodiac* (2007)

(12./ 15 Dec): Errol Morris, *The Thin Blue Line* (1988)

(13./ 22 Dec): Susanna Moore, *In the Cut* (1999) and Jane Campion's film *In the Cut* (2003)

Background Reading:

Nickerson, Catherine Ross. *The Cambridge Companion to American Crime Fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Priestman, Martin. *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003. London: Routledge 2005.

Scaggs, John. *Crime Fiction*. The New Critical Idiom. Oxon, New York: Routledge, 2005.

Worthington, Heather. *Key Concepts in Crime Fiction*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

Requirements for the class:

- All students must prepare a thesis statement for each class, to be posted on Olat (course forum) by Wednesday 9 am of the respective week. This can also entail a series of questions, comments or associations; it will facilitate class discussion and allow me to see in what directions you have been thinking while preparing for the class sessions. **Neglecting to hand in 12 thesis papers will result in a fail.**
- In addition, all students must compile written minutes (*Sitzungsprotokoll*) for one of the class sessions (to be sent to my assistant Hannah Schoch hannah.schoch@es.uzh.ch one week after the respective session at the latest).
- Students taking the class for 6 KP must write an essay to be handed in on **February 20, 2017** (hard copy in my pigeonhole in the secretary's office, and a pdf version to my assistant Hannah Schoch).
- BA thesis students are asked to present their project in the final session. You will have to hand in your **BA thesis by April 13, 2017** (hard copy in my pigeonhole in the secretary's office, and a pdf version to my assistant Hannah Schoch). It is wise to use the class discussions to test your ideas for this written assignment.
- Plagiarism is a serious offense and pertains to all assignments.
- All texts marked with * will be on OLAT.