**Intellectual Discovery:**

**Film Noir … Aggressively American**

**Catalog Description:**

The Intellectual Discovery course serves as part of the First Year Experience for students at High Point University. While representing different fields and disciplines, the Intellectual Discovery courses will encourage students to actively participate in their own learning through critical inquiry, active listening, analysis of texts, and/or the creation of original works.

**Course Description:**

Film noir emerged in the wake of WWII—a film genre so cynical, pessimistic, and dark that it merited a French moniker. Noir is the signature American film movement of the 20th Century, and in this course we will examine its rise from its roots in pulp detective fiction, through its heyday in the 40s and 50s, and ending with its rebirth in neo-noir and the hard-boiled films of the 70s on into the early 2000s.  We will view an assortment of examples that include seminal early films, as well as later examples that track the evolution of noir, from its beginnings when noir challenged the boundaries of American tastes and mores, to more recent examples that work to keep up with the expanding envelope of 21st Century culture.

**Course Information:**

DIS 1000, Fall 2024

**Instructor:**

Bob Haas

**Required Readings:**

*Film Noir Reader*—Alain Silver & James Ursini, (Limelight, 1996)

At least one hard-boiled or pulp detective novel (TBD by our class)

Any necessary additional essays will be distributed online through Blackboard

**Content Warning:**

Film noir content addresses the wide range of human failings; these include violence, sexuality—the entire range of human shortcomings. While some of these depictions may be disturbing, they are nothing more than similar material we see on most streaming TV content and in our daily news cycle.

I look forward to discussing any concerns you have before we tackle these subjects in class, but it’s difficult for me to predict what you may find problematic. To be fair, though, I would hazard that our sensibilities are not that far apart. In addition, I would welcome the chance to discuss your reactions to course material with the class or with me individually afterwards. Such discussions go to the heart of the college experience.

**General Education Learning Outcomes - Intellectual Discovery:**

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| **Learning Objective** | **Assessment Methodology** |
| Foster a constructive team climate through polite communication, a positive and confident attitude, and helpfulness. | * Class Discussion * Bb Group Discussion (Almost Private Files) * Active Participation in Class |
| Demonstrate emotional intelligence, a growth mindset, and resilience while addressing challenges and when facing new opportunities. | * Civil Class Discussion * Exploring Diverse Perspectives in Content |
| Connect concepts, theories, and frameworks of fields of study to life experiences, drawn from a variety of contexts. | * Class Discussion * Group Project (The Big Whatsit) |
| Adapt and apply skills, abilities, theories, or methodologies acquired in one situation or discipline to new situations or problems. | * Bb Group Discussion (Almost Private Files) * Group Project (The Big Whatsit) |

**Specific Principles for this Intellectual Discovery section:**

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| **Criteria** | **Assessment Methodology** |
| Identify the main formal and thematic characteristics of the film noir genre; describe how these texts and trends have evolved over time | * Quiz Prep * Formal Quizzes * Bb Group Discussion (Almost Private Files) |
| Learn and explain how film noir’s aesthetic features relate to the historical and cultural contexts from which it was formed, as well as its further development | * Formal Quizzes * Bb Group Discussion (Almost Private Files) * Exams |
| Posit cogent questions, via writing and discussion, and answer those questions with apt analysis supported by solid and convincing evidence | * Bb Group Discussion (Almost Private Files) * Quiz Prep * Formal Quizzes * Exams * Group Project (The Big Whatsit) * Active Participation |

**Additional Learning Outcomes for this Intellectual Discovery section:**

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| **By the end of the course,**  **students should also be able to:** | **Assessment Methodology** |
| Identify and explain the specifics of film noir aesthetics. | * Formal Quizzes * Exams * Group Project (The Big Whatsit) |
| Identify and explain the prevalent themes of film noir, as well as the context for its development in the American film industry. | * Class Discussion * Bb Group Discussion (Almost Private Files) |

**Course Assessment and Grading—the Assignments:**

* The Big Whatsit—a creative, multimodal group project that addresses the history and evolution of film noir. Groups must demonstrate their expertise in either the aesthetics or history of noir, or both. Groups will have great deal of latitude in designing their projects, but they must develop a formal plan for the project, as well as a contract among members that specifies which members will be responsible for the various elements of the work.
* Almost Private Files—groups chosen randomly by Blackboard each week will take part in discussion boards for each text. Group members are expected to post their own responses to cues provided and to also respond to their fellow group members in kind. When we have time, we will open such discussions up to F2F discussion in class. These group discussion will be found in each week’s folder on Blackboard.
* *The Big Switch*—a short essay that compares an apt hard-boiled novel with its film analog. These can be works that we don’t address as a class; students will clear their topics and texts with me.
* Final Exam—quiz section, short answer and essay.
* Mid-term Exam—quiz section, short answer and essay.
* Formal Quizzes—four formal quizzes that will be staggered throughout the semester. These will not be pop quizzes, so no surprises. The quizzes will be constructed from questions that students compose in the Quiz Prep work.
* Quiz Prep—students will compose three quiz-type questions (no essay questions) along with the appropriate answers before we begin our discussion of each text. The point is for students to already be invested in each text through such work. The assignments will be found in each week’s folder on Blackboard.
* Active Participation— based upon students’ preparation for class and their ability to demonstrate such preparation in class. Each student should be attentive and respectful of their classmates and the discussion taking place. Students must attend all classes, and any absence—particularly on quiz and exam days—will have a decidedly adverse effect upon this grade. That said, students who speak out and help to lead classroom discussion will see such behavior well rewarded with a positive participation grade.

**Grade Breakdown/Distribution**

Almost Private Files 20%

(Blackboard Group Discussions)

The Big Whatsit 15%

(Creative Group Project)

The Big Switch 10%

(Film/Novel Essay)

Final Exam 15%

Mid-term Exam 15%

Formal Quizzes 15%

Quiz Prep 5%

Active Participation 5%

**Grading Scale:**

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| A+ = 100 – 97% | B+= 89 – 87 % | C+=79 – 77% | D+= 69 – 67% |
| A = 96 - 93% | B = 86 – 83% | C = 76 – 73 % | D = 66 – 63 % |
| A-= 92 – 90% | B-= 82 – 80% | C-= 72 – 70% | D-= 62 – 60 % |
|  |  |  | F = 59% and below |

**Policies:**

**Attendance:** Attendance will be taken daily for advising and record keeping purposes only. Our program data tells us that failure rates are highest among students who miss three (3) classes before midterm, and it can be difficult to recover from a low midterm grade. If you are absent, it’s your responsibility to find out what you’ve missed.

\*Any student who continues to accumulate excessive absences after a warning may be withdrawn.

**Late work:** Students will regularly complete homework and short writing assignments that will inform and shape the larger writing projects in this class.  Quiz Prep work will be graded on a five-point scale; Discussion Boards on a 15-point scale.  The papers and projects will be graded on a traditional 100-point scale. Do not fail to complete this work.  The small assignments will help you to prepare for the larger assignments.  If you fall behind on the small stuff, the large stuff will suffer.  That’s just the way things are.

It is crucial for students to turn in work by the due date, so that they may receive timely feedback to their work as part of the larger process of revision.  Late work goes to the end of the to-do list, the late student is now out of sync with the rest of the class, and a late penalty will be applied. With the grace period, students may turn in work late, but when they do, their learning and final grades *always* suffer.  And once again, coursework/homework assignments will not be accepted late.

If you submit a project late, be prepared for an increased workload where you receive less for more effort. It is also *your* responsibility to check the status of late work:  when it was received, when it was graded, and when you can expect its return.

**Technology:** Electronic devices, including but not limited to cell phones, laptops, tablets, and mp3 players may not be used in my classroom unless explicitly okayed.  Upon entering our classroom, **please mute your phone and keep it out of sight** during class. This means you should place it in your pocket or in your bag—it must be off your desk.  If you need to leave your phone on vibrate in case of emergency please do so, but if you need to answer or check it, leave the room discreetly before doing so.

Any audio or video recording in the class, including the instructor’s lecture/discussion, or other classroom activity, is strictly prohibited unless authorized by the instructor and students in the classroom. This includes the unauthorized recording of online discussions and online breakout rooms.

Inappropriate use of a laptop, desktop or other electronic computing device during class will result in you being asked to leave the room. An **absence** will be recorded for that day’s class, and you will not receive any participation points for that day.

**Academic Honesty and Responsibility:** In this class you will need to work with texts in informed and ethical ways. However, when a student’s actions are meant to deceive the audience –when the actions constitute intentional plagiarism–then the student demonstrates a deep disregard for the academic processes that govern the construction and mediation of knowledge. Please review the University Honor Code in the Student Handbook. It remains your responsibility to engage in course work ethically and honestly.

**Get help from a tutor—from the HPU Writing Center:**

Writing Center consultants are kind, careful, and responsive readers for all High Point University writers (student, faculty, or staff) at any stage of the writing process. We help with everything from assignment comprehension to drafting to revising. However, we do not write or edit papers for clients. Instead, we work alongside them to develop strategies for improving their writing regarding their respective assignments, expectations, and writing needs/ styles. We see writing as both an individual process of learning and a life skill in need of cultivating and refining. We are trained student mentors who lead campus workshops and participate in professional conversations about writing all the while promoting critical thinking, self-sufficiency, and problem-solving in writing.

We are available in a variety of locations and times across campus Monday through Friday.

Go to [www.highpoint.mywconline.com/](http://www.highpoint.mywconline.com/) to make an appointment. Appointments can only be made through this online portal.

To learn more about us, visit www.highpoint.edu/english/writing-center/ or contact [writingcenter@highpoint.edu](mailto:writingcenter@highpoint.edu) and follow us on Instagram @hpuwritingcenter

The Writing Center is directed by Dr. Justin Cook ([jcook3@highpoint.edu](mailto:jcook3@highpoint.edu).)

**Tentative Calendar (readings will be introduced in class):**

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| Week 1 | Introduction to course  *The Maltese Falcon*  Quiz Prep and Almost Private Files (Bb Group Discussion) |
| 2 | *Double indemnity* (1944)  Quiz Prep and Almost Private Files |
| 3 | *The Big Sleep* (1946)  Quiz Prep and Almost Private Files  Formal Quiz #1 |
| 4 | *Out of the Past* (1947)  Quiz Prep and Almost Private Files |
| 5 | *The Third Man* (1949)  Quiz Prep and Almost Private Files |
| 6 | *The Asphalt Jungle* (1950)  Quiz Prep and Almost Private Files  Formal Quiz #2 |
| 7 | *Pick up on South Street* (1953)  Quiz Prep and Almost Private Files  Mid-Term Exam  Fall Break |
| 8 | *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955)  Quiz Prep and Almost Private Files |
| 9 | *Harper* (1966)  Quiz Prep and Almost Private Files |
| 10 | *The Long Goodbye* (1973)  Quiz Prep and Almost Private Files  Formal Quiz #3 |
| 11 | *Chinatown* (1974)  Quiz Prep and Almost Private Files |
| 12 | *Night Moves* (1975)  Quiz Prep and Almost Private Files |
| 13 | *Against All Odds* (1984)  Quiz Prep and Almost Private Files  Thanksgiving Break |
| 14 | *L.A. Confidential* (1997)  Quiz Prep and Almost Private Files  Formal Quiz #4 |
| 15 | *Michael Clayton* (2007)  Quiz Prep and Almost Private Files |
| 16 | The Big Whatsit—Group Creative Project |

A person in a suit yelling at a machine

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