

Hostos Community College (CUNY)

Syllabus Checklist for Writing Intensive (WI) Courses

Course Name __Special Topics: Genre: Modern Female Detective
Novel_____

Course Number __English 251_____ Credit Value _3 credits_____

Pre- and/or Co-Requisites(Specify) Pre-Requisite: _English 111_____

Department _English_____

Submitted by Prof. Teresa Justicia _____

Date _November 20, 2009_____

1. Indicate which of the following informal “writing-to-learn” activities you plan to utilize in your WI course. After each item you check, indicate the frequency with which you plan to utilize each activity. Please provide examples of some “writing-to-learn” assignments or activities.

| | Once/Month | Twice/Month | Once/Week |
|----------------------------------|---------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Summary Writing | | | X |
| Journal/log writing | | | |
| Double or triple-entry journal | | At least twice monthly | |
| Letter Writing | | | |
| E-mail discussion/forum | | | |
| Responding to prepared questions | | | X |
| Defining key terms or concepts | | At least twice monthly | |
| Personal Response Writing | | | Required for all works read |
| Free Writing | | | |
| Other (Please Specify) | Collaborative | | X |

2. The WI guidelines require a minimum of 10-12 pages of formal writing in all WI courses. Indicate which of the following formal writing assignments you plan to use in your WI course. Indicate also the number of pages of writing you require for each type of assignment.

| | Number of Pages |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Personal Response Essay | At least 6 pages (informal) |
| Summary Essay | At least 6 pages (informal) |
| Expository Essay | At least 3 pages (1 essay) |
| Compare/Contrast Essay | At least 9 pages (3 essays) |
| Research Paper | At least 7 pages |
| Book Report | |
| Lab Report | |
| Poster Presentation | |
| Other (Please Specify): In-class essays (informal) | At least 6 pages (handwritten) |
| | |
| Total Number of Pages of Formal Writing | 19- 22 pages |

3. Of the total number of formal writing assignments you plan to give in your WI course, indicate the percentage of assignments in which students will have the opportunity to revise and resubmit their work for evaluation.

10-25% 26-50% 51-75% 76-100%

4. Indicate the total number of exams you plan to give in your WI course. Then indicate what percentage of these exams requires writing by students. (Note: Exams do not need to contain writing.) Final (100%) No exams

5. WI guidelines stipulate that grades in WI courses “should be based in substantial part on students’ written work.” In determining the final grade for your WI course, indicate what percentage of the grade involves written work by students. Circle one.

10-25% 26-50% 51-75% 76-100%

6. Does the syllabus for your WI course clearly indicate the type of written work to be completed at particular times in the semester? Yes

7. Please identify or explain any terms you use in your WI syllabus for types of writing assignments that correspond to other commonly used labels (e.g., writing exercise for composition or reaction paper for personal response essay).

8. Along with your WI course syllabus, please provide examples of written assignments which comprise the formal writing assignments for this course.

Prepared by the Hostos Writing-Across-the-Curriculum (WAC) Task Force

**HOSTOS COMMUNITY COLLEGE
of THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK**

English 251
Dr. Teresa Justicia/ Spring 2010
Office: B539
Office Hours: T/Th 12:30-1:45pm or by appointment
e-mail: njusticia@hostos.cuny.edu

COURSE SYLLABUS

**SPECIAL TOPICS: ENGLISH 251: THE MODERN FEMALE DETECTIVE
NOVEL**

Pre-requisite: Completion of ENG 111

Course Description

This class will familiarize students with the major elements of a particular genre through the study of representative works with a variety of topics and themes. Students will be introduced to the overall goal of deepening their understanding of the genre being studied. Students will read works both in terms of their own individual merits and their contribution to the genre. In addition, students will consider the relationship between form and theme in the genre, and any cultural/historical influences deemed worthy of being examined in relation to it. This course will also enhance student's critical understanding of the rules of a particular genre and how these contribute to the formulation of its predominant themes.

Course Objectives

By the end of the semester, students will understand:

- The features that distinguish the genre as a subcategory of literature;
- The origins and development of the genre;
- Major contributions and exponents of the genre;
- The interaction between works in the genre and their cultural/historical context; and
- Themes with which works in the genre have historically interacted..

Course Requirements

- Attend all scheduled classes punctually: two latenesses will be considered an absence. No more than four absences will be permitted.
- Read all assignments given by the instructor and be prepared to discuss them in class.
- Be responsible for all assignments, even when absent.

- Be responsible for four assigned formal essays, each graded after revision, and three in-class essays graded without revision. In addition, other low-stakes assignments of various lengths will be assigned throughout the semester. Together, the non-researched low-stakes assignments will constitute no less than fifteen (15) pages of writing.
- Be responsible for the researched term paper which should be expanded through research from a paper already written in class and should be at least 7 pages long. This essay will allow students to deepen their understanding of a single aspect of the genre, or perhaps the work of a single major exponent. Sources should be cited according to MLA Style format.
- Be responsible for collaborative work assigned during the semester.

WRITING IN THE COURSE

To receive the Associate of Arts degree at Hostos, students must successfully complete two writing intensive courses. “Writing Intensive” means that throughout the course you will be engaged in various types of writing. The purpose of these writing activities is to help you develop your skills as a writer as you deepen your understanding of the material that will be presented. You will improve your understanding of female detective fiction in this course by reading six novels that represent major exponents of the genre such as Agatha Christie, P.D. James and others. Since the works to be read in the course will be arranged chronologically, you will be able to appreciate how the character of the female detective is always greatly influenced and restricted by reigning attitudes towards women at the time the works were written. Through prepared questions, summaries, personal responses, defining key terms and concepts, double-entry journals, collaborative work, and other types of writing-to-learn activities, you will explore various trends and styles of the genre. You will also understand how the acceptance of the female detective within the traditional detective model has imbued the detective genre with plots, settings, characters and themes that were hitherto considered exclusive masculine domains. In formal writing assignments you will be analyzing both form and content in these works to demonstrate how the elements of detective fiction contribute to our understanding of predominant themes that emerge in modern female detective novels. Finally, you will be asked to research secondary material in analyzing and supporting your own critical opinion about an aspect or theme connected to one of the authors or novels studied.

While the writing in this course, both formal and informal, is intended to help you improve your understanding of the material, there are added benefits to developing and enhancing your written communication. Writing activities will also hopefully complement your preparation for the CPE exam. Additionally, the ability to learn through writing and convey your written ideas effectively is vital not only to your college education but to the ongoing and life-long process of your becoming an educated person.

Suggested Resources

A standard English language dictionary, a thesaurus, and a writing handbook such as **The Writer's FAQ's** by Muriel Harris

Assessment:

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| Essay 1----- | 10% |
| Essay 2----- | 10% |
| Essay 3----- | 10% |
| Essay 4----- | 10% |
| Essay 5(researched) | 20% |
| Final Exam----- | 20% |
| Daily Grade:----- | 20% |
| 3 In-class essays (not revised) | |
| Class Participation | |
| Collaborative Work | |

Required Texts: (Available at the Hostos bookstore)

1. Christie, Agatha. *Murder at the Vicarage*. (1930)
2. James, PD. *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman* (1972)
3. Muller, Marcia. *Edwin of the Iron Shoes* (1977)
4. Grafton, Sue. *A is for Alibi* (1982)
5. Paretsky, Sara. *Indemnity Only* (1982)
6. Cornwell, Patricia. *Postmortem* (1990)

Tentative Schedule

Our readings will be organized chronologically so that the character of the female detective is seen against the backdrop of reigning attitudes towards women at the time the works were written. This will help students make connections among the readings as well as develop an understanding of themes, forms and structures of this genre.

WEEKS 1-5

Introduction: Origins of the genre;

Film showing of Agatha Christie's *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (David Suchet as Hercule Poirot)

Response: Write a character description of M. Poirot.

Collaborative task: Definition of key terms

Readings: Amateur sleuth and first female detective

Christie's *Murder at the Vicarage*

Response: Character description of Miss Marple.

In-class Essay 1: In *Murder at the Vicarage*, what kind of society does Christie concentrate on? How does she deploy the amateur detective? What surprises you about the way she structures the narrative?

Formal Essay 1: Comparison/Contrast of M. Poirot and Miss Marple.

Description of plot, detective, crime, setting, suspects, implicit and explicit gender and social issues.

James' *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman*

Response: How does Cordelia Gray's society differ from Miss Marple's? How have the roles of women changed?

WEEKS 6-9

Readings: Modern female private detectives

Sharon MacCone in Muller's *Edwin of the Iron Shoes*

Response: Summary of the novel

Kinsey Millhone in Grafton's *A is for Alibi*

Response: Description of detective, plot, crime, setting, suspects, "hard-boiled" elements

Double-entry journal: Comparison/contrast of MacCone and Millhone

In-class essay 2: Choose one of the two texts (Muller or Grafton) and describe what features of the work stand out. How would you characterize the detective in this novel? In your conclusion, discuss how Muller's novel compares to Grafton's.

Formal essay 2: Trace the development of the female detective by analyzing Miss Marple, Gray, MacCone and Millhone, the societies they live in, and the social issues they confront.

WEEKS 10-11

Readings: Modern Female Detective Transformed

Paretsky's V. I. Warshawski in *Indemnity Only*

Formal essay 3: Analyze and discuss how Paretsky has altered the traditional role of the female detective. How is V.I. Warshawski different from all the other detectives we've read about? How does she challenge previous stereotypes of female detectives? How has the female detective changed by the time Sara Paretsky writes?

Formal essay 4: Write a dialogue featuring Miss Marple, Cordelia Gray and V.I Warshawski as characters. You may choose the setting and other pertinent elements. However, the dialogue must revolve around the nature of detecting and the peculiar problems it presents to a woman detective.

WEEKS 12-13

Readings: Modern Female Forensic Detective

Kay Scarpetta in Cornwell's *Postmortem*

Response: Analyze and discuss significant themes in this novel that have not been reflected in other novels read in class. What kind of detective is Kay Scarpetta? How does the introduction of forensic science influence themes? How does it affect the solution of the mystery?

Formal Essay 5 (Researched: timeline and due date to be announced)

WEEKS 14-15

Other Female Detectives: Film: Alexander MacCall's *No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* (HBO)

In-class essay 3: Describe how an episode based on the first novel of the series, shows African values and traditions. How does the detective differ from all the others? How is she restricted by societal values? The author of this series is a man. Do you notice any difference between his treatment of the female detective and that of female authors studied in class?

Review for the final

Final

Researched paper due

Note:

1. In order to clarify what plagiarism is, how and why it is to be avoided and the penalties attached to it, please refer to the Hostos Policy on Academic Integrity, Hostos Community College Catalog/website.

2. In order to clarify what constitutes sexual harassment, please refer to the Hostos Policy on Sexual Harassment, Hostos Community College Catalog/website.

English 251: Definition of Key Terms
Prof. Justicia

Please look up and define the following key terms in your group:

1. Amateur detective
2. Clue
3. Cozy mystery
4. Detective
5. English Country House Mystery
6. Film noir
7. Forensic Science
8. Golden Age of Detective Fiction
9. Hard-boiled
10. Locked Room Mystery
11. Police Procedural
12. Private Eye
13. Red Herring
14. Scotland Yard
15. Suspect
16. Whodunit
17. Gender
18. Femininity
19. Masculinity

ENG 251: Special Topics: Modern Female Detective Novel
Formal Essays

Essay 1:

Write a 3-4 page essay where you compare and contrast M. Poirot, Christie's male detective, and Miss Marple. In your discussion, please consider the following:

- Crime elements associated with each: plot, setting, crime, suspects
- How each is characterized and the roles they each have in the detection of the crime
- Implicit and explicit gender and social issues each encounters

Essay 2:

In a 3-4 page essay discuss how the female detective has developed through an analysis of Miss Marple, Cordelia Gray, Sharon McCone and Kinsey Millhone. Please consider the following in your analysis:

- Characterization of each
- Kinds of societies they each live in
- Kinds of crimes they detect
- Social issues they confront

Essay 3:

Write a 3-4 page essay where you **analyze** and discuss how V.I. Warshawski is different from other female detectives we've read about. How does she challenge previous stereotypes of female detectives? How has the female detective evolved by the time Sara Paretsky writes?

Essay 4:

Write a dialogue (3-4 pages) featuring Miss Marple, Cordelia Gray and V.I Warshawski as characters. You may choose the setting of your dialogue and other pertinent elements. However, dialogue must revolve around the nature of detecting and the peculiar problems it presents to a woman detective.

In-class essays: (low-stakes)

1. Analyze and discuss the kind of society that Christie concentrates on in her first Miss Marple mystery, *Murder at the Vicarage*. Please consider the following questions in your analysis:
 - What kind of village is St. Mary Mead?
 - What is Miss Marple like and what role does she have in the village?
 - How is she perceived by those around her?
 - How does Christie deploy Miss Marple as amateur detective?
 - What surprises you about the way she structures the narrative?

2. Choose one of the two texts read (Muller or Grafton) and describe the following:
 - What elements of the work stand out?
 - How would you characterize the detective in the novel?In your conclusion, discuss how Muller's novel compares to Grafton's in general. You may use specific elements such as plot, setting, crime, detective, and suspects to focus your comparison.

3. Describe how an episode of *No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency*, based on the first novel of the series, shows African values and traditions. How does the detective differ from all the others? How is she restricted by societal values? The author of this series is a man. Do you notice any difference between his treatment of the female detective and that of female authors studied in class?

ENG 251: Research Paper
Prof. Justicia

NOTE: This research paper must have at least **seven** double-spaced (font 12), word-processed pages. You must consult **three to five** outside digital and/or print sources. There must be a **Works Cited** page at the end (**MLA Style**). Your paper will be expanded through research from an essay already assigned in class.

Choose **one** of the following essays assigned or written in class to expand through research into a research paper (at least **seven** double-spaced, word-processed pages):

1. Compare/contrast M. Poirot and Miss Marple
2. Essay on *Murder at the Vicarage*
3. Description/Analysis of Muller or Grafton novel
4. Comparative trace of development of female detective
5. Discussion/analysis of Paretsky novel
6. Dialogue (comparison/contrast of ideas of three female detectives)
7. Analysis of film based on MacCall's *No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency*

NOTE: Instructions for these essays have been provided as they have been written in class or assigned. For help with the research paper, please refer to the **OWL's MLA 2009 Formatting and Style Guide**. You may also seek help in the Library and/or Writing Center. MLA workshops offered by the Library are strongly recommended