FILM NOIR AND NEO-NOIR  
Spring 2008

Instructor:  Molly LeClair  
Office:  Temporary Building 1, Office 3  
Office hours:  TR 11:30-1:00p or by appointment  
Voice mail:  303-735-2861  
Email: molly.leclair@colorado.edu

Course Description  
This course focuses on writing analyses and arguments about film noir, a style of filmmaking whose classic period extends from the early 1940s to the late 1950s, primarily in America. We will explore its aesthetic and literary origins in German expressionism, French existentialism, and American detective and crime fiction. We will examine significant themes, characterizations, visual elements, and recurring icons that create the style’s distinctive identity, and chart film noir’s incursion into contemporary cinema. We will also look at the way in which ethnic and gender issues are reflected in noir narratives.

Objectives
- Explore critical and theoretical dimensions in writing about film.
- Become astute observers, thinkers, and interpreters of film through writing.
- Learn to develop, organize, research, write, revise, edit, and document critical essays.
- Engage in intensive writing workshops with peer groups.
- Make use of our library’s information literacy and research tools.
- Review sentence structure, grammar, and mechanics, as needed.

Textbooks
Thinking and Writing in the Humanities, Suzanne Hudson and Molly LeClair
Film Noir Reader, Alain Silver and James Ursini
Other readings and resources will be made available to you as handouts or online.

Requirements
• SEMINAR PARTICIPATION
  Your participation entails lively discussion of assigned readings and involvement in class activities. Plan on attending regularly and arriving on time. Refer to the text when needed during discussion. A seminar is not a test of memory; you are aiming at understanding ideas, values, and issues. Stick to the point, and make notes about ideas to which you want to come back. Discuss ideas rather than each other's opinions; a seminar should not be a bull session. Do not stay confused; ask for clarification. Take turns, and talk to each other, not just to the teacher. Listen carefully. The life and integrity of the course depends finally on your questions, comments, challenges, and defenses.
• ATTENDANCE
  Any more than three absences will result in the lowering of your final grade, so use absences wisely. Tardiness and early departures are disruptive and will also result in the lowering of your final grade.
• PEER REVIEW WORKSHOPS
  This class is a writing workshop and preparedness is the key to its success. Your participation in peer reviews calls for timely distribution of drafts, notable revision efforts, and constructive comments on your classmates’ papers.
• ASSIGNMENTS/DEBATE
  You will be responsible for completing in-class and homework exercises, discussion sheets, and short written responses that generate class discussion. The debates will focus on elements of style as well as the rhetorical soundness and strategy of your arguments.
• PAPERS
  An analytical essay, critical review, and argument essay, written expressly for this class, must
be typed or printed on a word processor, double-spaced, and proofread. Pay attention to deadlines and page requirements indicated on your class calendar. We will workshop all three papers. I will not accept a paper that has not been workshopped over the course of the assignment.

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**Grading Standards for Participation**
You will earn points toward a final grade for attendance, punctuality, and participation. The evaluation policy is constructed to accommodate the occasional, and sometimes unavoidable, absence. You are not required to call me or to present me with an excuse; I will assume that you have a legitimate reason for missing class. Be aware, though, that frequent absences will negatively affect your grade.

**Grading Standards for Peer Review Workshops**
You will earn points as an active critic in our workshops. You will be expected to 1) have copies of your draft turned in on time for critiquing by your classmates, 2) make significant improvements on your draft, and 3) discuss and offer sound commentary on your classmates’ drafts. Personal computer problems do not excuse the failure to prepare. Computer labs are available to you on campus for working on assignments, printing drafts, and accessing the instructor for help.

**Grading Standards for Assignments and Debate**
You will earn points for in-class and homework assignments, discussion sheets, and short written responses. I accept late work; however, any assignment that is not completed and turned in by the due date will earn no more than half credit. The debate, a component of our argument unit, is mandatory.

Points, ranging from three to zero, are earned based on participation, comprehension, completeness of assignments, and active involvement in workshops. At the end of the semester, points will be averaged and a grade assigned accordingly:

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
A & 3-2.5 & B & 2.4-2 \\
A- & 2.3-2 & C & 1.9-1.5 \\
B+ & 2.6-2.3 & C- & 1.4-1 \\
B & 2.4-2 & D & 1.4-1 \\
B- & 2.2-2 & D- & 1.0-0 \\
C & 1.9-1.5 & F & 0-0 \\
C- & 1.8-1.5 & & \\
D & 1.4-1 & & \\
D- & 1.0-0 & & \\
F & 0-0 & & 
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**Grading Standards for Papers**
You will earn a letter grade for your three critical papers. Late submissions will be accepted, but your grade will be lowered by a full grade (for example, B to C) if your essay is not submitted at class time on the due date, then a grade after that for each class day it is late.

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
A & Paper is exceptional in form and content: original, substantive, insightful, well-organized, clear, graceful, and error-free. \\
A- & Paper is clearly written, well-developed, and interesting, showing above average thought and writing craft, with no major flaws. \\
B & Paper is readable and reasonably organized, supporting a focused thesis. It may have unresolved problems in presentation and distracting grammatical errors and stylistic flaws—a mixture of strengths and weaknesses—fulfilling basic requirements of the assignment. \\
B- & Paper is seriously deficient in content, form, style, or mechanics. It may be disorganized, illogical, confusing, unfocused, with pervasive and distracting errors. \\
C & Paper is incoherent, inappropriate, or has not undergone peer reviews. \\
C- & & \\
D & & \\
D- & & \\
F & & \\
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**Plagiarism**
Plagiarism is pilfering someone else’s words or ideas. At the very least, plagiarizing will result in an F for the assignment. For more information about plagiarism and its consequences, visit the CU Honor Code site at [www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode](http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode).

**Calculation of Grades**

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<td>Peer Review Workshops</td>
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<td>Assignments/Debate</td>
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**Argument Essay 20%**

**Accommodations for Special Needs Students**
For information about special needs, contact the Counselor for Students with Disabilities, Disability Services Office, Willard 322, 303-492-8671, [http://www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices](http://www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices). If you qualify for accommodations, submit a letter to me from Disability Services within the first three days of class so that your needs can be addressed.

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**Calendar**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Assignment/Notes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 15</td>
<td>Welcome, course overview and policies, texts, syllabus, class introductions</td>
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<td>Assignment: Read <em>Thinking and Writing in the Humanities (TWH)</em> “Introduction”</td>
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<td>xi-xii, Chapter 1 “Types of Essays,” “Elements,” “Planning” 1-15, Chapter 2</td>
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<td>“Writing the Short Response” 27-41.</td>
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<td>Jan 17</td>
<td>Discuss modes of discourse, objective/subjective responses; respond to Chapter 2 exercises.</td>
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<td>Assignment: Read <em>Film Noir Reader (FNR)</em> “Introduction” 3-15; complete discussion sheet;</td>
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<td>write a summary of “Americans Also Make Noir Movies” (1946) by Jean-Pierre Chartier.</td>
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<td>Jan 22</td>
<td>Discuss Alain Silver’s “Introduction” and Chartier’s seminal essay on film noir.</td>
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<td>DUE: DISCUSSION SHEET, SUMMARY</td>
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<td>Assignment: Read <em>TWH</em> Chapter 3 “Writing the Analytical Essay” 43-89.</td>
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<td>Jan 24</td>
<td>Discuss approaches to analysis, posing a question, stating a thesis, formulating points of proof, inferring from facts (<em>Harper’s Index</em>); go over analytical essay assignment.</td>
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<td>Assignment: Read <em>FNR</em> “Towards a Definition of Film Noir” 17-25; complete discussion sheet.</td>
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<td>Create an annotated bibliography (at least four periodicals) pertaining to an aspect of film noir.</td>
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<td>Jan 29</td>
<td>Discuss Raymond Borde and Étienne Chaumeton’s “Towards a Definition”; review introductions, body paragraphs, and conclusions; begin <em>Out of the Past</em>.</td>
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<td>DUE: DISCUSSION SHEET, ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
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<td>Assignment: Read <em>TWH</em> “Quotation Marks” 241-44, complete paraphrasing/punctuating quotations.</td>
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<td>Jan 31</td>
<td>Discuss approaching the analysis; finish <em>Out of the Past</em>.</td>
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<td>DUE: PARAPHRASING/PUNCTUATING QUOTATIONS</td>
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<td>Assignment: Complete short response.</td>
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<td>Feb 5</td>
<td>Discuss <em>Out of the Past</em>, MLA style, peer review guidelines.</td>
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<td>DUE: SHORT RESPONSE</td>
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<td>Feb 7</td>
<td>Practice peer review</td>
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<td>Assignment: Prepare for peer reviews.</td>
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<td>Feb 12</td>
<td>In-class MLA quiz; review blending reference material, avoiding plagiarism.</td>
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<td>DUE: GROUP 1—OPENING PARAGRAPH (19 COPIES)</td>
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<td>Feb 14</td>
<td>Group 1—opening paragraph peer review</td>
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<td>DUE: GROUP 2—OPENING PARAGRAPH (19 COPIES)</td>
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<td>Feb 19</td>
<td>Group 2—opening paragraph peer review</td>
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<td>Assignment: All, make sure you have four copies of a half draft with a revised theme paragraph by Feb 21.</td>
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<td>Feb 21</td>
<td>Half draft peer review</td>
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DUE: HALF DRAFT

Feb 26 With Paul Schrader’s “Notes” and Janey Place’s “Visual Motifs” in mind, view Detour.
Assignment: Complete short response; bring in one copy of a revised draft for partner peer review.

Feb 28 Discuss Detour; partner peer review
DUE: SHORT RESPONSE, REVISED DRAFT
Assignment: Read TWH Chapter 3 “Revision and Editing Checklist” 89; complete analytical essay.

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Mar 4 Go over critical review assignment; begin Night and the City.
DUE: 5-6-PAGE ANALYSIS
Assignment: Read TWH Chapter 6 “Writing the Review” 143-161; read FNR “No Way Out” 77-93.

Mar 6 Discuss Robert Porfirio’s “No Way Out”; finish Night and the City.
Assignment: Read FNR “Expressionist Doom” 203-207; complete short response.

Mar 11 Discuss Night and the City.
DUE: SHORT RESPONSE
Assignment: Read FNR “Film Noir, Voice Over and the Femme Fatale” 243-259; complete discussion sheet.

Mar 13 Discuss Karen Hollinger’s “Film Noir, Voice Over.”
DUE: DISCUSSION SHEET
Assignment: All, make sure you have four copies of a full draft by Mar 18.

Mar 18 Full draft peer review
DUE: FULL DRAFT
Assignment: Read TWH “Revising and Editing Your Review” 161.

Mar 20 Go over argument essay; review thesis, refutation, points of proof; introduce debate topics.
DUE: 3-4-PAGE CRITICAL REVIEW
Assignment: Read TWH “Writing the Argument Essay” 91-129; consider debate topics.

Mar 24-28 SPRING BREAK • HAVE FUN!

Apr 1 Discuss logical fallacies, model essays, debate topics.
Assignment: Read FNR “Kill Me Again” 307-329, “Son of Noir” 331-338; complete discussion sheet.

Apr 3 Discuss Todd Erickson’s “Kill Me Again” and Alain Silver’s “Son of Noir”; go over debate format, form teams (exchange email addresses), choose resolutions.
DUE: DISCUSSION SHEET
Assignment: Research debate topic.

Apr 8 Meet with debate team; begin House of Games.
Assignment: Research debate topic.

Apr 10 Meet with debate team; finish House of Games.
Assignment: Prepare for upcoming debates; complete short response for Apr 22 discussion.

Apr 15-17 DEBATES

Apr 22 Discuss House of Games, progress of essays; go over argument rubric for final peer reviews.
DUE: SHORT RESPONSE
Assignment: Bring in four copies of a draft Thu, Apr 24, and a revised draft Tue, Apr 29.

Apr 24-29  Peer reviews
DUE: DRAFTS

May 1  CLASS CELEBRATION • CONGRATULATIONS!
DUE: 5-6-PAGE ARGUMENT

Ability is what you're capable of doing.
Motivation determines what you do.
Attitude determines how well you do it.
—Raymond Chandler