

Missouri Western State College  
Division of Liberal Arts and Sciences  
Department of English, Foreign Languages and Journalism

ENG 210: Approaches to Literature  
Spring 2004, Section 40

## Murder and More

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### Course Philosophy and Objectives

*Mordre wol out, that see we day by day.*

-- Geoffrey Chaucer

*Merely state your evidence, and the reader will mislead himself.*

-- John Dickson Carr

*What the detective story is about is not murder but the restoration of order.*

-- P.D. James

*There is nothing more deceptive than an obvious fact.*

-- Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

In this section of English 210, students will

- learn about the primary characteristics of a variety of mystery genres
- read a variety of mysteries and some critical works about the mystery and its authors
- discuss and write about the mystery as a literary form

As part of MWSC's General Studies program, this course is also designed to fulfill the Category IV General Studies Requirement. All English 210 sections provide practice in reading poetry, prose fiction, prose nonfiction, and drama. Upon completion of English 210, a student should be able to:

- Recognize the major characteristics of literary genres
- Discuss literature, orally and in writing, with assurance
- Appreciate literary works which are encountered
- Understand the different ways in which literary theme may be treated in literature.

To reach these goals, the student is expected to:

- Read poetry, prose fiction, and drama
- Investigate various methods of approaching and understanding literature
- Write papers, including themes and essay examinations
- Read a variety of works in which a chosen theme is dominant.

This course also meets the state level Institutional Competencies, as follows:

Skills Area - Valuing:

- Compare and contrast historical and cultural ethical perspectives and belief systems.
- Utilize cultural, behavioral, or historical knowledge to clarify and articulate a personal value system.
- Recognize the ramifications of ones' value decisions on self and others.
- Recognize conflicts within and between value systems.
- Recognize and analyze the effect of context on ethical decisions.

#### Knowledge Area - Humanities and Fine Arts:

- Identify works in humanities and fine arts.
- Explain historical, cultural, and social contexts in humanities and fine arts.
- Identify aesthetic standards used to make critical judgments in humanities.
- Understand differences and relationships between formal and popular culture.
- Apply aesthetic standards to works in humanities and fine arts

For more information on the general studies requirements and institutional competencies for this course, see the English Department website for general studies courses at <http://www.missouriwestern.edu/eflj/genstud.asp>. Click on English 210: Approaches to Literature.

#### Required Materials

##### Texts:

- Christie, Agatha. *The Mousetrap and Other Plays*. New York: Signet, 2000.
- Craig, Patricia. *The Oxford Book of English Detective Stories*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Hammett, . *The Maltese Falcon*. New York: Vintage Books/Random House, 1992.
- Hillerman, Tony and Rosemary Herbert. *The Oxford Book of American Detective Stories*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- McCrumb, Sharyn. *Missing Susan*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1991.
- Perry, Anne. *The Cater Street Hangman*. New York: Fawcett Crest, 1980.
- Rinehart, Mary Roberts. *The Circular Staircase*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1997.

##### Other:

- A Student E-mail Account at MWSC.
- Internet access
- For word processing, you must use Microsoft Word, or another compatible program. Compatibility means that files converted from some other program to MSWord retain their original format and layout and conform to MLA manuscript guidelines.
- Computer disks for revising, saving, and backing up your work.

#### Assignments

##### Reading Questions

Each week you will answer a number of short answer questions about the readings. These questions involve synthesizing information learned and practicing interpretation. Reading questions are emailed to the instructor each week as a file attachment. After grading for the week is completed, the instructor will post the answers to the questions to WebBoard, an online bulletin board, so that students may correct their own work and study for the final exam.

##### Quizzes

Each week, you will take one or two WebCT quizzes over the week's readings. These quizzes are timed and must be completed within a specific time period.

## Short Essays

You will write two short essays that provide a meaningful interpretation and analysis of a literary and/or mystery characteristic in one to three related readings done for the class. Short essays will be sent to the instructor as file attachments and posted to WebBoard, an online bulletin board, so that others in the course may read your ideas.

## Final Exam

The WebCT Final Exam will be available online during the last week of class. To study effectively for the exam, keep copies of all your reading question responses, as well as teacher emails and online reading materials.

## Course Policies and Requirements

### Saving Work

Students should save all their work, since there may be occasions when work needs to be re-submitted or grades verified. Back up disk copies should be made religiously at the end of each day's work, and if possible, make a current print copy as well.

### Formats for Submitting Work

All work for this course must be word processed and submitted in the format specified by the assignment. **Be sure to follow submission guidelines provided with each assignment carefully in order to receive full credit for your submissions.**

### Late Work

Learning is a cumulative process and each assignment in this course is designed to build on the last assignment; therefore late work disrupts this important aspect of the learning process. **Therefore, no late work will be accepted under any circumstances.** No work will be accepted after noon CST, Tuesday, May 4, 2004.

### Plagiarism

*... it is better to fail in originality than to succeed in imitation.*

*-- Herman Melville*

Plagiarism is literally the stealing of others' words and ideas and using them as your own. Make every effort to give credit where credit is due, and if you are not sure of "how"--ASK. Students are responsible for proving that all work turned in for grading is their own original work. Plagiarism is a serious offense and, therefore, will receive harsh punishment. Work with evidence of plagiarism will receive a zero and may result in failure of the course. Don't think that you won't be caught; writing style is distinctive and verifiable.

### Classroom Courtesy

Students are expected to be courteous and respectful in all of their exchanges with the instructor and other students. Because this course is conducted without face-to-face encounters, one should be particularly careful to note how tone, rhetoric, and language all contribute to the overall impression of one's communications.

### Student Disability

Any student in this course who has a disability that prevents the fullest expression of abilities **must contact me by the end of the first week** so that we can discuss class requirements.

## Computer Usage

You must have daily access to a computer with internet capability in order to do well in this course. For this course, **you must use your MWSC email account for all correspondence and assignment submission.**

Most students can set up their email accounts via the MWSC homepage. Go to: <http://www.missouriwestern.edu> and click on the Web Mail link for more information.

## Time Expectations

As with all college courses, a steady devotion to duty is expected. The readings and assignments are exactly the same as those given in my on campus version of this course, and you are expected to devote the same amount of time to completing the course requirements that you would be required to devote were the class held on campus. This means that you will have three hours of course activities in lieu of three hours of traditional classroom time and that you will have up to nine hours of homework per week. On the average, however, you can expect to spend about an hour per day (7 hours per week) completing course activities and requirements.

Unlike a traditional on campus course, however, you do have greater flexibility in determining how you will distribute your weekly workload. While assignments are due each week by Tuesday, at noon, Central Standard Time, you can choose to complete your work over several short work sessions or over fewer, longer work sessions. Keep in mind, though, that you cannot hope to do well if you wait until the last minute to complete the week's work--you may miscalculate how long it will actually take you to do the work or you may have computer problems that interfere with the completion of your duties. Remember: no late work is accepted *under any circumstances*, so anticipate that there will be occasional glitches, whether personal or technical, and strive to turn in your work a little ahead of the Tuesday deadlines.

## Grading

Over the course of the semester, students will read a variety of mystery genres and critical work about the mystery. In addition, students will complete reading questions over the assignments, take a number of quizzes, write two short essays, and take a final exam. The quality of this work and the percentage of the work completed will determine the final grades.

Your Final Grade Distribution is as follows:

- Reading Questions = 25%
- Quizzes = 25%
- Short Essay Responses = 25%
- Final Exam = 25%

A word of caution: don't underestimate the value of small assignments since no late work is accepted. Moreover, missing a short essay assignment will mean taking a loss of 100 points. Occasional lapses are understood, but chronic lapses can only pull the final grade downward.

## Some Final Thoughts

This syllabus is a contract; by remaining in the course you acknowledge your acceptance of its stipulations. If the policies and expectations are unclear, then you should email or speak with me immediately. If they are clear but unacceptable to you, then you should drop the course.

Life is unpredictable--at least for the most part. I recognize that at times your outside life may interfere with your classroom life. It is up to you to set your priorities and to realize that "doing it all" is not always possible or even desirable. If you are feeling stressed about all you have to accomplish, remember that sometimes you can do poorly without it effecting your grade unduly. If, however, what should be an occasional problem completing your work becomes a chronic problem, email, call, or come see me. If I understand what is going on in your life, I can more easily help you achieve your goals.

[Course Schedule](#) | [Donaher Homepage](#)