MDST 4660 Professor William G. Little

Spring 2017 Wilson Hall 204 454 New Cabell Hall

Nau 142 Office Hours: F 1-3 and by appointment

MW 2:00-3:15 e-mail: [wgl2h@virginia.edu](mailto:wgl2h@virginia.edu)

**Watching The Detectives**

This seminar mounts an investigation into the origins and legacy of a distinctive American art form: the portrayal of the private eye. To facilitate this inquiry, the course will focus on the relationship between the work of detection and the dynamics of modern industrial and post-industrial life. Through examination of a novel and multiple films, students will consider how the portrait of the detective dramatizes concerns about class, race, gender, urbanization, the rationalization of experience, the disappearance of “real” life, the blurring of boundaries between bodies and machines, the collapse of distinction between private life and public life. Clues to the principles that inform the detective’s quest for truth and justice will be gathered by analyzing the relationship of detective work to such modern developments as photography, psychoanalysis, statistical analysis, and the social science of making cases. There will also be substantial theoretical consideration given to how the work of the private eye compares to the authority of the “eye” of the film camera and to the gaze of the film spectator.

**Required Texts (books available at UVA Bookstore):**

Raymond Chandler, *The Big Sleep*

All other readings and course materials will be posted online on the Instructional Toolkit website in PDF format. Readings must be printed and brought to class.

**Course Films (Available as Links and on Reserve):**

John Huston, *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) 101 min

Howard Hawks, *The Big Sleep* (1946) 114 min

Roman Polanski, *Chinatown* (1974) 130 min

Francis Ford Coppola, *The Conversation* (1974) 113 min

Ridley Scott, *Blade Runner* (1982) 114 min

Kathryn Bigelow, *Blue Steel* (1990) 102 min

Christopher Nolan, *Memento* (2000) 116 min

David Fincher, *Zodiac* (2007) 156 min

Carl Franklin, *Devil in a Blue Dress* (1995) 102 min

David Lynch, *Mulholland Drive* (2001) 147 min

**Film Terminology:**

See file in Collab Resources titled “Glossary of Film Terms”

**Graded Requirements:**

Response Papers (2 @ 10 points each) (3-4 pages) 20 points

Participation 10 points

Essay #1 (5-8 pages) 30 points

Final Essay (9-12 pages) 40 points

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TOTAL 100 points

**Attendance:**

Attendance is mandatory. Students must inform me in advance of an intended absence. More than two absences will lower your grade and may be ground for failure.

**Participation:**

Participation is a crucial component of this course. Without your participation, the course cannot thrive. A successful participant will be one who makes insightful comments about the text at hand, and one who responds thoughtfully to what his/her peers have to say. I consider this kind of participation to be “active.” Let me be clear that “active” does translate simply into contributions made in a regular (i. e., continual or uninterrupted) fashion. One can be a successful, “active” participant by offering well-chosen, well-placed contributions. Your participation can raise or lower your grade as much as half a grade.

**Preparation/Commitment:**

Below are basic expectations I have with respect to your commitment to the course:

* That you will budget your time so as to complete all of the assigned reading on time
* That you will view all the films for the course at least once
* That you will bring the assigned text to class each period and make specific, productive use of it when engaging in discussion
* That your papers will be typed (double-spaced)
* That you will listen carefully to, and treat with respect, the contributions of others
* That you will feel free to approach me, both inside and outside of class, with questions, insights, concerns, speculations

**NOTE**: no cell phones or laptops are allowed in class.