

Political Science 405.090
Capstone: Murder
W: 4-645 pm

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Course Description: This course will explore a variety of themes, theories, explanations, and predictions about murder. Both perpetrators and victims will be studied through fiction, philosophy, politics, history, theatre, and film. This course has no lab co-requisite; this course is not a practicum.

Texts to be purchased:

L. Katz. Bad Acts and Guilty Minds. 1987. University of Chicago Press.
H.L. Pohlman. The Whole Truth? 1999. University of Massachusetts Press.
A. Sarat. When the State Kills. Rev. Ed. Princeton University Press.
S. Weisenthal. The Sunflower. Rev. Edition. Schocken.
E. Wiesel. Night. Bantam.

There may be additional readings assigned on Electronic Reserve.

Requirements.

1. Assignments. There will be three pieces of written work for the course, and, in addition, the final exam. No late papers will be accepted for excuses including but not limited to marriages, divorces, births, deaths, doctors' appointments, and car wrecks. The written assignments must be typed. No electronic submissions. Further details will be forthcoming. The final exam essay is to be written during the regularly scheduled final exam period. **In addition:** The professor reserves the right to issue spontaneously any additional course related assignment to any student(s) or to the entire class whenever circumstances dictate.

On all work, identify yourselves by student number only (last five digits of College of Charleston student number).

2. Attendance: roll call will be taken daily and accumulate toward 10% of the course grade. In the past, absences have led to serious and harmful effects. Students who are late to class (defined as later than the instructor's introductory commentary), for excuses including but not limited to marriages, divorces, births, deaths, doctors' appointments, and car wrecks, will not be permitted to sign the roll call sheet. Students who must leave early for excuses including but not limited to marriages, divorces, births, deaths, doctors' appointments, and car wrecks will not be permitted to sign the roll call sheet. Students who do not plan to attend class faithfully and complete the course work should drop the course.

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3. Grading policy: There is no class curve. Grades are based on numeric scores and attendance, computed by weighted average for the term: all scores are based on the numeric possibility of 100 points:

A = 93+

A-=90-92.9

B+=87.5-89.9

B =83-87.4

B-=80-82.9

C+=77.5-79.9

C =73-77.4

C-=70-72.9

D+=67.5-69.9

D =63-67.4

D-=60-62.9

4. Alternate meeting site: If for any reason we are locked out of our normal classroom or building, we will rendezvous at the **Randolph Hall fountain** and meet there or elsewhere.

5. Do not call the David Mann who lives East of the Cooper. We are not the same person. Contact me during regular office hours or business hours via e-mail, snail mail, voice mail, written messages left in my department mailbox at 114 Wentworth 2nd floor # 201, or by appointment. Messages left on my office door might not be seen. Papers or messages left under my door may be ignored.

6. All hand-held electronic devices, cell phones, pagers, and alarms shall be turned to silent or vibrate during all class periods. Those who violate this rule may be asked to leave and attendance for that date deducted.

7. Opening commentary: Consider the readings for this course to be good to great academic and/or literary scholarship. Two of your books are social science compendia on their topics (Katz and Sarat); another is a case study of a murder and trial (Pohlman). The “W”s are holocaust survival stories; you may treat them as fact or fiction—as a deceased colleague of mine once said, “it doesn’t matter.” Some of this course requires us to think about how the story is told. For instance, one difference between literature and film is the way the story is told; please don’t compare media, however. One maxim on film: if legend differs from the facts, print the legend.

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Course Outline, Assignments, and Reading Schedule

1. The Death Penalty

January 9th: Introduction: Justifications for Punishment; Justification Defenses

"ETV Frontline: Sister Helen Prejean"

January 16th: Discussion of Sarat, Chs. 1-4

"Just Cause"

January 23rd: Continuing discussion of Sarat, 5-7

"Paths of Glory"

Assignment # 1 issued

January 30th: Final assessment of death penalty arguments: New Jersey and Illinois

"In Cold Blood"

2. The Psychotics

February 6th: Katz, Chs. 1-4

"M"

February 13th: Katz, Ch. 5

"Psycho"

February 20th: no new readings at this time

Assignment # 1 due

"Instinct"

February 27th: no new readings at this time

"Taxi Driver"

Proposals for Research Assignment Due

3. The Assassins (readings to be announced)

March 12th:

"Julius Caesar"

Proposals for Research Assignment returned with comment/approval

March 19th:

"Z"

March 26th:

"Munich"

4. Genocide

April 2nd: Weisel

"The Garden of the Finzi-Contini"

April 9th: Wiesenthal

"The Shop on Main Street"

Assignment # 3 Announced

April 16th: Wiesenthal

"Sophie's Choice"

Assignment # 3 Due

April 23rd: **Research Assignment Due (no class scheduled)**

Final Exam as scheduled by the College

Possible Research Assignment project information: More details will follow. Generally, students are to make a proposal for a project topic (Due February 27th) and have the proposal formally approved (by March 12th). The projects will require research--these are not to be "opinion" pieces. Below are some possible examples that might receive approval:

A. Film-Related (including television) Note: there are lots of law review articles and articles from journals about "popular culture" on "law and literature/film". The objective is to link readings to film study. A minimum of two films or other video genre; a minimum of five refereed publications (Katz and Sarat count as one each, if you so choose).

- Murder in Science Fiction (Outland, Star Trek/progeny, Earth--Final Conflict, Blade Runner, Minority Report)
- Murder in Documentaries (Thin Blue Line, Trial of Adolph Eichmann, Eyes on the Prize, The Onion Field)
- Organized Crime (Scarface [2 versions], Wiseguy, On the Waterfront, Goodfellas)
- Murder and Race (Mississippi Burning, A Time to Kill, Malcolm X, Hurricane, Zoot Suit, Amistad)
- Native Americans (Drums Along the Mohawk, Dances with Wolves, Broken Arrow, Smoke Signals)
- Murder Mystery Genre (Call Northside 777, Clue, Domestic Disturbance, The Maltese Falcon, Lady in the Lake)
- Film Noir Genre (The Thin Man, Fury, Anatomy of a Murder)
- Foreign Films (Witness for the Prosecution, The Last Wave, Qiu Ju, In the Name of the Father)
- Conspiracies (JFK, The X-Files, Missing)
- Metaphors (The Crucible, High Noon, The Scarlet Letter, Miracle on 34th Street, Billy Budd)
- Military Justice (Breaker Morant, A Few Good Men, JAG, A Soldier's Story)
- Wyatt Earp in films (My Darling Clementine, Gunfight at the O.K. Corral, Warlock, Tombstone)
- Comedy (Fargo, My Cousin Vinny, Clue, The Fortune Cookie)

B. Case-Law Related

- Documentary analysis of any Supreme Court death penalty case
- Insanity Defenses

C. Assassinations

- biographical accounts of perpetrators
- biographical accounts of victims

Holocaust Studies: --genocides other than WW II Europe

D.