

EN 6620 3.0: American Hard-Boiled

Instructor: Art Redding

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Hours: TBA & by appointment

Evolving from dime novels, pulp and paperback fiction, literary naturalism and modernism, traditional detective stories, and gothic writing, a distinctively “American,” modern, urban, and masculine style of “hard-boiled” and (later) “noir” writing and film developed during the jazz age, matured during the Depression, and thrived in the early years of the Cold War. If, as James Ellroy has remarked, “the subgenre officially died in 1960” it has proved remarkably resilient in its afterlife, subject to periodic revivals, revisionary critiques, and parodies, ranging from *The Sopranos* to *Sin City*. Taking an expansive understanding of the term, this course reconsiders the complex traditions of hard-boiled and noir literatures, casting a critical eye on its depictions of urban life and representations of gender, crime, labor, and race, its various functions as social critique and stricture, and investigating as well considerations of style, problems of genre and popular culture, and the economics of the film and publishing industries.

Requirements: Each student will be expected to give a seminar presentations (20%); participate actively in class discussion (5%); submit three short reading responses (totaling 15%); and submit a final critical essay of 12-15 pages, suitable for publication in an academic journal (60%).

Required Texts:

Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* (1926).

Dashiell Hammett, *Red Harvest* (1929).

William Faulkner, *Sanctuary* (1931).

James M. Cain, *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1934).

Dorothy B. Hughes, *In a Lonely Place* (1947).

Raymond Chandler, *The Long Goodbye* (1953).

Jim Thompson, *The Killer Inside Me* (1952).

Patricia Highsmith, *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1955)

Charles Willeford, *Pick-Up* (1955). **Please note that this will not be available through the York bookstore. I will try to make copies available, but students are requested (if at all possible) to purchase an edition (via Amazon or elsewhere online) in advance.**

Chester Himes, *The Real Cool Killers* (1959).

Joan Didion, *Play it as it Lays* (1970).

There will also be a course reader (available online) of supplementary critical texts.

Films:

Out of the Past (1947), dir. Jacques Tourneur.

In a Lonely Place (1950), dir. Nicholas Ray.

The Naked Kiss (1964), dir. Samuel Fuller.