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ENG. 367C

Creative Writing Workshop: Crime Fiction

Course description

No matter what specific category it might fall into – thriller, suspense, mystery – crime fiction dominates the best-seller lists. This course examines the origins and evolution of crime fiction, from Edgar Allen Poe, Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett to such contemporary authors as Elmore Leonard, Don Winslow and Michael Connelly. Readings will include a diverse variety of representative selections with an eye on character development, dialogue, setting and plot. Participants will write and revise the first twenty pages and the outline/synopsis of a prospective manuscript.

Required reading

Don't you think it's kinda cheesy when professors make students go out and buy books that they've written? Yeah, me, too. Be that as it may, my most recent novel leads off this term's required reading list. I've never before included one of my books in this class, but there are a couple of reasons for doing it: 1) I have unique insight into what the author was thinking when he wrote it. 2) This is a workshop class. All of you will be sharing your work for critique. Since I'll be critiquing your writing, I figured I might as well give you a shot at critiquing mine. Be gentle.

The list:

1. *Baja Florida*, by Bob Morris. Available in the Rollins Bookstore (hardback - \$24.99, 0312377266). Also available on Amazon and other outlets via Kindle or Nook. If you don't have a Kindle or Nook there are free e-reader downloads available.
2. *In the Woods*, by Tana French. Availability as above. (hardback - \$11.25, 978-0143113492)
3. *The Lincoln Lawyer*, by Michael Connelly. Availability as above. (hardback - \$7.99, 978-1455500239)
4. *** Extra credit *** *Savages*, by Don Winslow. Available online.

Class policies

Absences: You get two freebies and you don't have to explain. If you will be absent a third time, please let me know by email in advance, but you still don't have to explain. Four times, you drop a letter grade. Five times ... you're a goner.

Late: Please, don't be. More than ten minutes and it counts as an absence, unless by prior notice.

Addendum to the above: You **WILL NOT** miss class when you are in charge of a discussion or a workshop, or if your story is scheduled to be workshopped. If there is absolutely no way out of it, you **MUST** contact me at least 24 hours in advance. You are letting your fellow authors down if you don't show up when you're responsible for a portion of the class. I hate putting stuff in **BOLDFACE**, but not holding up your end of the workshop constitutes a capital crime in this class.

Cell phones: Off and out of sight, please.

Laptops: If you got 'em, use 'em. But if I suspect you might be using them for something other than class work, well, it might prove embarrassing.

Food: This class takes place at dinnertime, so you are welcome to bring food and eat it in class. Please chew with your mouths closed and don't smack your lips. If it's really good food, then be prepared to share.

Office hours/meetings: I don't have an office at Rollins, but I live only a couple of blocks from campus and I am available for pre-arranged meetings. Typically, it's best to meet before class – say, in the 6:00-6:45 p.m. slot – in the adjunct professors' meeting room in Olin Library. (First floor, on the left as you head to the DVD section.) But I can be available for brief meetings after class if that works best for you.

What to call me: Not Dr. Morris. Because I'm not one. Professor Morris or Mr. Morris work just fine. Or Bob is good, if you're comfortable with that. I certainly am.

Course requirements

In this class, you will study crime novels and complete the first twenty pages of your own crime novel. You will reach your writing goal in four steps.

1. One-sentence synopsis of your novel-to-be
2. First eight-or-so pages (at least 2,000 words, but no more than 3,000)
3. One-page synopsis (about 250 words)
4. First twenty-or-so pages (at least 5,000 words, but no more than 6,000)

You will be expected to complete all of the required reading and take an active part in discussing the assigned books. Each of you will also lead workshop discussions of your

fellow authors' submissions (workshop guidelines to be passed out in class) and offer substantial critiques.

Manuscript format: Manuscripts will be written in Times New Roman 12 pt., double-spaced with one-inch margins. Pages should be numbered in the center at the bottom. Please submit these as Word files in .doc format, not .docx. I'm a Mac guy and I have to go through a couple of conversion steps to turn .docx into .doc. This tends to annoy me and makes me look unkindly upon the author. So please convert your files before submitting them to me or they will bounce back to you.

Each essay will be slugged on the top left of the first page as follows:

Assignment
Working title
Your name
Your email address

Example:

First eight pages
DEATH IN ROOM 113
Joe Poe
Joepoe@raven.com

Delivery: All assignments will be emailed to me before the drop-dead due date. Emphasis on drop-dead. Because if you are late and you expect an extension, then you might as well...

Grading:

Book discussion – 10 percent
Workshop leadership/participation – 10 percent
One-sentence synopsis – 5 percent
First eight pages – 25 percent
One-page synopsis – 10 percent
First twenty pages – 35 percent

If you're doing the math, then you know that totals 95 percent. So where does that other five percent come from?

Pop quizzes: I hate giving quizzes. I really do. But I reserve the right to spring them on you if I feel that some of you might be slacking off and not doing all the required reading. Or, if the mood strikes me. While I won't give you a specific grade on the quiz, I will stash away the results and when it comes time for me to award your final grade, I will refer to the quizzes, juggling those five-percentage points I have at my disposal. If you've

got a B-plus, then a good showing on the quizzes might bump you to an A. Or a bad showing might bring you down a notch. In short: If you do the reading, you won't have to sweat the quizzes. They will be a piece of cake.

Class schedule

The following week-by-week schedule is subject to constant and perpetual change:

Aug. 23

Why We Crave Crime Fiction – A Brief History

What is Crime Fiction?

Importance of the first 20 pages.

Ideas: Ripped from the headlines— Crime stories ideas gleaned from *The New York Times*, *USA Today* or *The Orlando Sentinel*

Reading assignment: *Baja Florida*

Aug. 30

Discussion: Ideas ripped from the headlines

Creating a Hero

Ethos, Pathos, Logos

Structure and Outlining

Reading assignment: Finish *Baja Florida*

Sept. 6

*****One-sentence synopsis due before class*****

Discussion: *Baja Florida*

Reading assignment: *In the Woods*

Sept. 13

*****First eight pages due before class*****

Pearls of Writing Wisdom from the Masters

Reading assignment: *In the Woods*

Sept. 20

Workshop: First eight pages

Reading assignment: Finish *In the Woods*

Sept. 27

Discussion: *In the Woods*

Workshop: First eight pages

Reading assignment: *The Lincoln Lawyer*

Oct. 4

*****Full one-page synopsis due before class*****

Workshop: First eight pages

Reading assignment: *The Lincoln Lawyer*

Oct. 11

Discussion: *The Lincoln Lawyer*

Workshop: Pages and synopses

Oct. 18

Discussion: Tips and observations

Oct. 25

*****First 20 pages due before class*****

Discussion: TBD

Nov. 1

Workshop: First 20 pages

Nov. 8

Workshop: First 20 pages

Nov. 15

Workshop: First 20 pages

Nov. 22

Workshop: First 20 pages

Nov. 29

Discussion: How to make those first 20 pages sing and dance

Dec. 6 – NO CLASS

***** FINAL REVISION DUE BEFORE CLASS *****

Academic Honor Code

Membership in the student body of Rollins College carries with it an obligation, and requires a commitment, to act with honor in all things. Because academic integrity is fundamental to the pursuit of knowledge and truth and is the heart of academic life at Rollins College, it is the responsibility of all members of the College community to practice it and to report apparent violations.

The following is a binding commitment by the students of Rollins College:

The development of the virtues of Honor and Integrity are integral to a Rollins College education and to membership in the Rollins College community.

Therefore, I, a student of Rollins College, pledge to show my commitment to these virtues by abstaining from any lying, cheating, or plagiarism in my academic endeavors and by behaving responsibly, respectfully and honorably in my social life and in my relationships with others.

This pledge is reinforced every time a student submits work for academic credit as his/her own. Students shall add to all stories submitted for this class the following handwritten abbreviated pledge followed by their signature:

“On my honor, I have not given, nor received, nor witnessed any unauthorized assistance on this work.”

Disability Services Statement

Rollins College is committed to equal access and does not discriminate unlawfully against persons with disabilities in its policies, procedures, programs or employment processes. The College recognizes its obligations under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 to provide an environment that does not discriminate against persons with disabilities.

If you are a person with a disability on this campus and anticipate needing any type of academic accommodations in order to participate in your classes, please make timely arrangements by disclosing this disability in writing to the Disability Services Office at (box 2613) - Thomas P. Johnson Student Resource Center, 1000 Holt Ave., Winter Park, FL, 32789. Appointments can be scheduled by calling 407-646-2354 or email: gridgateway@rollins.edu