



**Gifted LearningLinks Program  
Whodunnit? American Society through  
Crime Fiction**

**Instructor name: Joy Nehr  
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**Course Title:**

*Whodunnit? American Society through Crime Fiction*

**Session Date:**

*Fall, 2010 (rolling enrollment)*

**Course Description:**

Suspects, detectives, crimes and motives – it's easy to see how crime fiction captures our attention. This course uses literary criteria to interpret this popular genre as students gain insight into American society. Students read from a selection of crime fiction and related articles to explore this genre. Discover the elements that connect these great mysteries!

**Outcomes:** Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

- a. *Be able to analyze crime fiction using a variety of literary techniques.*
- b. *Trace the history of crime fiction.*
- c. *Discuss how crime fiction has changed and evolved over time.*

**Resources and Materials:**

Students will be required to read 3 novels from the following options:

- Any of the Sir Arthur Conan Doyle novels about Sherlock Holmes (you may pick one which appeals to you- please do not select something you have already read previously).
- Any of Agatha Christie's novels.
- *The Westing Game* by Ellen Raskin (ASIN B000R0VP7A)
- Any of the Nancy Drew and/or Hardy Boys books.
- *The Adventures of Feluda* by Satyajit Ray (This is a series similar to Nancy Drew. Students may select any of the books in the series.)
- *The Attack of the Mutant* by R.L. Stine (ISBN 043966215X)
- *Emil and the Detectives* by Erich Kastner (158567865)
- *The Famous Five* by Enid Blyton (This is a series similar to Nancy Drew. Students may select any of the books in this series.)
- *The Maltese Falcon* by Dashiell Hammett (ISBN 0679722645)

**Note:** *While a staff member (which includes but is not limited to instructors, teaching assistants, residential staff, office staff) may use or refer students to third-party web sites for instructional purposes, s/he is required to review thoroughly any such web sites for inappropriate content before referencing them. This includes clicking on all links contained in any such web site, reviewing the materials contained on every page within*

a web site, and ensuring that the web site does not provide links to other inappropriate web sites. If there is any doubt about whether something is appropriate, a staff member is instructed to err on the side of caution and not use the web site or check with a CTD supervisor. If a referenced third-party web site is later determined to contain inappropriate content, the staff member may be subject to discipline.

**Schedule:**

<b>Whodunnit? American Society through Crime Fiction</b>				
	<b>Topic/Focus</b>	<b>Activities &amp; Reading Assignments</b>	<b>What do I need to post to the Discussion Board?</b>	<b>What do I need to turn in?</b>
<b>Week 1</b>	Orientation to Online Learning  Icebreaker	Introduction and Course Expectations	Icebreaker  What is your definition of crime fiction? What crime fiction have you read or seen (tv shows or movies)?	Nothing
<b>Week 2</b>	Definition	What is crime fiction?  The History of Crime Fiction  Characteristics of Crime Fiction	Why do you think people have been fascinated with crime fiction over the years?  What do you think was the primary reason for the rise in this new genre?	Crime Fiction Checklist
<b>Weeks 3 and 4</b>	The Victorians	Vidocq Edgar Allan Poe Wilkie Collins Anna Katherine Green	Why do you think crime fiction became popular so quickly and has remained one of the more popular genres over the years?  Which story or author did you enjoy the most? Why?	Add to your graphic organizer Or Venn Diagram Or Comic Strip
<b>Weeks 5 and 6</b>	Holmes	Sir Arthur Conan Doyle  Sherlock Holmes	What do you think the primary attraction to Holmes stories is to modern readers?  Will Holmes' popular continue? Explain.	Add to your graphic organizer Or Story in Pictures Or Original Holmes mystery

<b>Weeks 7 and 8</b>	The Golden Age	The Golden Age Defined  10 Commandments of Detective Fiction  Agatha Christie Dorothy L. Sayers	Why is this period of crime fiction known as the "Golden Age" of this genre?  How are the Golden Age works different from and similar to those we've already looked at?  What do you think accounts for the change in the genre?	Add to your graphic organizer Or Essay Or 10 Commandments Quiz
<b>Weeks 9 and 10</b>	Hard-Boiled Fiction	Hard-boiled Fiction  Dashiell Hammett Raymond Chandler Mickey Spillane	What are some of the major changes in crime fiction in the sub-genre of hard-boiled?  Why did this genre differ so dramatically from previous versions?	Nothing
<b>Weeks 11 and 12</b>	Fun Break	Radio Shows  Parody and Spoof  A Few Authors  Cartoons TV Shows Movies	Nothing	Add to your graphic organizer Or Spoof Comparison Or Slideshow
<b>Weeks 13 and 14</b>	Police Procedural	The Cop Gets His Say  Comparison/Contrast  Authors  TV Shows Movies	What do you see as the primary differences between the police procedural and the previous versions of crime fiction we've been studying?	Add to your graphic organizer Or Venn Diagram Or Re-telling Or Novel Summary
<b>Weeks 15 and 16</b>	Modern Mysteries	Modern Crime Writing  What does the future hold for crime fiction?  A couple of authors...  Graphic Novels and Manga  Movies	Internet surfing results.  Will the crime fiction genre be long-lasting or will its appeal end?	Add to your graphic organizer
<b>Weeks 17 and 18</b>	Final Project Reflection	Time to work on final projects	Share your final projects and provide each other with feedback and suggestions	Formal essay Or Slideshow Or Original story Or TV Show

## Student Evaluation and Grading Policies for Credit Courses Only:

### a. CTD Grading scale

<b>A+</b> 97-100	<b>B+</b> 87-89	<b>C+</b> 77-79	<b>D+</b> 67-69	<b>F</b> Below 60
<b>A</b> 93-96	<b>B</b> 83-86	<b>C</b> 73-76	<b>D</b> 63-66	
<b>A-</b> 90-92	<b>B-</b> 80-82	<b>C-</b> 70-72	<b>D-</b> 60-62	

### b. Breakdown of final grade

- Projects: 70%
- Discussions/Participation: 30%

### Instructor Biography:

*Joy Nehr has been a classroom teacher for more than 15 years and has taught in numerous states and overseas. During the course of this time, she has taught English, Language Arts, Journalism, Social Studies, and Drama. She has been the primary sponsor for student groups such as Student Council, Destination Imagination, Odyssey of the Mind, Forensics, and even a Fitness Club. In all of the schools in which she has taught she has always played a vital leadership role as chairperson of numerous committees such as the School Improvement Committee, Building Leadership Team, Affective Education, and is frequently served to serve as a stand-in administrator.*

*Mrs. Nehr holds a Bachelor's degree in English Literature from the University of South Carolina and a Master's of Science in Educational Professional Development from the University of Wisconsin-Stout. She has held certifications in North Carolina, Utah, Texas, Arizona, and the Department of Defense Dependent Schools. She has been working for Northwestern University's CTD since 2008.*