



English 3361F:
Sherlock Holmes
and the Fiction of
Detection

Department of English & Writing Studies
Western University
Fall 2021
Visual Arts Centre, Room 100
Mondays 11:30-12:30 and Wednesdays 12:30-2:30

Instructor

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Course Description

Sherlock Holmes was introduced to the Victorian reading public in the pages of *Beeton's Christmas Annual* in December, 1887. "A Study in Scarlet" was the first of some 56 short stories and four novels published over the next four decades to feature "the world's greatest consulting detective." The Holmes canon, as these stories and novels are collectively referred to, is relatively small, but their impact—both literary and cultural—has been enormous. Arthur Conan Doyle's depictions of obscure mysteries occurring in the fog-shrouded streets of London, and the methodical work of deduction that slowly but inevitably reveals their true origins, captured the spirit of the *fin de siècle*: the strange new temporalities resulting from the expansion of gas and electric light systems, the disorienting experience of riding London's underground railway or the fast commuter trains connecting the metropole to the provinces, the overwhelming ubiquity of information, especially as circulated through mass-market newspapers and newspapers, the disturbing thrill of hearing a disembodied voice on a gramophone or seeing a face projected on the giant screen of the cinematograph, the omnipresent sense of being watched or that one should be watching others—these were all strangely magnified and distorted through the lens of the detective's magnifying glass.

Sherlock Holmes made Doyle the best paid writer of his generation, and the character has proven surprisingly long-lived. He survived plummeting to a sure death at Reichenbach Falls in "The Final Problem" (1893), and has now outlived not only his creator but his estate's copyright, appearing in countless novels, films, radio plays, computer games, and television adaptations. With the recent success of the BBC series *Sherlock* (2010-17), a film featuring the supposed younger sister of Holmes, *Enola Holmes* (2020), and a Netflix program that focuses on Holmes's gang of teenage accomplices, *The Irregulars* (2021), Holmes is arguably more popular today than ever.

English 3361F is a study of the figure of Sherlock Holmes, both as a literary figure and a cultural construct that embodies many of the period's anxieties concerning race, gender, and sexuality. We will explore the roots of the detective story in the early- to mid-nineteenth century, looking first at Edgar Allan Poe's "The Purloined Letter" (often identified as the text that codified many of the genre's most enduring formal elements) and Mary Elizabeth Braddon's "sensation novel," *Lady Audley's Secret* (which gave us the figure of the female criminal and helped establish the transgressive sexual politics of the genre). We will then turn to Holmes himself, studying the first full-length novel in which he appears, *The Sign of Four*, and several of the short stories that originally appeared in *The Strand* magazine and were subsequently collected as *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. These texts will

allow us not only to better understand the formal structure of Doyle's detective stories, but consider the importance of the popular press in their dissemination. A visit to Special Collections in Weldon Library will give us a chance to inspect rare first-editions of the texts we are studying and put them in the context of their mode of production. The course will then turn to representative examples of some of the many rivals to Holmes in the 1890s, including the "Lady Detective," the "Occult Detective," and the "Girl Detective." And we will conclude with a screening of *Enola Holmes* to discuss the enduring appeal of the Holmes figure and the ways it continues to both reflect and shape the cultural imagination.

Required Texts

(Available at the Book Store as hardcopy and, if available, as e-books)

Braddon, Mary Elizabeth. *Lady Audley's Secret* (Broadview)
Doyle, Arthur Conan. *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (Oxford)
---. *Sign of the Four* (Broadview)
Stevenson, Robert Louis. *The Strange Case of Dr. Jeekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Broadview)

If you are unable to purchase the books through Western's book store, you may do through these online vendors:

Braddon, Mary Elizabeth. *Lady Audley's Secret* (Broadview)
<https://broadviewpress.com/product/lady-audleys-secret/>
Doyle, Arthur Conan. *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (Oxford)
https://www.amazon.ca/Adventures-Sherlock-Holmes-Oxford-Classics-ebook/dp/B005OQGZK4/ref=sr_1_3?dchild=1&keywords=doyle+adventures+of+sherlock+holmes+oxford&qid=1631798955&sr=8-3
---. *Sign of the Four* (Broadview)
<https://broadviewpress.com/product/the-sign-of-four>
Stevenson, Robert Louis. *The Strange Case of Dr. Jeekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Broadview)
<https://broadviewpress.com/product/strange-case-of-dr-jeekyll-and-mr-hyde-third-edition/>

(Available as pdfs in the Resources section of the course Owl site)

Galbraith, Lettice. "The Blue Room." *Supernatural Sherlocks: Stories from the Golden Age of the Occult Detective*, edited by Nick Rennison, No Exit, 2017, pp. 64-86.
Hodgson, William Hope. "The Gateway of the Monster." *Supernatural Sherlocks: Stories from the Golden Age of the Occult Detective*, edited by Nick Rennison, No Exit, 2017, pp. 137-59.
Marsh, Richard. "Conscience." *The Complete Judith Lee Adventures*, edited by Minna Vuohelainen, Valancourt, 2016, pp. 45-67.
Orczy, Baroness. "The Ninescore Mystery." *Lady Molly of Scotland Yard*. Arno, 1976, pp. 1-25.
---. "The Man in the Inverness Cape." *Lady Molly of Scotland Yard*. Arno, 1976, pp. 204-29.
Pirkis, Catherine Louisa. "The Black Bag Left on a Door-Step." *The Experiences of Loveday Brooke, Lady Detective*. Dodo, 2020, pp. 1-32.
---. "The Redhill Sisterhood." *The Experiences of Loveday Brooke, Lady Detective*. Dodo, 2020, pp. 67-98.

Poe, Edgar Allan. "The Purloined Letter." *The Purloined Poe: Lacan, Derrida, and Psychoanalytic Reading*, edited by John P. Muller and William J. Richardson, Johns Hopkins UP, 1988, pp. 6-27.

Assignments and Grade Distribution

Participation: 10%
Learning Cell (3-4 pages): 20%
Research Essay (10-12 pages): 35%
Final Exam: 35%

Participation

English 3361F is conceived as a learning space in which the students share with the instructor and teaching assistant the responsibility for the production of knowledge, that is to say, for how we will approach the assigned texts and the nature of the conclusions that we will draw from them. Participation is a vital part of the course; each student should feel enfranchised to make their views known, while, at the same time, respecting the importance of the views and opinions of the other members of the class. Participation will count for ten percent of your final grade. In order to achieve a "B" grade for participation, students must attend class regularly, arrive in class having read the assigned material, and make occasional contributions to the discussion. To achieve an "A" grade, students must attend class regularly, arrive in class having not only read the assigned material, but having clearly thought carefully about it, and contribute comments and questions that demonstrate a superior grasp of the texts and critical issues of the course.

Learning Cell

Your Learning Cell concerns Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Read the whole text carefully and prepare **two** questions that you believe are central to an understanding of the text's themes, imagery, and style, particularly with regards to its contributions to the detective genre. For **each** of these questions, you will provide two to three paragraph answers. These answers will be in proper essay form, with topic sentences, detailed exposition of specific passages (including quotations), and a conclusion.

On October 4 you will bring your printed responses (please include your name on the first page), to class. You will then split up into the same groups used during the practice session on September 27. Alternatively, you may choose to meet with the members of your group in a virtual space (e.g. Zoom, Google Meet) during the regularly scheduled class time.

Each member of the group should share one of their questions and briefly indicate the nature of their answer to that question; the other members of the group will then comment, providing their points of view or supplementary arguments. When the question seems exhausted, move onto the next person. If someone has a question that is similar to one already discussed, skip that one and move onto the next. Make sure everyone in the group has the opportunity to present one or more of their questions and to comment on each of the other questions presented. The discussion should be as free and as creative as possible, allowing as much room for tangents, diverse opinions, and sustained verbal riffing as possible without wandering too far from the task of literary analysis of this

specific text.

While the discussion is on-going, you may make notes in the margins or the backs of the pages of your printed responses, or on a separate page. If you prefer to type rather than write by hand, or you are meeting virtually, you may add a page of type-written responses.

Submit this annotated copy at the end of class, or upload it through the Owl assignments page (the submission window for online submission will close at 12:30).

In grading the Learning Cell, we will consider the following:

1. How well did you succeed in defining questions which are central to the interpretation of the text, and in responding to them?
2. How closely and carefully did you read the text? Have you simply paraphrased its overt content, or have you presented an interpretation of its underlying structure or patterns of meanings?
3. How clearly did you present your ideas? Were there many errors of grammar and style in your work?
4. Do the annotations made during the group work provide evidence that you have listened carefully to your peers, and used their comments to develop your theses?

If you are unable to participate in the group work portion of the assignment, whether in-person or virtually, you will need to obtain academic accommodation.

Research Essay

The research essay is your opportunity to provide a sustained reading of one or more of the texts from the syllabus in the context of the historical and cultural ideologies of late-nineteenth century Britain. One might, for example, choose to read Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* in the context of late-Victorian concepts of "degeneration" and the "female criminal," or Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* in light of the popular press reports of the "Jack the Ripper" murders. Other possibilities include reading one or more of Doyle's Holmes stories in relation to the material exigencies of magazine publication, or Pirkis's Loveday Brooke stories as a reflection on the rise of the New Woman. With permission, you might also study a recent adaptation of one or more of the Holmes stories and reflect on how it carries on in the tradition of or transforms its source text(s). The choice is up to you—pursue what interests you most!

Whatever text or texts you choose to study, you are strongly encouraged to discuss your essay ideas and topics with the instructor or teaching assistant early in your research process, a process which, needless to say, cannot begin too early.

You will be expected to use at least three secondary sources, but the essay is not to be a review of such secondary literature. Rather, you should carefully distinguish your argument from that of other critics with an aim to contributing something original to our understanding of this writer's relationship to the issue that you have chosen to study. Please consider using an electronic search tool, such as the MLA Bibliography, to find peer-reviewed journal articles. Journal articles have the advantages of being generally more up-to-date, easier to read, and, because journals don't circulate,

more readily available than books. Search engines are also a wonderful means to refine the scope of your research topic. Don't forget to examine the bibliographies of the articles and books you find: they will likely point you in the direction of other useful material.

All essays will be written according to standard essay style: paper size will be set to 8.5" x 11" and margins will be 1." Please double-space and use a 12-point font. A title-page is not necessary, but the first page must include the title of the essay, your name, the course number, the professor's name, teaching assistant's name, and the date.

Originality of argument, the ability to support the argument with reference to the primary text, rhetorical persuasiveness, syntax, grammar, spelling, and accurate bibliographic citation will *all* be factors in the grading of the essay.

All bibliographic notation will employ the MLA method of parenthetical notation and a works cited page. Please consult a standard style guide such as the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (9th ed.), which is available in the reference shelves of the D.B. Weldon Library. A good online guide to the MLA method can be found [here](#).

Assignments will be submitted electronically through the Owl site, and are due by 4:30 on the due date. Late papers will be penalized 10 per cent for the first 24 hours and then 2% per day thereafter, including weekends. Papers submitted after the assignment is returned will not normally be accepted.

Please keep at least one copy of each of your papers. Save each file on a usb key, external drive, drop box, or other form of back up media. Retain all returned, marked assignments until you receive your final grade for the course.

Accommodation Policies

Students seeking academic accommodation for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments must apply to the Academic Counseling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested.

The Student Medical Certificate (SMC) can be found [here](#).

The full policy is set out [here](#).

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

Academic Consideration for Student Absence

Students will have up to two (2) opportunities during the regular academic year to use an on-line portal to self-report an absence during the term, provided the following conditions are met: the absence is no more than 48 hours in duration, and the assessment for which consideration is being sought is worth 30% or less of the student's final grade. Students are expected to contact their instructors within 24 hours of the end of the period of the self-reported absence, unless noted on the syllabus. Students are not able to use the self-reporting option in the following circumstances:

- for exams scheduled by the Office of the Registrar (e.g., December and April exams)
- absence of a duration greater than 48 hours,
- assessments worth more than 30% of the student's final grade,
- if a student has already used the self-reporting portal twice during the academic year

If the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence are not met, students will need to provide a Student Medical Certificate if the absence is medical, or provide appropriate documentation if there are compassionate grounds for the absence in question. Students are encouraged to contact their Faculty academic counselling office to obtain more information about the relevant documentation.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds, or for other reasons. All documentation required for absences that are not covered by the Self-Reported Absence Policy must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's Home Faculty.

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the Western Multicultural Calendar.

Support Services

Registrarial Services: <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services: <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC: <https://westernusc.ca/your-services/>

Student Development Centre: <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help

Plagiarism

Plagiarism (the unacknowledged use of another person's work) is one of the most serious academic offences, since it involves fraud and misrepresentation. In plagiarizing, one is in effect claiming another person's words or ideas or data as one's own work, and thus misrepresenting material subject to academic evaluation. It is necessary, therefore, that plagiarism carry appropriate penalties. These are within the discretion of the Chair of Undergraduate Studies, but may include failure of a course or a grade of zero on an assignment, without the privilege of resubmitting it. The Department's policy on plagiarism is [here](#).

Plagiarism Checking: All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between Western University and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Office Hours

Students are encouraged to speak with the instructor or teaching assistant concerning any aspect of the course or its assignments during the office hours noted above. These times are open to anyone; you do not need to make an appointment. If these times are inconvenient, however, feel free to get in touch on email and arrange an alternative date and time.

The instructor's and the teaching assistant's office hours will be conducted on Zoom for this term. Please use the links in the "Zoom" tab of the course Owl site to attend that day's meeting.

Email

If you have a question that you feel is best addressed to the instructor, please do feel free to get in touch. I will try to respond within one business day; email over the weekend will be returned the following Monday. Please note, however, that email is not the most ideal medium for the discussion of difficult conceptual material, such as is often the focus of queries regarding an English course. If you miss a class and would like to catch up, or are having difficulties with an assignment, please do consider seeing me during my office hours, or, if those times are not convenient, making an appointment to meet at some alternative time.

Lecture and Reading Schedule

September	8	Introduction: The Detective
	13	Poe, "Purloined Letter"
	15	Poe, "Purloined Letter"
	20	Braddon, <i>Lady Audley's Secret</i>
	22	Braddon, <i>Lady Audley's Secret</i>
	27	Practice Learning Cell: Braddon, <i>Lady Audley's Secret</i>
	29	Braddon, <i>Lady Audley's Secret</i>
October	4	Learning Cell: Stevenson, <i>Jekyll & Hyde</i>
	6	Stevenson, <i>Jekyll & Hyde</i>
	11	Thanksgiving
	13	Stevenson, <i>Jekyll & Hyde</i>
	18	Stevenson, <i>Jekyll & Hyde</i>
	20	Doyle, <i>Sign of Four</i>
	25	Doyle, <i>Sign of Four</i>
	27	Doyle, <i>Sign of Four</i>
November	1	Reading Week
	3	Reading Week
	8	Doyle, <i>Adventures</i>
	10	Doyle, <i>Adventures</i>
	15	Doyle, <i>Adventures</i>

	17	Doyle, <i>Adventures</i>
	22	Pirkis, “The Black Bag Left on a Door-Step” and “The Redhill Sisterhood”
	24	Orczy, “The Ninescore Mystery” and “The Man in the Inverness Cape”
	29	Marsh, “Conscience”
December	1	Hodgson, “The Gateway of the Monster” and Galbraith, “The Blue Room”
	6	<i>Enola Holmes</i>
	8	Review