Crime Fiction: The Global Hyper Genre
GRMN 0750 C

Thomas W. Kniesche
TR 9-10:20
Spring 2009
190 Hope Street, R. 203

Course Description:
Today, every forth new “literary” book is a mystery novel. Twenty-five percent of all new literary books worldwide are crime fiction. Wouldn’t you like to study a literary genre that people actually read, perhaps even you? A genre that has long been considered as a cultural ingredient of the Anglo-American West, has now become truly global. Crime fiction is written and read everywhere. It also has incorporated other literary genres, such as the adventure story, the family tragedy, the historical novel, or the novel of coming-of-age, thus acquiring the status of literary hyper-genre. As a means of a society to reflect upon itself, crime fiction can be compared to find out how certain cultures deal with the dialectics of threatening and securing civic order, how they depict mentalities, traditions, topographies, or cultural change. In this class, we will discuss and compare mystery novels from France, Italy, Turkey, Germany, Angola, Algeria, China, and Cuba. No prerequisite.
In English.

Course Goals:
- To understand the multiple meanings of crime fiction and the different ways in which they can be interpreted.
- To gain insight into the social, political, and historical background of crime fiction.
- To obtain a theoretical framework for reading crime fiction.
- To put into a larger perspective cultural differences that manifest themselves in mystery stories.

Texts (available at the Brown Bookstore):
Andrea Camilleri: The Shape of Water
Fred Vargas: The Three Evangelists
Qiu Xiaolong: When Red is Black
Leonardo Padura: Havana Red
Pepetela: Jaime Bunda, Secret Agent
Mehmet Murat Somer: The Prophet Murders
Yasmina Khadra: Morituri
Jakob Arjouni: Happy Birthday, Turk
John Scaggs: Crime Fiction

Course program:

1/22
Introduction
1/27
The Italian Connection
1/29
Historical Overview of Crime Fiction
2/3

2/5
Criticizing Cuba
2/10
Classic Detectives
2/12

long weekend
2/19
An Angolan James Bond?
2/24
The Hard-Boiled Variety
2/26

3/3
French New Noir
3/5
The Police Procedural

Readings/Writing Assignments:
Andrea Camilleri: The Shape of Water
Scaggs, Intro and Ch. 1
First Paper Due
Leonardo Padura: Havana Red
Scaggs, Ch. 2
Second paper due
Pepetela: Jaime Bunda, Secret Agent
Scaggs, Ch. 3
Third paper due
Fred Vargas: The Three Evangelists
Scaggs, Ch. 4
mid-semester

3/12  Transvestites in Turkey

3/17  The Thriller

3/19  Mehmet Murat Somer: The Prophet Murders

Scaggs, Ch.5

Final draft of fourth paper due to
writing fellow

spring break

3/31  Changes in China

4/2   Crime in History

4/7   Qiu Xiaolong: When Red is Black

4/9   Being noir in Algeria

4/14  Scaggs, Ch.6

4/16  Yasmina Khadra: Morituri

4/21  First draft of fifth paper due to writing

4/23  fellow

4/21  Jakob Arjouni: Happy Birthday, Turk!

4/30  Final draft of fifth paper due to

instructor

Grades:
Attendance                       10%
Participation                    10%
Weekly quizzes                   10%
Papers 1-2 (2 pages each)        15%
Paper 3  (5 pp.)                 15%
Paper 4  (10 pp.)               20 %
Paper 5  (10 pp.)               20%

It is important that you attend every session of this class. If you cannot attend due to illness or other reasons, you have to let me know before the session in question.

Participation is an essential part of taking this class. Your active involvement in the discussions will not only insure the high quality of our deliberations, it will also make the class more fun to attend. I want you and me to look forward to every session of this class.

A careful preparation for every session will be vital to achieve this goal. You have to read the texts assigned for each session thoroughly and perhaps repeatedly. This will also prepare you for the weekly unannounced quizzes on the readings for this class.

There will be a writing fellow for this class who will work with you on the papers you will have to submit. The writing fellow is a great resource for you and you should use it wisely.

Office Hours and Contact:

TTH 10:30-11:30 and by appointment (R. 101; 190 Hope Street, corner of Hope and Waterman)
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