**Crime**

COREP-AD 56

Fall 2016

Professor Cristina Vatulescu

Contact Information

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Course Description

Is a fascination with crime universal or does it vary over time and across cultures? Why do humans feel compelled to tell, retell, edit, and contest stories about their darkest doings? What is more revealing of a society's values: the stories of its exemplary leaders, saints, and heroes, or the stories of its criminals, outcasts, and pariahs? What does the way a society judges and treats its criminals tell us about that society? For example, what does the death sentence passed on Socrates for corrupting the youth with his philosophical ideas tell us about classical Athens? How does Plato create a foundational myth of Western philosophy out of this criminal sentence? We will investigate the ways crime and the criminal have been defined through time and in different cultures, using the lenses of literature, film, and visual culture. For instance, the last unit of the course will examine two turning points in the modern representation of crime: the rise of the detective novel at the end of the 19th century and the return of the reenactment movie at the turn of the 21st century. Works by Plato, Dostoyevsky, Poe, Conan Doyle, Kafka, Lu Xun, Borges, Nabokov, Muller, Kurosawa, Godard, Kiarostami, and Makhmalbaf, among others.

**Course Details**

Course Meetings: Section A: Tuesday-Thursday, 11:50-1:05, C2-W008.

Section B: Tuesday-Thursday 4:05-5:20, C2-E050.

Credits: 4

Prerequisites: None

**Learning Outcomes**

Students who complete this course successfully will be able to:

* gain a sophisticated understanding of a challenging topic—crime—taking into account points of view coming from different disciplines (criminology, sociology, anthropology, literary, film, and cultural studies), arts (literature, film), different cultures, and different historical periods.
* perform a critical examination of a given corpus of works in different genres (Socratic dialogue, 19th and 20th century novels, detective story, modernist novellas, film noir), and media (mostly literature and film)
* choose between a variety of methodologies of analysis and interpretation (such as close and distant reading), the methodology that best suits their object of study and the argument they aim to make
* review library research techniques, proper citation, and avoidance of plagiarism
* gain frequent practice in analytical writing as well as peer review
* gain a sophisticated understanding of cultural, linguistic, and diachronic differences, grappling with the role of translation as a communicative and interpretive practice
* learn to build a research and writing project from earliest stages through the drafting and revision process to a polished final paper

These outcomes will be assessed through short writing exercises, longer papers, and class participation.

**Teaching and Learning Methodologies**

Course meetings will involve a combination of interactive lecture and discussion. Given the wide temporal and cross-cultural range of our material, most classes will start with a short lecture that will contextualize the material and link it to the previous class. We will then analyze the texts and/or films, usually starting with short paragraphs/ shot sequences and building towards finding larger themes, questions, connections and dissonances between the materials. In approaching this diverse corpus of works from different cultures and time periods, we will use a variety of methodologies to approach them (such as close and distant reading) and we will learn to do so critically and mindfully.

Class participation is key in this course. Note that you are not expected to participate only when you have a fully formed idea but rather to contribute to our class making and challenging arguments and interpretations together as a group, building on each others’ insights. In order for the seminar to be successful it is imperative that you do all the reading assigned for the class *before the class* and that you take part in *each* conversation.

**Course Requirements**

Your final grade will be determined as follows:

20% Class preparation and active and thoughtful participation (please see guidelines below)

25% Short Writing Assignments (Two x 2 Page Papers, 1 Page Paper, and additional short writing exercises)

20% Midterm Exam

10% In-class presentation (10-15 minutes)

25% 8 Page Final Paper

You must complete all assigned coursework (all of the short writing assignments, drafts, and papers) in order to pass the course.

*Participation.* I cannot stress enough how important active and thoughtful participation is to the success of the class and to your success as a learner. I will do my best to promote equal participation in class, but if you have any concerns about this please see me as early in the semester as possible. All students will be expected to work consistently in order to make the most of their own class experience and to enrich the experience of the group.

Classroom participation counts for 20% of the grade and it will be evaluated according to the following guidelines.

*Attendance, class readings, and active participation in the classroom discussion are required.* Seminar discussions are collaborative and require that each participant contribute to the quality, direction, and inclusive tone of the conversation. *Participation* will be graded according to the following general standard:

A: Student’s contributions are regular and invaluable to the direction and quality of the class discussion

B: Student’s contributions are occasional and sometimes contribute to the direction and quality of the class discussion

C: Student’s contributions are infrequent and rarely contribute to the direction and quality of the class discussion.

C/D range: Student’s behavior in the classroom is distracting other members of the class (one salient example is using wireless devices for texting, surfing the internet, checking email, etc.).

Note: Talking a lot is not a guarantee of an A grade for classroom participation. It is more important to make sure that your class contributions are thoughtful, and that they demonstrate your careful reading and thinking through of the assignments, and as well as careful listening to the other members of the class. Asking clarifying questions, building on the insights of other students, and working to create an atmosphere where all students feel comfortable to participate are important components of the learning process. Students concerned for any reason about their ability to participate should speak to the instructor after the first day of class or during office hours early in the semester.

*Attendance*. Attendance in class is mandatory.

*Electronic Devices*. Use of mobile phones, portable music players, laptop computers, and other electronic devices is not allowed during class. Please turn off your devices and put them away before class begins. Exceptions will be made for students who require the use of an electronic device in order to participate in class effectively. You must see me if you have a documented need for this accommodation, or if you have questions about this policy.

***Accommodations***. Academic accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Students who think they may need accommodations in this course because of a disability should let me know privately and provide a letter of accommodation from the Center for Students with Disabilities at the beginning of the semester.

*Note on Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism.* Writing your name on papers and examinations constitutes a pledge that the work is completely your own. Do not plagiarize: always cite and identify the sources that you have used. If you have questions about proper citation or referencing, never hesitate to ask **before** turning in your work. *Students who commit plagiarism will ordinarily receive a failing grade for the course*. You may also want to consult the university’s policy and procedure regarding issues of academic integrity at *https://nyuad.nyu.edu/students/campus.life/policies/policy.academic.integrity.html*.

*Note on Grading Policy for Late Papers and Homework.* Papers and homework assignments need to be turned in on time. For each calendar day that a paper is turned in late, the grade for this paper will be lowered by a third of a letter grade (for example, a B+ will become a B when the paper is turned in one calendar day late). If there are special circumstances (family emergencies, illness, and so forth), please contact me *before the paper is due* to arrange an extension.

**Required Books**

Plato, *Five Dialogues*, Hackett Classics, 2002.

Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Crime and Punishment,* Vintage, 2012.

Edgar Allan Poe, *The Complete Stories,*Everyman’s Library, 1993, selections

Arthur Conan Doyle, *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Novels and Stories*, The Bantham Classics, vol. 1, 1986

Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter,* Norton, 2004

Frank Kafka, *The Trial,* Shocken Books, 1995.

Lu Xun, *The Real Story of Ah-Q and Other Stories,* Penguin, 2010

Sinan Antoon, *I'Jaam: an Iraqi Rhapsody,* City Lights, 2007

Varlaam Shalamov, *Kolyma Tales,* Penguin, 1994

Cristina Vatulescu, *Police Aesthetics,* Stanford University Press, 2010

**Required and Recommended Films**

Akira Kurosawa, Rashomon, 1950

Jean-Luc Godard, *My Life to Live,* 1962

Harun Farocki, *Serious Games*, 2009-10

Abbas Kiarostami, *Close-up*, 1990

Mohsen Makhmalbaf, *A Moment of Innocence,* 1996

Errol Morris, *The Thin Blue Line,* 1988

Cristian Mungiu, *4 Months, 3 Weeks, 2 Days, 2007*

Joshua Oppenheimer*, The Act of Killing, 2012*

Orson Welles, *The Trial*, 1962

**Recommended Book Resources for Academic Writing**

Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, *“They Say/I Say”: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*

Michael Harvey, *The Nuts and Bolts of College Writing*

Gordon Harvey, *Writing with Sources* available at <http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic930980.files/WritingWithSources.pdf>

Ann Lamott, *bird by bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*

These books are available at the NYUAD Bookstore. Additional readings will be handed out in class and made available on the course website.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

Reading and writing assignments should be completed before class on the date under which they are listed.

**Unit One: What is Crime?**

**Definitions, Etymologies, Historical and Cross-Cultural Differences**

**Tuesday, August 30**– Introductions, Definitions, and Etymologies

Class discussion of TALWST, *Por que*?, Studio Museum in Harlem

Read at home for next time: Adam Gopnik, “The Caging of America,” New Yorker, 30 January 2012, http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/01/30/the-caging-of-america (online)

**Thursday, September 1st**–from the beginning: Etymology

**One page paper** based on research of one class keyword in the English Oxford Dictionary **due today**; please post online under Forums and also bring hard copy to class;

Read Plato, “The Apology*”*

**Tuesday September 8** - Make sure to have finished “The Apology*”* before class

Begin reading Crime and Punishment, first 1/3 of the novel by Thursday.

**Thursday, September 8**- Plato, “The Apology,*”* intro to Crime and Punishment

**Tuesday, September 13—No Class, University Holiday**

**Thursday, September 15**- Feodor Dostoyevsky, *Crime and Punishment*

Come to class having read two thirds of the novel

**Tuesday, September 21**- Feodor Dostoyevsky, *Crime and Punishment*

Come to class having finished the novel

**Thursday, September 22**

Come to class having watched Akira Kurosawa, *Rashomon*

Jennifer Roberts, “The Power of Patience: Teaching students the value of deceleration and immersive attention,” Harvard Magazine, (online)

**2 Page Close Reading Paper Due in class**

**Tuesday, September 27** Franz Kakfa, *The Trial*

Come to class having read first half of the book

**Thursday, September 29**- Kafka, *The Trial-*come to class having finished reading

Come to class having watched Orson Welles, *The Trial* on your own, class discussion

**2 Page Close Reading/Close Watching Paper Due**

**Unit Two: The Criminal**

**Tuesday October 4** Lu Xun, “The Real Story of Ah-Q”

Recommended Michel Foucault, *The Lives of Infamous Men* (online)

**Thursday October 6** Ann Applebaum, “Introduction,” *Gulag,* xv-xl*,* (online)

Varlaam Shalamov, *Kolyma Tales*, selections

**Tuesday October 11**– Isaac Babel “I Beg You to Hear Me: The File on Isaac Babel” in

*Arrested Voices,* Vitalii Shentalinskii 22-72 *(online)*

Cristina Vatulescu, “Arresting Biographies: The Personal File in the Soviet Union and Romania,” *Police Aesthetics,* 27-54

**Thursday October 13**– Herta Muller, “Every Word Knows Something of a Vicious Cycle,” https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\_prizes/literature/laureates/2009/muller-lecture\_en.html

**Tuesday October 18** – Sinan Antoon, *I'Jaam: an Iraqi Rhapsody,*

**Thursday October 20** – No class, final exams for 7-week courses

**October 21st to October 25th No Classes—Happy Fall Break!**

**Thursday, October 27 Midterm Exam**

**Unit Three: The Female Criminal and Crimes against Women**

**Tuesday, November 1**– Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*

Read two thirds of the book

# Thursday, November 3- Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*

Finish the book

Rania Abouzeid, “Out of Sight”, *New Yorker*, October 5, 2015 (online)

**Tuesday, November 8** Watch Jean-Luc Godard, *Vivre sa vie*, 1962

**Thursday, November 10**  – Watch Cristian Mungiu, *4 Months, 3 Weeks, 2 Days*

**Unit Four: Key Historical Moments**

1. **What the Rise of the Detective Story Teaches us About Crime and**

**about the End of the Nineteenth Century**

**Tuesday, November 15**– Edgar Allan Poe, “ The Murders in Rue Morgue,” “The Mystery of Marie Roget,” in *The Complete Stories*

**Thursday, November 17** Edgar Allan Poe, “The Purloined Letter,” in *The Complete Stories*

Lisa Zunshine, *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel,* 6-12, 16-27, 47-58, 119-155.

**Tuesday, November 22**- Arthur Conan Doyle, “Mr. Sherlock Holmes” and “The Science of Deduction,” from *A Study in Scarlet*, “The Five Orange Pips” in *Sherlock Holmes, Complete Novels and Stories,* vol. 1

Franco Moretti, “The Slaughterhouse of Literature,” *MLQ*, 61:1 (March 2000), p. 207-227 (online)

Work on your final paper draft

**Thursday, November 24** Arthur Conan Doyle, “A Case of Identity,” in *Sherlock Holmes, Complete Novels and Stories,* vol. 1

Carlo Ginzburg, “Morelli, Freud, and Sherlock Holmes: Clues and the Scientific Method” in *The Sign of Three: Dupin, Holmes, Peirce*, 81-118 (online)

**Unit Four: Key Historical Moments**

**II. Revisiting the Crime at the Turn of the 21st century:**

**Cinematic Reenactments**

**Tuesday, November 29–** bring one page proposal to class today, it will be discussed in our class workshop;

**Thursday, December 1**- No class, University Holiday

**Tuesday, December 6** Errol Morris, *The Thin Blue Line*

**Thursday, December 8** Abbas Kiarostami, *Close-up*, 1990

**Tuesday, December 13**– Harun Farocki, *Serious Games*, 2009-10

**Thursday, December 15**- Wrapping up

**Monday, December 11 8-10 page final paper due** in my mailbox by 4 pm