

ENGLISH 117A AMERICAN LITERATURE & FILM FALL 2014
WASHINGTON SQUARE HALL 207 TUESDAY 15:00-17:45
ENGLISH MAJOR ELECTIVE AND G.E. (SAN JOSE STUDIES) AREA S:
SELF, SOCIETY, AND EQUALITY IN THE U.S.
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Tuesday 12:30-14:00
FOB 218

COURSE DESCRIPTION: We will study novels, films, and works of non-fiction prose set in and focused on California, specifically San Francisco, Los Angeles, and the Eastern Sierra. The novels are “Roman Noir” —dark novels about crime, the detection of crime, and moral corruption. The films are “Pre-Noir (c 1920-1940),” “Noir (c 1940-1960),” and “Neo-Noir (c 1960-1980)” —dark films about crime, its detection, and moral corruption. The two works of non-fiction prose describe the Eastern Sierra before, during, and after the great Los Angeles “water grab,” a woeful historical tale of crime and moral corruption evoked in the film *Chinatown*. The “Noir” sensibility is alive and thriving in California and in many recent literary and screen works created in and about the State. This sensibility extends to works involving all social classes and ethnic and racial groups. It represents the “dark underside” of the glowing “Golden State.” The moral darkness often arises from individuals unscrupulously pursuing money and power. The moral darkness may also arise from jealousy, envy, fear, hatred, racism, sexism, classism, etc. These dark impulses are present in the works we will read and watch. As part of our investigations of “California Noir,” we will discuss not only the moral but also the historical, sociological, class/ethnic, and artistic/aesthetic implications of the “Noir” sensibility. All works we will read and watch are examples of both popular and high art—an extraordinary accomplishment of their creators.
PREREQUISITES: Passage of the WST; upper-division standing; completion of Core G.E.

COURSE GOALS AND STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH & COMPARATIVE LITERATURE [D stands for Department]:

- 1D. Students will demonstrate the ability to read closely in a variety of forms, styles, structures, and modes, and articulate the value of close reading in the study of literature, creative writing, rhetoric, or film.
- 2D. Students will demonstrate the ability to show familiarity with major literary works, genres, periods, and critical approaches in British, American, and World Literature.
- 3D. Students will demonstrate the ability to write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, context, and nature of the subject.
- 4D. Students will demonstrate the ability to develop and carry out research projects, and locate, evaluate, organize, and incorporate information effectively.
- 5D. Students will demonstrate the ability to articulate relations among culture, history, & texts.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR SAN JOSE STUDIES AREA S [S stands for G.E. Area S]:

- 1S. Students shall be able to describe how identities (i.e. religious, gender, ethnic, racial, class, sexual orientation, disability, and/or age) are shaped by cultural and societal influences within contexts of equality and inequality.
- 2S. Students shall be able to describe historical, social, political, and economic processes producing diversity, equality, and structured inequalities in the U.S.
- 3S. Students shall be able to describe social actions which have led to great equality and social justice in the U.S. (i.e. religious, gender, ethnic, racial, class, sexual orientation, disability, and/or age).
- 4S. Students shall be able to recognize and appreciate constructive interactions between people from different cultural, racial, and ethnic groups within the U.S.

DEPARTMENT AND G.E. LEARNING OBJECTIVES COVERED ARE LISTED NEXT TO ASSIGNMENTS.

ASSESSMENT: All student writing shall be assessed for grammar, clarity, conciseness, and coherence. In accordance with the approved assessment plan, the course coordinator/department chair will summarize the assessment results for English 117A according to the procedure for submitting courses for continuing certification in General Education.

REQUIRED LITERARY TEXTS IN ORDER READ:

Norris, Frank. MCTEAGUE, 2nd ed. Norton Critical Editions, 1996. ed. Donald Pizer.

Dashiell Hammett. THE MALTESE FALCON. Vintage (Random House), 1989.

James M. Cain. DOUBLE INDEMNITY. Knopf, Doubleday, 1989.

Chandler, Raymond. THE LONG GOODBYE. Vintage (Random House), 1988.

Austin, Mary. THE LAND OF LITTLE RAIN. Penguin Nature Classics, 1997.

Reisner, Marc. CADILLAC DESERT, Revised Edition. Penguin, 1993.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:

All assignments listed on the class schedule are accompanied by the Student Learning Objectives for both the Department of English & Comparative Literature and for San Jose Studies Area S. All Learning Objectives in both categories will be covered during the course of the semester.

Writing Assignments include a series of short answer (never multiple choice) and short essay quizzes, an Annotated Bibliography, a short critical essay, and a creative project. Guidelines and explanations for these various writing assignments will be provided in class.

GRADING:

Five Short Answer and Short Essay Quizzes	6% each	Total 30%
Short Critical Essay with Annotated Bibliography		Total 35%
Creative Project		Total 35%

Overall Total of 100%; Total writing approximately 5,000 words.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND ASSIGNMENTS [All class meetings are from 15:00-17:45 in WSQ 207]:

T 8/26	DISCUSSION & LECTURE: Class Syllabus (handout), Film Terms (Handout), Literary Terms (handout), and the California Roman Noir and Film Noir
T 9/2	READING: Read at least half of Frank Norris. MCTEAGUE. DISCUSSION & LECTURE: MCTEAGUE; Introduction to Silent Film and Erich von Stroheim's GREED, the film based On MCTEAGUE
T 9/9	READING: Complete reading MCTEAGUE. FILM SCREENING: GREED (be on time; this film will take the entire period!)
T 9/16	1 st SHORT ESSAY QUIZ: Film Terms, Literary Terms, MCTEAGUE and GREED (SLOs 1D, 2D, 3D, 5D, 1S, 2S, 3S, 4S) DISCUSSION & LECTURE: MCTEAGUE and GREED: class, ethnicity, race, gender, poverty, violence, and the law
T 9/23	READING: Complete reading Raymond Chandler. THE MALTESE FALCON. Discussion and Lecture: Roman Noir, Film Noir, Chandler, the San Francisco of Norris, von Stroheim, & Chandler: money, power, class, ethnicity, poverty and crime
T 9/30	READING: Review THE MALTESE FALCON as a Roman Noir FILM SCREENING: John Huston. THE MALTESE FALCON Brief DISCUSSION & LECTURE: THE MALTESE FALCON, novel and film

- T 10/7 READING: Complete reading James M. Cain. DOUBLE INDEMNITY.
2nd SHORT ESSAY QUIZ: THE MALTESE FALCON, novel and film (SLOs 1D, 2D, 3D, 1S, 2S)
DISCUSSION & LECTURE: DOUBLE INDEMNITY, the Roman Noir, and Los Angeles; the short Critical Essay and Annotated Bibliography due on 11/04
- T 10/14 READING: Review DOUBLE INDEMNITY as Roman Noir.
FILM SCREENING: Billy Wilder. DOUBLE INDEMNITY
Brief DISCUSSION & LECTURE: THE MALTESE FALCON & DOUBLE INDEMNITY: two Roman Noir, two Film Noir, two cities and cultures: San Francisco & Los Angeles
- T 10/21 3RD SHORT ESSAY QUIZ: DOUBLE INDEMNITY, novel and film; Los Angeles between the wars; class and ethnicity in DOUBLE INDEMNITY (SLOs 1D, 2D, 3D, 5D, 1S, 2S, 3S, 4S)
Discussion and Lecture: Class, ethnicity, and inequality in three Roman Noir (or Proto-Noir in the case of MCTEAGUE) and three Film Noir (or Proto-Noir in the case of GREED). California, north and south as both a land of opportunity and a land of greed and corruption and extreme and frequently unfair class and ethnic competition
- T 10/28 READING: Read at least half of Raymond Chandler. THE LONG GOODBYE.
DISCUSSION & LECTURE: Chandler, post-WWII Los Angeles and California; changes in and the development of ethnic and racial and class groups in California after WWII; Chandler as the quintessential Roman Noir author and Los Angeles as the quintessential Roman Noir and Film Noir site: why?
- T 11/4 SHORT CRITICAL ESSAY & ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE [See handout distributed in class] (SLOs 1D, 3D, 4D, 5D; 1S through 4S depending on nature of individual project)
READING: Complete reading THE LONG GOODBYE
DISCUSSION: Very brief overview of the final, creative project, due 12/2.
FILM SCREENING: Robert Altman. THE LONG GOODBYE.
- T 11/11 NO CLASS: VETERANS DAY
- T 11/18 4TH SHORT ESSAY QUIZ: THE LONG GOODBYE, novel & film: various comparisons in relation to time period, structure, the nature of Noir, the nature of California/Los Angeles class, ethnicity, and race in the 50s and 70s (SLOs 1D, 2D, 3D, 5D, 1S, 2S, 3S, 4S)
DISCUSSION & LECTURE: THE LONG GOODBYE, novel and film: Roman Noir versus Film Neo-Noir; Altman's film as commentary on Noir, as a 1970s take on a 1950s novel; as a story of changes in Los Angeles; Chandler's novel and Altman's film as different takes on Southern California, class, ethnicity, race, and their treatment in Noir art
- T 11/25 READING: finish Mary Austin's THE LAND OF LITTLE RAIN
FILM SCREENING: Roman Polanski. CHINATOWN
Brief DISCUSSION & LECTURE: Rural and urban California, the California water wars; class, ethnicity, and race in relation to farming, water, and urbanization
- T 12/2 CREATIVE PROJECT DUE [See handout distributed in class] (SLOs 1D, 2D, 3D, 5D, 1S, 2S)
READING: Read Marc Reisner, CADILLAC DESERT: Introduction, Chapter 2, & Chapter 10
DISCUSSION & LECTURE: Mary Austin, Native California tribes, rural California, and water ; Marc Resiner and the great Los Angeles water grab; CHINATOWN: political and personal corruption: two sides of the same coin
- T 12/7 5TH SHORT ESSAY QUIZ: THE LAND OF LITTLE RAIN, CADILLAC DESERT, CHINATOWN (SLOs 1D, 2D, 3D, 5D, 1S, 2S, 3S, 4S)
DISCUSSION & LECTURE: Rural vs. urban, rich vs. poor; white vs. 'other': Solutions? Resolutions? Reasons to hope? California as the LAND OF NOIR