MDST 3660 Professor William G. Little

Spring 2014 Wilson Hall 242 454 New Cabell Hall

Nau Hall 341 Office Hours: W 1-3 and by appointment

Tuesday & Thursday 11:00-12:15 e-mail: 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 pursue 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 novels, films, and television shows, 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.

After initial study of “classic” conceptions of the detective from the 1930s and 1940s—Dashiell Hammett’s *The Maltese Falcon* [book and film]; Raymond Chandler’s *The Big Sleep* [book and film]—students will consider how this figure has been revived and revised over time.

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

Dashiell Hammett, *The Maltese Falcon*

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 (on reserve in Robertson Media Center):**

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

Jon Amiel, *The Singing Detective* (1986) 415 min

David Simon, *The Wire*, Season 1 (2002)

**Instructions for accessing the list of films on reserve and their call numbers**:

1. Go to the UVA library homepage ([www.lib.virginia.edu](http://www.lib.virginia.edu))

2. Click on “Services” on upper right-hand side of page

3. Click “Search Course Reserves”

Writing about film and film terms (a helpful guide):

<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~writing/materials/student/humanities/film.shtml#a>

**film/tv databases**:

[www.imdb.com/](http://www.imdb.com/)

[www.allmovie.com/](http://www.allmovie.com/)

**Graded Requirements:**

Response Papers/Participation 35 points

Essay #1 (5-7 pages) 25 point

Final Essay (8-10 pages) 40 points

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TOTAL 100 points