

Department of English & Writing Studies
Film Studies Program

Film Studies 3366F (001)
Film Noir and the Crime Genre
Fall 2025

Instructor: Prof. M. Jones | mjones@uwo.ca

Calendar Description

This course examines the narrative and aesthetic innovations of film noir in relation to its literary origins and cinematic influences. Tending to key figures such as the hard-boiled detective and the femme fatale, the course will chart the development and revision of noir from WWII to the present.¹

Course Description

David Lynch once said that film noir is “a mood that everyone can feel. It’s people in trouble, at night, with a little bit of wind and the right kind of music. It’s a beautiful thing.” “Noir” is one of the most notoriously contentious film categories: is it a genre, a film style, a period, an aesthetic, a mood, a psychology, a philosophy, an associated set of themes, icons, character types, and/or narrative conventions? Film noir emerged as an identifiable phenomenon in the United States in the 1940s and continues to influence contemporary culture, from film and video to fashion, music, advertising, and social media. Our class will consider the history of film noir from the 1940s to the present, its distinctive representations of crime, the law, racial issues, ideas about masculinity and femininity, and the impact of American consumer culture. We will explore film noir through a variety of critical lenses, considering both classical exemplars and revisionist approaches to noir.

General Objectives

By the end of the course, successful students will be able to:

- Understand film noir in terms of style, genre, themes, icons, and narrative conventions.
- Comprehend the development of film noir in its historical, industrial, cultural, and aesthetic dimensions.
- Conduct advanced research in film studies.
- Advance critical analyses, including integration of scholarly resources.
- Demonstrate advanced presentation and oral communication skills.

¹ Prerequisites: At least 60% in Film Studies 1020E or Film Studies 1022 or 1.0 of English 1000-1999 plus English 2112F/G, Film 2212F/G, or Theatre Studies 2212F/G, or permission of the Department. Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Course Materials

Links to film streaming sources and critical readings are in the Schedule of Films and Readings in the Syllabus folder in OWL. There are no extra costs for this course.

Students are responsible for checking the course OWL site (<https://westernu.brightspace.com/>) regularly for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class.

If students need assistance with the course OWL site, they can seek support on the OWL Brightspace Help page. Alternatively, they can contact the Western Technology Services Helpdesk. They can be contacted by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800.

Methods of Evaluation²

ASSIGNMENT	VALUE	LENGTH/FORMAT	DUE DATE
Selfie Noir	10%	500 words + images	Sept. 23
Sequence Analysis	10%	40 mins. (in class)	Oct. 28
Neo-Noir Presentation	20%	See below	Nov. 18
Essay	25%	1500 words	Dec. 2
Final Exam ³	35%	3 hours	TBA

Student Interviews: After submitting their assignment, students may be required to meet with the instructor to discuss their composition process and the content of the submission before a grade is assigned.

Attendance Policy: Attendance is mandatory in all classes and tutorials. The classroom experience is integral to the course – this is where the substance of the course is generated and presented. *The content of lectures is not “contained” in the PowerPoints posted on Brightspace.*

Late Policy: Students are expected to submit each of the assignments by the deadline listed. Should extenuating circumstances arise, students do not need to request Academic Consideration; they are permitted to submit their assignment up to 72 hours past the deadline without a late penalty. Should students submit their assessment beyond 72 hours past the deadline, a late penalty of 2% per day will be applied unless the student has Academic Consideration.

A Word on Course Content and Language

The content of this course will engage with powerful and potentially upsetting representations of violence, race, sex, and existential dread. I will do my best to alert you in advance to particularly difficult moments, and steer you through a discussion of these issues with sensitivity, respect, and care. Students who anticipate discomfort while screening/discussing particular issues or imagery should prepare themselves by looking up information on the content of films in advance of viewing them (eg., on IMDb). While it may be employed in the dialogue of films we discuss, the use of derogatory, racist, sexist language will not be tolerated in this class.

² Students are fully responsible for being familiar with the information posted on the English and Writing Studies department website at <http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/Student%20Information.html>

³ No aids are permitted for this exam. Electronic devices of any kind (including calculators, cell phones and smart watches) are not permitted.

Intellectual Property/Copyright

All instructor-written materials (e.g. PowerPoints, lecture notes, oral lectures) for this course are created solely for students' personal use within the course, and remain the instructor's intellectual property. Further reproduction, fixation, distribution, transmission, dissemination, communication, or any other uses, without securing the consent of the copyright owner (the course instructor) may be an infringement of copyright. You may not distribute, email, or otherwise communicate these materials to any other person. These limitations extend to recording, photographing, or sharing lectures (online or in-person) and lecture material without permission. Posting the instructor's content from this course to online course sharing sites like OneClass or Course Hero without permission is both an infringement of intellectual property law and a violation of academic integrity guidelines.

Academic Consideration

In this course, requests for academic consideration pertaining to the **in-class sequence analysis** must be accompanied by supporting documentation from the Academic Advising office of the student's Faculty of registration. Requests linked to examinations scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during official examination periods **always** require formal supporting documentation.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. In cases of excessive absenteeism (e.g. more than 9 unexcused hours), which are not accounted for by either academic consideration or accommodation, students may be debarred from taking the final examination, and will receive an official warning to this effect by or before the course drop date (see Senate policy).

Accommodation & Accessibility Policies

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](#).

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.

Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

Plagiarism includes the use of any material generated by artificial intelligence programs or large language models (LLMs) such as [ChatGPT](#), with the exception of those instances where they form part of the assignment instructions.

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 for such checking 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 The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.

Supports & Resources

[Registrarial Services](#)

[Student Support Services](#)

[Services provided by the USC](#)

[Academic Support & Engagement](#)

Students who are [in emotional/mental distress](#) should refer to [MentalHealth@Western](#) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Western University is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced gender-based or sexual violence (either recently or in the past, you will find information about [support services for survivors](#), including emergency contacts.

To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca or call 519-661-3568.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The spaces where we teach and learn at Western are located on traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Chonnonton Nations. The land continues to be enriched by the presence of diverse Indigenous peoples. Making this acknowledgement is meant to inspire action and commitment towards furthering relationships with Indigenous communities here and elsewhere.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF FILMS AND READINGS 2025

WEEK	DATE	YEAR	FILM TITLE	DIRECTOR	ACCESS	READINGS	ASSIGNMENTS
1	Sept. 9	1941	<i>The Maltese Falcon</i>	Houston	Criterion	Place & Peterson, "Some Visual Motifs of Film Noir"	
2	Sept. 16	1944	<i>Double Indemnity</i>	Wilder	Internet Archive	Naremore, "American Film Noir The History of an Idea"	
3	Sept. 23	1947	<i>Out of the Past</i>	Tourneur	McIntyre Media	Tasker, "Women in Film Noir"	Selfie Noir
-	Sept. 30	NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION					
4	Oct. 7	1945 1953	<i>Detour</i> <i>The Hitch-Hiker</i>	Ulmer Lupino	McIntyre Media Internet Archive	Naremore, "Low is High: Budgets and Critical Discrimination"	
5	Oct. 14	1947	<i>Nightmare Alley</i>	Goulding	Criterion	Krutnik, "Film noir and the popularization of psychoanalysis"	
6	Oct. 21	1974	<i>Chinatown</i>	Polanski	Criterion	Cawelti, " <i>Chinatown</i> & Generic Trans-formation in Recent American Films"	
7	Oct. 28	1982	<i>Blade Runner</i>	Scott	Criterion	No reading	Sequence Analysis (in class)
-	Nov. 4	FALL READING WEEK					
8	Nov. 11	1995	<i>Devil in a Blue Dress</i>	Franklin	McIntyre Media	Bastiaans, "Detecting Difference in <i>Devil in a Blue Dress</i> : The Mulatta Figure, Noir, and the Cinematic Reification of Race"	
9	Nov. 18	1996	<i>Bound</i>	Wachowskis	McIntyre Media	Straayer, "Femme Fatale or Lesbian Femme: <i>Bound</i> in Sexual Différance"	Neo-noir Presentation
10	Nov. 25	2000	<i>Memento</i>	Nolan	Kanopy	Novak, "'It's Like Waking': Making Meaning in and of	

						Christopher Nolan's <i>Memento</i>	
11	Dec. 2	2005	<i>Brick</i>	Johnson	McIntyre Media	Vermeulen, "Teen Noir: The Suburb as Lived Space"	Essay
12	Dec. 9	2020	<i>I'm Your Woman</i>	Hart	Amazon Prime	No reading	