

# Crime Scenes: Investigating the Cinema and Its Cultures

GERMAN 190 / SCAND 190

Fall 2011

<http://courses.washington.edu/crmscns>

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## Course Information

### Meeting Times and Location

|               |                      |
|---------------|----------------------|
| Tu 11:30-1:20 | KNE 220 (Screening)  |
| W 11:30-12:20 | CDH 109 (Discussion) |
| Th 11:30-1:20 | KNE 220 (Lecture)    |
| F 11:30-12:20 | CDH 109 (Discussion) |

### Instructors

Prof. Eric Ames, Germanics ([eames@uw.edu](mailto:eames@uw.edu))

Prof. Andrew Nestingen, Scandinavian Studies ([akn@uw.edu](mailto:akn@uw.edu))

Gloria Man, Germanics ([luciaman@uw.edu](mailto:luciaman@uw.edu))

### Office Hours

Prof. Ames: Tu 9:30-11:00, Denny 337

Prof. Nestingen: Th. 1:30-3:00, Raitt 305P

Gloria Man: W 1:00-2:00, Denny 248

## Course Description

“How many bodies do you think we’ll find?” Acts of violence and mysterious motives have fascinated audiences for more than a century. This introduction-to-film course gives you a set of tools for investigating the cinema and its international cultures. Directors to be discussed include such notables as Fritz Lang, Carl Dreyer, Billy Wilder, and Aki Kaurismäki; films include *M*, *Minority Report*, and *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*.

The course is organized in terms of an investigation. There are methods for analyzing a film, just as there are methods which investigators follow in reconstructing a crime. As in a criminal investigation, film analysis requires certain techniques in identifying, collecting, analyzing, and interpreting evidence. This is also true of the scholarly process more generally, which likewise proceeds from inquiry to observation, to analysis, to presentation. The basic steps of criminal, cinematic, and scholarly investigation are also the steps that organize our course:

- Acquire a set of analytical tools
- Approach the scene in a particular way
  - Ask questions, make observations, take notes
  - Assemble a team, prioritize, make a preliminary evaluation
- Collect and evaluate evidence
- Interpret evidence
- Organize and present findings

When we analyze a film, we follow the same process--which is precisely what we are going to do in this course. Rather than focus on a particular genre (e.g., the detective film), this course casts a wide net, investigating “crime scenes” in the broadest sense, through a diversity of genres, cultures, and historical contexts.

### **Course Goals**

- To learn fundamental concepts of film and film analysis
- To develop an understanding of films as both cultural productions and historical artifacts
- To learn how to do a sequence analysis
- To introduce students to German and Scandinavian studies through the study of film
- To reflect on the practice of scholarly writing as an investigative process

### **Readings**

Each reading is to be completed in advance of the date indicated on the syllabus--before class. Please come prepared to discuss the reading in class. There are two required textbooks:

- Anton Kaes, *M* (2d ed.; London: BFI, 2008), available at the University Bookstore
- David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction* (9<sup>th</sup> ed.; New York: McGraw-Hill, 2010), available at the University Bookstore

In addition, there are PDF copies of other assigned articles and handouts on the Catalyst Workspace for the course (“Crime Scenes e-Res”). Access the Workspace at the following URL, which is also linked to the course webpage: <https://catalyst.uw.edu/workspace/crmsens/20507/123352>

### **Screenings**

- All screenings will begin at 11:30am sharp on Tuesdays. Arrive on time.
- Each film shown in class will also be streamed by Odegaard Media Center and available on its website. In addition, each film will be available at the Odegaard Media Center on 4-hour course reserve (library-use only) under SCAND 190 or GERMAN 190.
- We strongly recommend that you watch each film at least twice (even if that means multiple viewings of selected scenes).

**Course Website: <http://courses.washington.edu/crmscns>**

The course website contains all information about the course. The syllabus, glossary of film terms, selected lecture notes, film clips, links, and announcements are available there. We will use email for announcements, but it is your responsibility to check the website for updates.

**Grades**

The following scheme will be used to calculate your course grade:

- Participation = 10%
- Study Questions = 30%
- Mid-Term Exam = 30%
- Final Exam = 30%

**Requirements and Assignments**

**PARTICIPATION:** Participation is your responsibility, so you help decide your grade in this area. During the quarter, we will ask you to complete two on-line self-evaluations using these criteria for evaluation:

- How many times a week on average do I comment or ask a question in class?
- How many absences have I had so far this quarter?
- How often do I complete all the assigned readings?
- How many times on average do I check my cell phone during a single class meeting?

We will combine your self-assessment with our own evaluation of your performance to determine your participation grade, which is 10% of your course grade. As people participate in different ways, we trust you can help us understand how exactly you have (and have not) participated. Please note: If you award yourself a grade of 4.0 for participation, then we expect you to ask questions and make comments in class every week.

**STUDY QUESTIONS:** Weekly study questions are included in the schedule below. The study questions help prepare you to speak in class discussions, while reinforcing your comprehension of the readings and lectures. Please respond to all of the questions for each week with one full page of writing (typed, double-spaced, 12-point font). **Answers must be submitted either as a Word document (.doc), or a rich text file (.rtf), or a PDF (.pdf); no other file formats will be accepted.** Responses are due on Fridays by 11:30am in the Catalyst Drop Box:

<https://catalyst.uw.edu/collectit/dropbox/crmscns/16981>. The Drop Box is also linked on our Workspace: <https://catalyst.uw.edu/workspace/crmscns/20507/>

**Late submissions will not be accepted (the Drop-Box system automatically closes at 11:30am on the day the questions are due).** There are a total of **EIGHT** sets of study questions in the course schedule, but we require only **SIX** submissions (graded on a credit/no credit basis), which means that you get two freebies.

**MID-TERM EXAM:** The mid-term exam will cover the first half of the course: all films, readings, lectures, and discussions to date. It will have multiple-choice questions and an essay. The mid-term exam will take place **in class on Friday, October 28. You must bring an examination booklet (any size, any color) to the test.**

**FINAL EXAM:** The final exam will cover the entire course: all films, readings, lectures, and discussions. It will be structured in three parts: sequence analysis; multiple-choice questions; short-answer questions. The exam will be held in **KNE 220 from 4:30 to 6:20pm, Wednesday, 14 December 2011. You must bring an examination booklet to the test. And if you wish to complete the sequence analysis, then you must arrive on time.**

### COURSE POLICIES

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** The University of Washington is a community dedicated to learning. Students belonging to the community adhere to the ethical obligations outlined in the student conduct code. Plagiarism, cheating, and disruptive behavior in class violate the code, and harm everyone's learning. Any violations of the code in connection with the course will result in referral to the university administration for appropriate action. Cheating on the mid-term or final exam will result in an assignment of a 0.0 grade for the exam in which the cheating occurred, and possible referral to the University administration.

**GRADES GRIEVANCE POLICY:** If you disagree with the grade you have been awarded and wish to appeal your grade, you must follow the policy outlined below. We will make no exceptions to this policy, and reserve the right to refrain from considering your complaint if you do not follow the policy.

- a. Wait twenty-four hours from the time you receive the grade.
- b. Deliver a written statement explaining your complaint to both instructors: Prof. Eric Ames (Box 353130) and Prof. Andrew Nestingen (Box 353420). (No emails or telephone calls will be accepted.)
- c. Make an appointment with the instructors to discuss your written complaint in person (email is fine for making an appointment).
- d. We will indicate our final decision to you by email within twenty-four hours of our meeting.
- e. If you disagree with our final decision, please request a meeting with the instructors and either the Chair of the Scandinavian Department, Prof. Jan Sjavik, or the Chair of Germanics, Prof. Sabine Wilke.

## Course Schedule

### Week 1      Acts of Violence

|      |    |  |
|------|----|--|
| 9/28 | W  | Introduction to the course<br>Discussion: Watching silent film   |
| 9/29 | Th | Screening: <i>The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari</i> (Wiene, G, 1920; 72 min.)<br>Discussion: Narrative structure<br>Reading: <i>Film Art</i> , pp. 78-92 (narrative) |
| 9/30 | F  | Lecture: "How long do I have to live?"<br>Reading: <i>Film Art</i> , pp. 92-103 (narrative)<br><b>Study Question Due</b>                                       |

#### Study Question

1. Identify and describe 2 important features of the film's narrative structure, and explain what makes them important

### Week 2      Crime Scene Tools

|      |    |  |
|------|----|--|
| 10/4 | Tu | Screening: <i>Nightwatch</i> (Bornedal, DK, 1994; 101 min.)  |
| 10/5 | W  | Discussion: Breaking Down "Crime Scenes" in <i>Nightwatch</i><br>Reading: <i>Film Art</i> , pp. 167-186 (cinematography)   |
| 10/6 | Th | Lecture: Why Do "Crime Scenes" Fascinate?<br>Reading: <i>Film Art</i> , pp. 186-218 (cinematography)   |
| 10/7 | F  | Discussion: Observing and Taking Notes<br>Reading: "Glossary of Terms" (e-res); "How to Read a Film" (e-res);<br>Interview with Bornedal (e-res)<br><b>Study Questions Due</b> |

#### Study Questions

1. Define in your own words 3 elements of cinematography (camera work), such as:
  - a. Type of shot
  - b. Framing
  - c. Off-screen space
2. Identify 1 key example of camera work in *Nightwatch*, and explain its significance

### Week 3 Arriving at the Scene

|       |    |   |
|-------|----|---|
| 10/11 | Tu | Screening: <i>M</i> (Lang, G, 1931; 110 min.) 16 mm   |
| 10/12 | W  | Discussion: Asking questions, observing, and constructing the scene<br>Reading: Kaes, <i>M</i> , pp. 7-37 |
| 10/13 | Th | Lecture: The Sound of Crime<br>Reading: <i>Film Art</i> , pp. 269-298 (sound)                             |
| 10/14 | F  | Discussion: Writing about film<br>Reading: Kaes, <i>M</i> , pp. 38-76<br><b>Study Questions Due</b>       |

#### Study Questions

1. Identify 2 important uses of sound in this film, and explain what makes them important.
2. How does the film imagine and represent the city?

### Week 4 Arriving at the Scene Again

|       |    |   |
|-------|----|---|
| 10/18 | Tu | Screening: <i>Vampyr</i> (Dreyer, F/G, 1931; 75 min.)   |
| 10/19 | W  | Activity: Assembling a team, prioritizing, preliminary evaluation<br>Reading: <i>Film Art</i> , pp. 223-249 (editing)         |
| 10/20 | Th | Lecture: Dreyer's Method<br>Reading: <i>Film Art</i> , pp. 254-265 (editing)  |
| 10/21 | F  | Discussion: Observing the Face<br>Reading: Balázs, "The Close-Up" and "The Face of Man" (e-res)<br><b>Study Questions Due</b> |

#### Study Questions

1. Define in your own words the "spatial relations" that are part of film editing.
2. How does "discontinuity editing" function in *Vampyr*?

**Week 5 Collecting and Evaluating Evidence**

|       |    |   |
|-------|----|---|
| 10/25 | Tu | Screening: <i>Double Indemnity</i> (Wilder, US, 1944; 107 min.)   |
| 10/26 | W  | Discussion: How does one collect evidence? What does it matter?<br>Reading: Schrader, “Notes on Film Noir” (e-res); Place, “Women in Film Noir” (e-res) |
| 10/27 | Th | Lecture: Perspectives on “the perfect murder”<br>Reading: <i>Film Art</i> , pp. 118-163 (mise-en-scene)   |
| 10/28 | F  | <b>Mid-Term Exam</b>  |

**Week 6 Questioning Evidence**

|      |    |   |
|------|----|---|
| 11/1 | Tu | Screening: <i>Minority Report</i> (Spielberg, US, 2002; 145 min.) *Note: Because this film runs longer than the class period, you’ll need to watch the last 35 minutes of this widely available film on your own. |
| 11/2 | W  | Discussion: What Constitutes Evidence?  |
| 11/3 | Th | Lecture: The Instability of Evidence  |
| 11/4 | F  | Discussion: Creating the Modern Criminal<br>Reading: Foucault, excerpt from <i>Discipline and Punish</i> (e-res)<br><b>Study Questions Due</b>  |

Study Questions

1. How are images “deceptive” in this film? Discuss 2 specific examples.
2. What is the purpose of imprisonment, according to Foucault?

**Week 7 Presenting Evidence**

|       |    |   |
|-------|----|---|
| 11/8  | Tu | Screening: <i>The Nasty Girl</i> (Verhoeven, G, 1990; 94 min.)                            |
| 11/9  | W  | Discussion: “Coming to terms with the past”<br>Reading: Kaes, “Images of History” (e-res) |
| 11/10 | Th | Lecture: German Cinema as Crime Scene<br>Reading: <i>Film Art</i> , pp. 312-326 (style)   |
| 11/11 | F  | Holiday<br><b>Study Questions Due</b>   |

Study Questions

1. Identify 2 ways in which film imitates a “documentary” style.
2. Then, explain why it does so, what the larger purpose is.

**Week 8 Case Study #1: Late Capitalism**

|       |    |   |
|-------|----|---|
| 11/15 | Tu | Screening: <i>Jerichow</i> (Petzold, G, 2008; 96 min.)  |
| 11/16 | W  | Discussion: Identity and Difference<br>Reading: Cain, "Postman Always Rings Twice," pp. 1-58 (e-res)  |
| 11/17 | Th | Lecture: "Play It Again, Sam": Repetitions, Remakes, and Revisions<br>Reading: Cain, "Postman Always Rings Twice," pp. 59-106 (e-res)                 |
| 11/18 | F  | Discussion: Christian Petzold and the "Berlin School" of Filmmaking<br>Reading: Abel, "Cinema of Identification"(e-res)<br><b>Study Questions Due</b> |

Study Questions

1. Identify and discuss 2 important differences between Cain's story and Petzold's film
2. How does the film treat (i.e., represent) the theme of sexual desire? Illustrate your point by discussing a specific example from the film.

**Week 9 Case Study #2: Victims' Rights**

|       |    |   |
|-------|----|---|
| 11/22 | Tu | Screening: <i>The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo</i> (Oplev, S, 2009; 152 min.)<br>Reading: Joan Acocella, "Man of Mystery" (website link) |
| 11/23 | W  | Finish screening: <i>The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo</i> (Oplev, S, 2009; 152 min.)   |
| 11/24 | Th | Thanksgiving Holiday – No Class   |
| 11/25 | F  | Thanksgiving Holiday – No Class   |



**Week 10 Case Study #2: Victims' Rights (cont'd)**

|       |    |  |
|-------|----|--|
| 11/29 | Tu | Lecture: Men Who Hate Women  |
| 11/30 | W  | Discussion: Melodramatic Justice<br>Reading: Gledhill, "Melodrama and Cultural Disorder" (e-res) |
| 12/1  | Th | Discussion: Lisbeth Salander and the Femme Fatale (One-Hour Meeting)                             |
| 12/2  | F  | Sequence analysis workshop<br><b>Study Questions Due</b>   |

Study Questions

1. Give an example of how Lizbeth Salander is formally constructed as a character in the film. (Lighting, editing, or composition or another formal feature will be part of your response.)
2. Is Lizbeth Salander an "innocent victim" in the terms of Gledhill's article? Analyze briefly two pieces of cinematic evidence to support your view.

**Week 11 Closing Statements**

|      |    |  |
|------|----|--|
| 12/6 | Tu | Screening: <i>The Man Without a Past</i> (Kaurismäki, SF, 2003; 97 min.)                   |
| 12/7 | W  | Discussion: How Do We Respond to Crime?<br>Reading: Sekula, excerpt from <i>Fish Story</i> |
| 12/8 | Th | Lecture: Crime and Punishment  |
| 12/9 | F  | Summary and review   |

**Final Exam: 4:30-6:20 pm Wednesday 14 December 2011 in KNE 220**