W.S. 302* - 3 Genre Bending: Women in Crime Fiction       Nora Kelly

Crime fiction has been popular throughout the twentieth century. It is a literary form that presents feminist writers with serious difficulties, yet many choose it, and they are widely read. This course will consider the question: what is a feminist crime novel? We will examine the traditions and conventions of crime fiction and analyze the work of selected women writers against this background. Images of women, attitudes to crime and authority, and the role of the hero will be themes central to our enquiry.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Dorothy Sayers Gaudy Night
Josephine Tey Miss Pym Disposes
P.D. James An Unsuitable Job For A Woman
Sara Paretsky Bitter Medicine
Barbara Wilson Murder in the Collective
Barbara Neely Blanch on the Lam

One of the following pieces of “classic” crime fiction:

Dashiell Hammett Red Harvest, The Maltese Falcon
Raymond Chandler The Big Sleep, Farewell My Lovely
Mickey Spillane I, the Jury, Kiss Me Deadly

Two Sherlock Holmes short stories and critical articles selected from Glenwood Irons’ Gender, Language and Myth, Kathleen Klein’s The Woman Detective: Gender and Genre, and Sally Munt’s Murder By the Book?; these will be available as course packs or on reserve in the Belzberg Library.

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION:

20% Written report (5 pgs.) on assigned reading; due class #4 (2nd week)
20% Oral report (10 min) on assigned and additional reading;
   due classes #4 & #10 (weeks 2 & 5)
20% Participation in class discussion
40% Final Essay (15 pgs.); due in last class

* Students may apply to the English Department to obtain 3 upper division credits toward their upper division English requirements.
Students may apply to the Liberal Arts Certificate Program to obtain 3 upper division credits toward a Certificate in Liberal Arts