

CL190W Spring 2020

The Detective Story and Theories of Reading



'X' marks the scene of a crime; but 'X' also marks the site of reading, in the sense that, like a puzzling crime, an innovative text (story or film) challenges our ability to read it. This course proposes to use the detective story (texts about how crime can or cannot be solved) to introduce theories of reading. By examining different kinds of detective stories and the critical and theoretical issues they directly or indirectly pose, the course will serve as a gentle and entertaining initiation to current critical theory. Texts studied will include the pioneering work of E.A.Poe and Conan Doyle ('Murders in the Rue Morgue', 'The Purloined Letter', and the Sherlock Holmes stories); the 'hard-boiled' transformation of the genre in films like 'The Maltese Falcon' and 'Chinatown'; and stories showing the detective at the center of a new kind of malaise in the contemporary city (Paul Auster's 'City of Glass') and in cyberspace (Ridley Scott 'Bladerunner').

**Monday and Wednesday
11-12:20pm HH 226**