

## CRCJ 4002B True Crime Media

Winter Term 2025  
Institute of Criminology and Criminal Justice  
Carleton University

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**Office hours:** please email for an appointment

**Brightspace course page link:** <https://brightspace.carleton.ca/d2l/home/283525>

**Seminar:** Thursdays 8:35am to 11:25am.

**Please see registration classroom location.**

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### Acknowledgement & Affirmation

Ni manàdjiyànànìg Màmìwininì Anishinàbeg, ogog kà nàgadawàbandadjig iyo akì eko weshkad. Ako nongom egawikàd kì mìgiwewàdj.

Ni manàdjiyànànìg kakina Anishinàbeg ondaje kaye ogog kakina eniyagizidjig enigokamigàg Kanadàng eji ondàpinangig endàwàdjin Odàwàng.

Ninisdawinawànànìg kenawendamòdjig kije kikenindamàwin; weshkinìgidjig kaye kejeyàdizidjig.

Nigijeweninmànànìg ogog kà nìgànì sòngideyedjig; weshkad, nongom; kaye àyànikàdj.<sup>1</sup>

### **Course Description**

This course is a 4th year special topics seminar about true crime media and its relation to criminology.

### **Prerequisites**

CRCJ 1000, CRCJ 2100, and 4th year standing.

### **Course Materials and Texts**

All required course materials will be hyperlinked or posted to the course Brightspace page. Students will require access to a computer and internet access.

There are no additional costs associated with this course.

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<sup>1</sup> 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, and future.

## **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.

## **Content Warning**

Students should review the syllabus in advance of deciding to participate in this course; students who feel they cannot participate in academic discourse related to any of the topics due to religious beliefs; discomfort with topics related to murder, intimate partner violence; sexual violence; and/or victimization; and other controversial subject matter are encouraged to enrol in a different seminar course.

## **Policies**

**Assignment Formatting & Preferred Citation Style:** Either APA 7 or McGill legal citations are acceptable (absolutely no MLA). Please submit all assignments in Word format (.doc or .docx).

**Emails:** I endeavour to answer emails within 72 hours (not including weekends or holidays). Please do follow up if a response is not received after four business days. ***Only emails sent from Carleton student accounts may receive a reply.*** Please ensure all communications with any university staff are always professional and respectful in tone.

**Accommodations and Extensions:** Please request extensions as far in advance as possible.

**Late policy:** There is a 5% per day late penalty; assignments more than 7 days late may not be accepted.

***Assignments emailed to the instructor will not be graded; only assignments uploaded via Brightspace will be marked.***

## **Evaluation**

### **Active Seminar Participation and Discussion: 20%**

- Cumulative
- **Attendance is showing up, participation is active engagement.**
  - 10% individual participation (awarded by instructor)
  - 10% team participation (awarded by peer-evaluation from group)
  - See Brightspace for rubrics and further details

### **Class Reading Discussion Questions: 10%**

- 10 discussion questions over 10 weeks (1% each)
- Must be submitted via Brightspace the day before class at 4pm
  - No late submissions will be accepted
  - Further details available on Brightspace

### **Op-Ed Assignment: 20%**

- **Due January 31<sup>st</sup> by noon via Brightspace**
- 1,000 words
- Hyperlinked citations
- See Brightspace for rubric, examples, and further instructions

### **Paper Proposal: 10%**

- **Due February 14<sup>th</sup> by noon via Brightspace**
- 3 pages + title page + references
- Proper citations and referencing
- Thesis statement or exploratory question
- Outline of arguments
  - Minimum application and discussion of four readings from the class
  - Minimum application and discussion of two additional academic sources

### **Final Paper: 40%**

- **Due date to be determined by exam services during official exam period**
- See Brightspace for rubric and further details
- 10-12 pages + title page + works cited
  - Minimum application and discussion of four readings from the class
  - Minimum application and discussion of four additional academic sources

**CRCJ 4002B True Crime Media (Winter 2025)**

A+ = 12.0	A+ = 6.0	A+ = 3.0	90-100%
A = 11.0	A = 5.5	A = 2.75	85-89%
A- = 10.0	A- = 5.0	A- = 2.5	80-84%
B+ = 9.0	B+ = 4.5	B+ = 2.25	77-79%
B = 8.0	B = 4.0	B = 2.0	73-76%
B- = 7.0	B- = 3.5	B- = 1.75	70-72%
C+ = 6.0	C+ = 3.0	C+ = 1.5	67-69%
C = 5.0	C = 2.5	C = 1.25	63-66%
C- = 4.0	C- = 2.0	C- = 1.0	60-62%
D+ = 3.0	D+ = 1.5	D+ = 0.75	57-59%
D = 2.0	D = 1.0	D = 0.5	53-56%
D- = 1.0	D- = 0.5	D- = 0.25	50-52%
F = 0.0	F = 0.0	F = 0.0	0-49%

**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.**

## **Academic Integrity**

[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.

Academic dishonesty, in whatever form, is destructive to the values of the university, and risks harming the university’s reputation as place of learning and innovation. Furthermore, it is unfair and discouraging to those students who pursue their studies honestly.

### ***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
- failing to acknowledge sources with 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 follows a rigorous process for academic integrity allegations, including reviewing documents and interviewing the student, when an instructor suspects a violation has been committed. Penalties for violations may include a final grade of “F” for the course.

### **Students in this course are prohibited from:**

- Use AI, such as ChatGPT, to generate written or visual content
- Resubmit work previously submitted in part or whole in another course
- There is no collaborative or group work in this course

### Dates to Note

- January 6<sup>th</sup> is first day of winter semester classes
- January 17<sup>th</sup> is the last day for registration and course changes
- January 31<sup>st</sup> is the last day to withdraw for full reimbursement
- Course drops from January 31<sup>st</sup> to March 15<sup>th</sup> show on transcripts as withdrawn
- **January 31<sup>st</sup> Op-Ed assignment due by noon**
- February 1<sup>st</sup> is the last day to request Formal Exam Accommodations with PMC
- **February 14<sup>th</sup> paper proposal due by noon**
- April 8<sup>th</sup> is the last day of winter term
- April 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> no classes or exams
- April 11<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> is the exam period (including weekends)

### Course Calendar

#### **Week 1: January 9<sup>th</sup>**

##### ***Introduction to True Crime Media***

Altheide, David L. (1997). The news media, the problem frame, and the production of fear. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 38(4), 647-668.

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

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

#### **Week 2: January 16<sup>th</sup>**

##### ***Ethics, Entertainment, and Justice***

Boling, Kelli S. (2019). True crime podcasting: Journalism, justice or entertainment? *Radio Journal: international Studies in Broadcast & Audio Media*, 17(2) 161-178.

Gans, Jeremy. (2019). True criminal law ethics. *University of Western Australia Law Review*, 45(2), 274-293.

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

#### **Optional:**

Bolin, Alice. (Aug. 1, 2018). The ethical dilemma of highbrow true crime. *Vulture*, Retrieved from: <https://www.vulture.com/2018/08/true-crime-ethics.htm>

### **Week 3: January 23<sup>rd</sup>**

#### ***History of True Crime***

- Flanders, Judith. (2011). "Trial by newspaper," in *The invention of murder: How the Victorians revelled in death and created modern crime*. London: Harper Press, pp. 20-98.
- 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.
- Warwick, Alexandria. (2006). The scene of the crime: Inventing the serial killer. *Social & Legal Studies*, 15(4), 552-569.

### **Week 4: January 30<sup>th</sup>**

#### ***True Crime Myths and Legends***

- Albini, Joseph L. (1993). The Mafia and the Devil: What They Have in Common. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, 9(3), 240-250.
- 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, 146-177.

### **Week 5: February 6<sup>th</sup>**

#### ***Possession, Witchcraft, and Magic***

- Craker, Wendel D. (1997). Spectral evidence, non-spectral acts of witchcraft, and confession at Salem in 1692. *The Historical Journal*, 40(3), 331-358.
- Hall, Helen. (2016). Exorcism, religious freedom and consent: The devil in the details. *The Journal of Criminal Law*, 80(4), 241-253.
- Klassen-Molyneaux, Riley. (2024). Bad religion and bad business: The history of the Canadian witchcraft provision. *Canadian Journal of Law and Society*, 39(1), 154-173.

## Week 6: February 13<sup>th</sup>

### *The Satanic Panic*

Frankfurter, David. "Experts in the identification of evil," *Evil Incarnate: Rumors of Demonic Conspiracy and Satanic Abuse in History*. Princeton University Press, pp. 31-72.

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.

Ross, Colin. (1995). "Five Levels of Satanism," in *Satanic Ritual Abuse: Principles of Treatment*. University of Toronto Press, pp. 61-72.

## Reading week: February 17<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup>

## Week 7: February 27<sup>th</sup>

### *Cults*

Bleakley, Paul. (2021). The cult of corruption: Reframing organizational frameworks of police corruption from a cultic perspective. *Deviant Behaviour*, 42(5), 565-577.

Crockford, Susannah. (2018). How Do You Know You're In A Cult?: The Continuing Influence of Peoples Temple and Jonestown in Contemporary Minority Religions and Popular Culture. *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*, 22(2), 93-114.

Forberg, Peter L. (2023). 'No Cult Tells You to Think for Yourself': Discursive Ideology and the Limits of Rationality in Conspiracy Theory QAnon. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 67(5), 649-664.



## **Week 8: March 6<sup>th</sup>**

### ***The Interweb***

Hobbs, Simon., and Hoffman, Megan. (2024). "It's not all r@p!s+\$. M!rd3r3r\$ and ki!!3r\$ True crime activism on TikTok," in Lili Pâquet and Rosemary Williamson (eds.)'s *True Crime and Women: Writers, Readers, and Representations*. Taylor & Francis Group, pp. 155-173.

Purhouse, Joe. (2020). 'Paedophile hunters,' criminal procedure, and fundamental human rights. *Journal of Law and Society*, 47(3), 384-411.

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 spaced. *Crime Media Culture*, 14(1), 81-109.

## **Week 9: March 13<sup>th</sup>**

### ***Think of the Children!***

Cleary, Sarah. (2023). "The myth of harm: An introduction," in *The myth of harm: Horror, censorship and the child*. UK: Bloomsbury, pp. 1-33.

Kohm, Steven A. (2020). Claims-making, child saving, and the news media. *Crime Media Culture*, 16(1), 115-137.

Walker, Allyn. (2023). Transphobic discourse and moral panic convergence: A content analysis of my hate mail. *Criminology*, 61(4), 994-1021.

## **Week 10: March 20<sup>th</sup>**

### ***"And that's when the cannibalism started..."***

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

Lefebvre, Martin. (2005). Conspicuous consumption: The figure of the serial killer as cannibal in the age of capitalism. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 22(3), 43-62.

Palermo, Mark T., and Bogaerts, Stefan. (2015). The dangers of posthumous diagnoses and the unintended consequences of facile associations: Jeffrey Dahmer and Autism spectrum disorders. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 59(14), 1564-1579.

## Week 11: March 27<sup>th</sup>

### Fandoms

Broll, Ryan. (2020). Dark fandoms: An introduction and case study. *Deviant Behavior*, 41(6), 792-804

Dickson, E.J. (Oct.12, 2023). "His True-Crime Podcast Stood Up for Victims. Now, He's Been Accused of Abuse." *Rolling Stone*, Retrieved from:  
<https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-features/last-podcast-on-the-left-ben-kissel-abuse-allegations-1234852755/>

Fathallah, Judith. (2022). Reading serial killer fanfiction: What's fannish about it? *Humanities*, 11(65), 1-13.

## Week 12: April 3rd

### Storytelling

Later, Naha. (2023). "The Forest and the Trees: The "Woods" as Intersection between Documentary, Fairy Tale, and Internet Legend in Beware the Slenderman," in Jessica Balanzategui (ed.)'s *Monstrous Beings and Media Cultures: Folk Monsters, Im/materiality, Regionality*. Amsterdam University Press, pp. 81-

Sanberg, Sveinung. (2010). What can 'lies' tell us about life? Notes towards a framework on narrative criminology. *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*, 21(4), 447-467.

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.

## **Mental Health & Resources**

As a 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. For more information, please consult <https://wellness.carleton.ca/>

### **Emergency Resources ([on and off campus](#))**

- Suicide Crisis Helpline: call or text 9-8-8, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- For immediate danger or urgent medical support: call 9-1-1

### **Carleton Resources**

- Mental Health and Wellbeing: <https://carleton.ca/wellness/>
- Health & Counselling Services: <https://carleton.ca/health/>
- Paul Menton Centre: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>
- Academic Advising Centre (AAC): <https://carleton.ca/academicadvising/>
- Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS): <https://carleton.ca/csas/>
- Equity & Inclusivity Communities: <https://carleton.ca/equity/>

### **Off Campus Resources**

- Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region: call 613-238-3311, text 343-306-5550, or connect online at <https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/>
- Mental Health Crisis Service: call 613-722-6914 or toll-free 1-866-996-0991, or connect online at <http://www.crisisline.ca/>
- Empower Me Counselling Service: call 1-844-741-6389 or connect online at <https://students.carleton.ca/services/empower-me-counselling-services/>
- Good2Talk: call 1-866-925-5454 or connect online at <https://good2talk.ca/>
- The Walk-In Counselling Clinic: for online or on-site service <https://walkincounselling.com>

## **Academic Accommodation**

Carleton is committed to providing academic accessibility for all individuals. You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. The accommodation request processes, including information about the Academic Consideration Policy for Students in Medical and Other Extenuating Circumstances, are outlined on the [Academic Accommodations website](#).