

CRCJ 4001D True Crime Media—Winter 2023

**Institute of Criminology & Criminal Justice
Carleton University**

**CRCJ 4001D True Crime Media
Course Outline**

Term: Winter Semester 2023

Class Date & Time: Wednesday 2:35-5:25pm

Location: Southam 515

Prerequisites: CRCJ 1000, CRCJ 2100, and 4th year standing

Max. Enrolment: 35 students

Instructor: Meg D. Lonergan [she/they]

Email: Megan.Lonergan@Carleton.ca

Office Hours: Wednesday at noon or by appointment, Loeb C560

Course Description

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

Learning Outcomes

After successfully completing this course students will be familiar with the history of true crime as a media genre; the relationship between true crime media and criminology; the major forms of true crime media (literature, film, and podcasting); criminological, ethical, and socio-political concerns related to true crime media; and applied knowledge of a particular true crime case study. Assignments will help develop critical thinking skills, use of academic sources, evaluation of information sources and media literacy, as well as both independent and group work. Weekly seminar are discussion drive and students are expected to come to class having completed the assigned readings and with questions/thoughts to further discussion with their instructor and peers.

Course Texts

All required readings are available on Brightspace.

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.

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.

Course Evaluation Breakdown

Attendance and Active Seminar Participation 10%

Weekly Course Reflections and Discussion Questions 20%

Why True Crime and Criminology Writing Assignment 10%

- ***due January 24th***

True Crime Analysis Project 60%

- ***Part I: True Crime Media Comparison 10%***
 - ***due February 14th***
- ***Part II: Film Review 20%***
 - ***due March 14th***
- ***Part III: Class Presentations 30%***
 - ***March 29th and April 5th***

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 hour, 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 dedications, rather you start at 0% and earn marks.

Attendance and Active Participation in Seminar Discussions 10%

- Attendance is showing up
- 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.
- I post lectures the night before class on the expectation students will look over my questions on the slides which can also guide your reading of the materials and will be put to the class for discussion in seminar
- 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
- 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 Discussion Questions 20%

- 10 weeks x 2% each
- *No extensions are available for this component*
- Weekly submissions should be approximate 1 page in length total (encompassing all of 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

Why True Crime and Criminology? Writing Assignment 10%

- Due by midnight January 24th, 2023, via Brightspace
- 2 pages double spaced, 1-inch margins, 12-point Times New Roman Font
- Must be submitted in Word (.Doc) format
- Details available in folder on Brightspace

True Crime Analysis Project

By January 17th at midnight please submit your top 4 topics ranked in order of preference via the submission box on Brightspace. I will match people in pairs (or potentially some groups of 3) based on selections.

Failure to submit a ranked preference by the deadline will result in you being assigned a topic, so be sure to get your submission in!

The Film Review and Media Comparison assignments are to be done individually. For the class presentations, you will work with your peers who have been working on the same topic to prepare a group presentation. Class presentations will be held the last two classes of the course.

You are required to come to both dates for presentations—both the day you are presenting, as well as the other week. Part of your grade for the presentations is attending and asking questions of your peers based on their presentations.

Please submit your ranked top four preferences of topics from this list through the Brightspace submission box by January 17th at midnight:

True Crime Topics:

1. Jack the Ripper
2. H. H. Holmes
3. Ed Gein
4. The Manson Family Murders
5. The Zodiac Killer
6. John Wayne Gacy
7. Aileen Wuornos
8. Ted Bundy
9. The West Memphis Three
10. Jeffrey Dahmer
11. Paul Bernardo & Karla Homolka
12. Robert Pickton
13. Russell Williams
14. The Golden State Killer
15. Gill Valle aka “Cannibal Cop”
16. Slenderman Stabbings
17. Luka Magnotta

Part I: Media Comparison 10%

- Due February 14th by midnight via Brightspace

Compare podcast or YouTube video on your topic to the book on the subject.
Detailed assignment guidelines and rubric available on Brightspace.

Part II: Film Analysis 20%

- Due March 14th by midnight via Brightspace

Analyze and evaluate the film version based on your True Crime Topic using course materials and your knowledge on the subject from your previous assignment.
Detailed assignment guidelines and rubric available on Brightspace.

Part III: Class Presentations 30%

- March 29th and April 5th

Based on all that you’ve learned in the course on True Crime Media and your specific topic, come together with your partner(s) who have also been focusing on the same case study.

Together you will create a brief written component reflecting on both the learning process and content you’ve learned in the course and your case study. You will also prepare a class presentation in which you will educate your peers on your case study topic and its relationship to criminology and true crime media.

Week 1: January 11th

Introduction to True Crime

Harrison, Marissa A., and Frederick, Erika J. (2020). Interested in serial killers? Morbid curiosity in college students. *Current Psychology*, 41(5), 3768-3777.

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

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

Week 2: January 18th

History of True Crime & Criminology

Franks, Rachel. (2016). True crime: The regular reinvention of a genre. *Journal of Asia-Pacific Pop Culture*, 1(2), 239-254.

Kohm, Steve. (2017). "Popular criminology," *Oxford Research Encyclopedias: Criminology and Criminal Justice*, pp. 1-19.

Valier, Claire. (1998). True crime stories: Scientific methods of criminal investigation, criminology, and historiography. *British Journal of Criminology*, 38(1), 88-99.

Why True Crime and Criminology Assignment due January 24th by midnight via Brightspace

Week 3: January 25th

Ethics, Entertainment, and Education

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

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

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.

Optional:

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

Week 4: February 1st

True Crime Media
Part I: Literature

Hartung, Franziska., Withers, Peter., Hagoort, Peter., and Willems, Roel M. (2017). When fiction is just as real as fact: No differences in reading behavior between stories believed to be based on true or fictional events. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8, 1-14.

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

Scaggs, John., and Drakakis, John. (2005). "A chronology of crime," in *Crime fiction*. London: Routledge, pp. 7-33.

Optional:

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.

Week 5: February 8th

True Crime Media
Part II: Podcasts

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

Sherrill, Lindsey A. (2020). The 'serial effect' and the true crime podcast ecosystem. *Journalism Practice*, 1-22.

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.

Media Comparison Assignment Due February 14th by midnight via Brightspace
Happy Valentine's Day!

Week 6: February 15th

True Crime Media
Part III: Documentaries

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.

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Horeck, Tanya. (2019). “ ‘Tagging’ the true crime audience: Netflix trailers for true crime documentaries,” in *Justice on Demand: True Crime in the Digital Streaming Era*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, pp. 64-84.

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

READING WEEK (February 20th to 24th)

Week 7: March 1st

Untrue Crime
Part I: Crime Myths & 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. (2022). Real scary/scary real: Consuming simulated and authentic horrors in the digital era. *Horror Studies*, 13(1), 63-75.

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

Optional:

Henriksen, Line. (2018). ‘Spread the word’: Creepypasta, hauntology, and an ethics of the curse. *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 87(1), 266-280.

Week 8: March 8th

Untrue Crime
Part II: Possession & Satanic Panic

Jenkins, Philip., and Maier-Katkin, Daniel. (1992). Satanism: Myth and reality in a contemporary moral panic. *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 17, 53-75.

Levack, Brian P. (2014). The horrors of witchcraft and demonic possession. *Social Research*, 81(4), 921-939.

Stidham, Dan., Fitzgerald, Haley., and Baldwin, Jason. (2012). Satanic panic and defending the West Memphis Three: How cultural differences can play a major role in criminal cases. *The University of Memphis Law Review*, 42(1), 1061-1104.

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Film Analysis Assignment Due March 14th by midnight via Brightspace

Week 9: March 15th

Race, Gender, Class, and True Crime

Vicary, Amanda M., and Fraley, R. Chris. (2010). Captured by true crime: Why are women drawn to tales of rape, murder, and serial killers? *Social Psychological Personality Science*, 1(1), 81-86.

Walkowitz, Judith R. (1982). Jack the Ripper and the myth of male violence. *Feminist Studies*, 8(3), 542-572.

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 10: March 22nd

Serial Killers: Crime & Culture

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

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

Jarvis, Brian. (2007). Monsters Inc.: Serial killers and consumer culture. *Crime Media Culture*, 3(3), 326-344.

Week 11: March 29th

Presentations Part I

Week 12: April 5th

Last Class

Presentations Part II

Week 13: April 12th

University follows a Friday schedule

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;
- 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 through the use of 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). Audio and video recording in lecture is strictly prohibited without the written consent of the instructor.

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 list that may be helpful: Emergency Resources (on and off campus): <https://carleton.ca/health/emergencies-and-crisis/emergency-numbers/>

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: (613) 238-3311 or TEXT: 343-306-5550, <https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/>
- Mental Health Crisis Service: (613) 722-6914, 1-866-996-0991, <http://www.crisisline.ca/>
- Empower Me: 1-844-741-6389, <https://students.carleton.ca/services/empower-me-counselling-services/>
- Good2Talk: 1-866-925-5454, <https://good2talk.ca/>
- The Walk-In Counselling Clinic: <https://walkincounselling.com>

Bonus Points for Reading the Course Syllabus

Congratulations, you are *actually* reading the details and information outlined in this document. That is an excellent practice because all the most important information about the course and how to be successful in it are contained herein. If you're reading this, you can send me an email with the course code in the subject line and attach a photo of a goat that you find cute or funny for a 2% bonus on your final grade. Good job.

Statement on Pandemic Measures

It is important to remember that COVID is still present in Ottawa. The situation can change at any time and the risks of new variants and outbreaks are very real. There are several actions you can take to lower your risk and the risk you pose to those around you including being vaccinated, wearing a mask, staying home when you're sick, washing your hands and maintaining proper respiratory and cough etiquette.

Feeling sick?

Remaining vigilant and not attending work or school when sick or with symptoms is critically important. If you feel ill or exhibit COVID-19 symptoms do not come to class or campus. If you feel ill or exhibit symptoms while on campus or in class, please leave campus immediately. In all situations, you should follow Carleton's symptom reporting protocols.

Masks

Masks are no longer mandatory in university buildings and facilities. However, we continue to recommend masking when indoors, particularly if physical distancing cannot be maintained. We are aware that personal preferences regarding optional mask use will vary greatly, and we ask that we all show consideration and care for each other during this transition.

Vaccines:

While proof of vaccination is no longer required to access campus or participate in in-person Carleton activities, it may become necessary for the University to bring back proof of vaccination requirements on short notice if the situation and public health advice changes. Students are strongly encouraged to get

a full course of vaccination, including all booster doses as soon as they are eligible and submit their booster dose information in cuScreen as soon as possible.

Please note that Carleton cannot guarantee that it will be able to offer virtual or hybrid learning options for those who are unable to attend the campus.

All members of the Carleton community are required to follow requirements and guidelines regarding health and safety, which may change from time to time. For the most recent information about Carleton's COVID-19 response and health and safety requirements please see the University's COVID-19 website and review the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs). Should you have additional questions after reviewing, please contact covidinfo@carleton.ca.

Requests for Academic Accommodations

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For accommodation regarding a formally scheduled final exam, you must complete the Pregnancy Accommodation Form.

Religious obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally scheduled exam (if applicable).

Survivors of Sexual Violence

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: <https://carleton.ca/equity/sexual-assault-support-services>

Accommodation for Student Activities

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the

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university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation will be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.

<https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>