

## Course Outline

**COURSE:** CRCJ 4001A True Crime Media

**TERM:** Fall 2023

**PREREQUISITES:** CRCJ 1000, CRCJ 2100, and 4th year standing

**CLASS:** **Day & Time:** Monday, 8:35am to 11:25am

**Room:** Please check with Carleton Central for current room location.

**INSTRUCTOR:** Meg D.  
**(CONTRACT)** Lonergan

**Office:** Contract Instructor Office in Criminology,  
17<sup>th</sup> Floor Dunton Tower

**Office Hours:** Mondays from 1-2:30pm or by appointment

**Email:** [Megan.lonergan@carleton.ca](mailto:Megan.lonergan@carleton.ca)

*You must use your Carleton email address in all correspondence with the instructor.*

**Link to Brightspace page:** <https://brightspace.carleton.ca/d2l/home/208275>

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### Acknowledgement & Affirmation

#### **ANISHNABE**

Ni manàdjyànànìg Màmìwinìni Anishinàbeg, ogog kà nàgadawàbandadjìg iyo akì eko weshkad. Ako nongom ega wìkàd kì mìgiwewàdj.

Ni manàdjyànànìg kakina Anishinàbeg ondaje kaye ogog kakina eniyagìzìdjìg enìgokamìgàg Kanadàng eji ondàpinangìg endàwàdjìn Odàwàng.

Nìnisidawinawànànìg kenawendamòdjìg kije kikenìndamàwin; weshkinìgidjìg kaye kejeyàdìzìdjìg. Nìgìjewenìnmànànìg ogog kà nìgànì sòngìdeyedjìg; weshkad, nongom; kaye àyànìkàdj.

#### **ENGLISH**

We pay respect to the Algonquin people, who are the traditional guardians of this land. We acknowledge their longstanding relationship with this territory, which remains unceded.

We pay respect to all Indigenous people in this region, from all nations across Canada, who call Ottawa home.

We acknowledge the traditional knowledge keepers, both young and old. And we honour their courageous leaders: past, present, future.

## **Course Description**

This is a 4<sup>th</sup> year seminar course on the topic of true crime media and its relationship to criminology.

This course contains weekly discussions of violence, sexual abuse, incest, exploitation, victimization, and crime. Students interested in a fourth-year seminar on the intersections of culture and crime, but with a less intense focus on content that some people may find difficult or upsetting, may prefer to enroll in CRCJ 4002 Cultural Criminology with me in the winter term.

## **Learning Outcomes**

Students will critically engage with true crime media as a genre and its relationship to criminology, public policy, and criminal justice. Assignments will aid students in effective readings strategies, time management, and applying their thoughts and analysis in both creative and academic ways. Students will further develop their research and writing skills. True Crime Media is an opportunity for students to critically reflect on the materials that inform most of the population's views on criminal justice subjects, helps them bridge their knowledge as criminologists, and prepares them to contribute to the broader social discourse from this position of expertise.

## **Assignments**

All assignments in this course are evaluated based on demonstrated engagement and knowledge of the course materials, including required readings, lectures, and seminar discussions. I can only evaluate and grade you based on what you show me you know or show me that you are trying to understand and/or make connections with; you demonstrate this understanding and engagement through your written and other course assignments, as well as in seminar discussion.

***Please do make use of my office hours, schedule an appointment with me, or email me with any questions.*** I am here to help you understand the course concepts, themes, and ideas, and be successful in the course.

*You do not start with 100% and receive deductions, but rather you start at 0% and earn marks.*

## Evaluation Overview

- # **Attendance and seminar participation: 15%**
  - o Cumulative
- # **Weekly reading reflections and discussion questions: 25%**
  - o Due each Sunday by 9pm the night before the seminar for which they are assigned.
    - Cumulative
- # **Op-ed assignment: 10%**
  - September 25<sup>th</sup> before midnight
- # **Midterm assignment: 20%**
  - October 30<sup>th</sup> before midnight
- # **Final assignment: 30%**
  - Part I: Thesis proposal November 13<sup>th</sup>
  - Part II: Presentation (video or podcast) to be presented during the last week of the course.

### **Attendance and active participation in seminar discussions: 15%**

- o Attendance is showing up.
- o Active participation is asking or answering questions, making connections between different content both from within the course, other courses, popular culture, and current events, etc.
- o Because I post my slides, I do encourage students to take notes the old-fashioned way with pen and notebook, as this does help many people avoid distraction and help the information sink in.
- o Oftentimes asking a question is even more valuable than knowing a correct answer, as this demonstrates to me that you're engaging with the materials, being an advocate for your own learning, and in turn benefiting your peers who may not be comfortable asking the same question.

### **Weekly reading reflections and discussion questions: 25%**

- o No extensions are available for this component.
- o Weekly submissions should be approximate 1 page in length total (encompassing all the required readings, not per each reading), double spaced, 1-inch margins, 12-point, Times New Roman Font

Submissions should include a summary of the thesis; personal reflection about the article; and 1 or more discussion questions per reading; proper references for each reading discussed and in-text citations where appropriate. Please see assignment guidelines in Brightspace folder for more details on discussion questions

### **Op-Ed Assignment: 10%**

- o 800-1,000 words
- o Details and rubric on Brightspace

### **Midterm Assignment: 20%**

#### **A Case Study in Criminology, True Crime, and Ethics**

- o Students will apply the course concepts and content learned so far.
- o Critical comparison of Jason Moss and Jeffrey Kottler's best-selling non-fiction

true crime book *The Last Victim: A true-life journey into the mind of the serial killer* (1999) and the 2010 film adaptation *Dear Mr. Gacy*.

- Students will discuss the different mediums of true crime representation for the same case; the ethics of both texts; and their broader relationship to the course themes and criminological issues in general.
- Specific details and rubric are available on Brightspace.

### **Final Assignment: 30%**

- Part I: Proposal November 13<sup>th</sup>
- Part II: Presentation (video or podcast) to be presented during the last week of the course.
- You must be present in class for both presentation days, regardless of which day you are presenting.
- Further details and rubrics are available on Brightspace.

### **Course Texts**

**All required readings are available on Brightspace.**

Additional sources should be found using the university library database, Google Scholar, and the campus and/or city libraries.

The book for the midterm assignment is available via ARES, a PDF is available under the assignments tab, and is also widely available at all major booksellers if you would prefer to get a physical copy of the text:

- Moss, Jason., and Kottler, Jeffrey. (1999). *The last victim: A true-life journey into the mind of the serial killer*. NY: Hachette Book Group.<sup>1</sup>

The following are recommended texts. Both books are useful and accessible texts to improve the quality and clarity and quality of your writing:

- Klineborg, Verlyn. (2012). *Several short sentences about writing*. New York: Vintage.
- Strunk, William., and White, E.B. ([1918] 1959). *The elements of style*. London: Macmillan.

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<sup>1</sup> I have also requested Black Squirrel Books order a few copies in for the course as well and will update the class when those become available.

## Course Calendar

### **Week 1: September 11<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Introduction**

Haggerty, Kevin D. (2009). Modern serial killers. *Crime Media Culture*, 5(2), 168-187.

Ingebretsen, Edward J. (1998). The monster in the home: True crime and the traffic in body parts. *Journal of American Culture*, 21(1), 27-34.

Schechter, Harold. (2012). Our long-standing obsession with true crime. *Creative Nonfiction*, 45, 6-8.

### **Week 2: September 18<sup>th</sup>**

#### **History**

Miranda, Michelle. (2017). Reasoning through madness: The detective in gothic crime fiction. *Palgrave Communications*, 3, 1-11.

Risinger, D. Michael., Denbeaux, Mark P., and Saks, Michael J. (1989). Exorcism of ignorance as a proxy for rational knowledge: The lessons of handwriting identification 'expertise.' *University of Pennsylvania Law*, 137(3), 731-792.

Wiltenburg, Joy. (2004). True crime: The origins of modern sensationalism. *The American Historical Review*, 109(5), 1377-1404.

#### **Optional:**

Franks, Rachel. (2017). Building a professional profile: Charles Dickens and the rise of the 'detective force.' *Media/Culture (M/C) Journal*, 20, 2, 1-13.

**Week 3: September 25<sup>th</sup>****Foundations**

Chancer, Lynn S. (2005). "Exemplifying a genre: A tale of two crimes," in *High-profile crimes: When legal cases become social causes*. University of Chicago Press, pp. 29-60.

Hamm, Mark S. (1994). No sense makes sense: The paradox of prosecuting bias-motivated cult crime. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 19(1), 145-160.

Voss, Ralph F. (2011). "The myth of the nonfiction novel," in *Truman Capote and the Legacy of In Cold Blood*. Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, pp. 80-99.

**Optional:**

Linnemann, Travis. (2015). Capote's ghosts: Violence, media and the spectre of suspicion. *British Journal of Criminology*, 55(3), 514-533.

**Week 4: October 2<sup>nd</sup>****Film and Television**

Morton, Pheobe. (2021). Stylistic choices in true-crime documentaries: The duty of responsibility between filmmaker and audience. *Media Practice and Education*, 22(3), 239-252.

Picart, Caroline Joan., and Greek, Cecil. (2002). The compulsion of real/reel serial killers and vampires: Toward a gothic criminology. *The Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture*, 10(1), 39-68.

Stoneman, Ethan., and Packer, Joseph. (2021). Reel cruelty: Voyeurism and extra-judicial punishment in true-crime documentaries. *Crime Media Culture*, 17(3), 401-419.

**October 9<sup>th</sup>**

Statutory holiday (Thanksgiving)

**Week 5: October 16<sup>th</sup>****Podcasts**

- Boling, Kelli S. (2019). True crime podcasting: Journalism, justice or entertainment? *Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast & Audio Media*, 17(2), 161-178.
- Pâquet, Lili. (2021). Seeking justice elsewhere: Informal and formal justice in the true crime podcasts *Trace* and *The Teacher's Pet*. *Crime Media Culture*, 17(3), 421-437.
- Yardley, Elizabeth., Kelly, Emma., and Robinson-Edwards, Shona. (2019). Forever trapped in the imaginary of late capitalism? The serialized true crime podcast as a wake-up call in times of criminological slumber. *Crime Media Culture*, 15(3), 503-521.

**October 23<sup>rd</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup>****Fall Reading Week****Week 6: October 30<sup>th</sup>****Amateurs**

- Childs, Andrew., Robertson, Amanda., and Fuller, Jacqueline. (2020). A commentary on the potential impact of online communities and crime-related media on the criminal justice system: 'Do you know more?... join the investigation.' *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, 32(1), 111-123.
- Nhan, Johnny., Huey, Laura., and Broll, Ryan. (2017). Digilantism: An analysis of crowdsourcing and the Boston Marathon bombings. *British Journal of Criminology*, 57, 341-361.
- Yardley, Elizabeth., Lynes, Adam George Thomas., Wilson, David., and Kelly, Emma. (2018). What's the deal with 'websleuthing'? News media representations of amateur detectives in networked space. *Crime Media Culture*, 14(1), 81-109.

**Week 7: November 6<sup>th</sup>****Narratives and Modernity**

Seltzer, Mark. (2008). Murder/media/modernity. *Canadian Review of American Studies*, 38(1), 11-41.

Wattis, Louise Tanya. (2023). The cultural scope and criminological potential of the 'hardman story.' *Crime Media Culture*, 19(1), 40-57.

Webb, Lindsey. (2021). True crime and danger narratives: Reflections on stories of violence, race, and (in)justice. *Journal of Gender, Race, and Justice*, 24(1), 131-170.

**Week 8: November 13<sup>th</sup>****Untrue Crime Part I:  
Crime Myths and Legends**

Donovan, Pamela. (2002). Crime legends in a new medium: Fact, fiction and loss of authority. *Theoretical Criminology*, 6(2), 189-215.

Lonergan, Meg D. (2023). Consuming ghost stories: The spectre of snuff films is haunting Canadian obscenity. *The Annual Review of Interdisciplinary Justice Research*, 12, 147-178.

Tolbert, Jeffrey A. (2015). 'Dark and wicked things': Slender Man, the folkloresque, and the implications of belief. *Contemporary Legend*, Series 3, 38-61.

**Week 9: November 20<sup>th</sup>****Untrue Crime Part II:  
Possession and the Satanic Panic**

Gatchet, Roger Davis., and Gatchet, Amanda Davis. (2017). Hunting our bad selves: Projective identification and the case of the West Memphis Three. *Western Journal of Communication*, 81(5), 523-540.

Hall, Helen. (2016). Exorcism, religious freedom and consent: The devil in the details. *The Journal of Criminal Law*, 80(4), 241-253.

Hicks, Robert D. (1991). *In pursuit of Satan: The police and the occult*. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books.<sup>2</sup>

**Optional:**

Oliva, Javier Garcia. (2022). Exorcism and children: Balancing protection and autonomy in the legal framework. *International Journal of Law in Context*, 18, 55-68.

Rupcic, Sonia. (2021). *Mens daemonica: Guilt, justice, and the occult in South Africa*. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 63(3), 599-624.

**Week 10: November 27<sup>th</sup>****Untrue Crimes III:  
Cannibals, Cults, and Cryptids**

Caputi-Levine, Deidre., and Harris, Jacob. (2022). Experiencing relative deprivation as true crime: Applying cultural criminology to the Qanon superconspiracy theory. *International Journal of Criminology and Sociology*, 11, 55-63.

Hayes, Matthew. (2022). "Introduction," in *Search for the unknown: Canada's UFO files and the rise of conspiracy theory*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University press, pp. 3-17.

Johnson, Thea., and Gilden, Andrew. (2015). Common sense and the cannibal cop. *Stanford Journal of Civil Rights & Civil Liberties*, 11(2), 313-330.

**Optional:**

Bauer, Henry H. (2020). Loch Ness monsters as cryptid (presently unknown) sea turtles. *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 34(1), 93-104.

Forth, Gregory. (2021). Rare animals as cryptids and supernaturals: The case of dugongs on Flores Island. *Anthrozoos*, 34(1), 61-76.

**Week 11: December 4<sup>th</sup>**  
PRESENTATIONS

**Week 12: December 8<sup>th</sup> is a Monday schedule (we have class!)**  
PRESENTATIONS

*You've survived the course!*

**Final examination period:  
December 10<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup>**

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## Course and University Policies

### Email Correspondence Policy

I try to reply to emails within 72 hours, not including weekends and statutory holidays. If you do not receive a reply to an email after 72 hours, please do send a follow up email, it may have gotten lost in the abyss of my inbox.

Email correspondence is expected to reflect a professional and respectful tone. You may find sample email formatting on the Brightspace page.

### Late Penalties and Extension Policy

Please be sure to ask for extensions as far in advance as is foreseeable. Asking in advance demonstrates organization and planning. Sometimes unforeseeable things do happen, of course, so please let me know if situations arise and you need accommodations.

Assignments submitted late without notice and extensions will be penalized 5% per day.

Assignments more than 7 days late may not be accepted.

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

### Plagiarism

The University Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as “*presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.*” This includes reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source. Examples of sources from which the ideas, expressions of ideas or works of others may be drawn from include but are not limited to books, articles, papers, literary compositions and phrases, performance compositions, chemical compounds, artworks, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, diagrams, constructions, computer reports, computer code/software, material on the internet and/or conversations.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else, including the unauthorized use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT);
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms, formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgement;
- submitting a computer program developed in whole or in part by someone else, with or without modifications, as one’s own; and
- failing to acknowledge sources by proper citations when using another’s work and/or failing to use quotations marks.

**Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course’s instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of “F” for the course.**

**Intellectual Property**

Classroom teaching and learning activities, including lectures, discussions, presentations, etc., by both instructors and students, are copy protected and remain the intellectual property of their respective author(s). All course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, outlines, and other materials, are also protected by copyright and remain the intellectual property of their respective author(s).

Students registered in the course may take notes and make copies of course materials for their own educational use only. Students are not permitted to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly for commercial or non-commercial purposes without express written consent from the copyright holder(s).

**The “You Actually Read the Syllabus” Bonus**

Thank you for taking the time to read over the policies and procedures in the course outline/syllabus. If you send me an email with the course code in the subject line and attach a picture of a unicorn you will receive a 2% bonus added to your final grade.

Do not tell your peers about this (like with fight club, we don't talk about unicorn club). You will notice during the course that a unicorn counter will appear on Brightspace (again, we don't talk about unicorn club) and you'll be able to see how True Crime Media's stable compares to that of Digital Criminology. If you happen to be in both of my courses this term, you can send in two different unicorns (or a photo that contains two unicorns) but please ensure you put both course codes in the subject line.

**Statement On Student Mental Health**

As a university student, you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you. Here is a link to information about all of the resources, both on campus and off, that you may find helpful:

<https://carleton.ca/wellness/>

**Academic Accommodation**

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes can be found at the below link:

<https://students.carleton.ca/course-outline/>

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