

English

Mystery, Magic, and Mayhem--From Sherlock Holmes to Harry Potter ~ Annette Sisson

UD (Upper Division 300-400)/G (Graduate 500 and above)

3 credit hours

While doing our own "scavenger hunt" of relevant sites, we will read and discuss Wilkie Collins' *THE MOONSTONE*, Arthur Conan Doyle's *THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES* and a few Sherlock Holmes short stories, Robert Louis Stevenson's *DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE*, Agatha Christie's stories including Poirot and Mrs. Marple as well as the play *MOUSETRAP*, and selected Harry Potter books. Students will learn about the development of the detective/mystery novel, with explicit connections made to novels by Charles Dickens, and will consider not only how the rational and irrational--the scientific and supernatural--are mutually dependent, but also what cultural interests and social exigencies drive the public's obsession with these "super-human," heroic characters. We will go see the production of Christie's *MOUSETRAP* in West End, will travel to Oxford to see the "Great Hall" and to Alnwick Castle to see other filming sites of the early *HARRY POTTER* films. I would also like to require--or at least strongly recommend, if requiring is not acceptable--that all of my students go on the Edinburgh weekend trip, so we can see relevant sites (museums, homes, University of Edinburgh, places associated with the writing)--sites particularly relevant to Stevenson, Doyle, and Rowling. My overarching goal is for students to come to understand that these novels, though "popular," were written by writers that were incisive commentators on their culture and who thereby offered their readers socially relevant works of literature that invited them to inquire into and reflect on the values, ideals, and shortcomings of their societies. In short, then, these "popular" writers should be taken seriously--perhaps even more seriously because their social commentaries were read and therefore likely "heard" by a much larger segment of the reading public than some literature that was deemed more "serious" at the time (and since). My goals for the course include: **Writing skills (they will write and revise papers) **Presentation skills (they will present their work to the class) **Reading skills (they will read and respond to literature) **Discussion skills (they will be engaged in discussions of the literature) **Audience/viewing/listening skills (we will see at least one play, will attend museums and sites that will require them to engage seriously in the experience) **An enlarged understanding of English and Scottish history, culture, and society, as evidenced by these works of literature and these authors, who explored the relationship between the rational and irrational as it was/is understood by their public and interpreted within their culture **An opportunity to connect their hands-on experiences in England and Scotland with their studies.

Can the course be taken to fulfill major and minor requirements? YES

Can the course be taken to fulfill general elective credits? YES

Are there prerequisites for this course?

Students should have successfully completed one semester of college-level Freshman Composition or its equivalent.

Assessment Methods:

8 Class Journal Responses about the Readings: 30%

Personal Journal about "Scavenger Hunt" and Travels/Sites: 30%

Paper, approximately 7-8 pages, researched (using 5-7 sources): 20%**

10-12 minute Presentation of Paper (will serve as an introduction to an author and his/her set of texts): 10%**

Final Exam Essay: 10%

**This paper will be researched, written, and carefully revised before the trip; the presentation will also be planned prior to the trip.

If I have graduate students in the course, I will expect their papers to be longer (8-12 pages) and to use more sources (8-12) than those of the undergraduate students. I will also expect their presentation to be 15-20 minutes in length. In addition, I will expect them to write more in their "personal journal" and may ask them to visit more "sites/destinations" in their "scavenger hunt."

I will not make a distinction between the students taking the course for "major" credit and those taking it for Humanities credit in their Gen. Ed. program; either way, it will be an "upper-division" class.