



National Taiwan University of Science and Technology

2020 Summer Program

ENG 400 Pulp Fiction

Course Outline

Term: June 1-July 3, 2020

Course Code: ENG 400

Instructor: Robert Barsky

Home Institution: Carleton University

Office Hours: by appointment

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Credit: 4

Course Overview:

Pulp Fiction: The term “pulp fiction” originally referred to cheap paperback books aimed at the mass market rather than the cultural elite. Some of the original “pulp” were reprinted literary classics, but the term “pulp fiction” became most familiarly associated with lurid, sensational stories. Today “pulp fiction” is sometimes used as a general label for popular genres like mysteries, westerns, or romances, but the early connotations of cheap thrills and low quality lingers, and in some circles genre fiction gets as little critical respect as the “pulp” once did.

Course Description:

In this class, we will read a selection of novels and short stories from three genres associated with the “pulp” tradition—a Western, a mystery, and a romance—considering their historical contexts, their formal features, and the vexed question of their literary merit – all while enjoying their often spectacular story-telling and entertainment value.

Learning Outcomes:

By the completion of this course, students will have a strong understanding of the history, role and importance of Pulp Fiction.

Required Textbooks and Films:

Textbook: The New Mammoth Book Of Pulp Fiction Kindle Edition, Sold by Hachette Book: \$3.99
How to Write Pulp Fiction Kindle Edition: \$3.99

Selected readings by such authors as Frank Miller, Mickey Spillane, William S. Burroughs, Doris Sommer, John Le Carré, D. H. Lawrence and Diane di Prima

Selected films including: Quentin Terentino’s “Pulp Fiction”, Bryan Singer’s “The Usual Suspects” and Christopher Nolan’s “Memento,” Soderbergh’s “Out of Sight” and John Cusack vehicle “Grosse Pointe Blank

Grading & Evaluation:

Attendance and Participation 10%

Writing Assignment (5-7 pages): Analysis of Pulp Fiction’s history: 20%

Writing Assignment (5-7 pages): Pulp Fiction and their relation to the literary and artistic canons: 20%

Writing Assignment (5-7 pages): Pulp Fiction and texts deemed smut or obscene: 20%

Writing Assignment (7-10 pages): Final project: 30%

Grading Scale

A	94-100	C	74-76
A-	90-93	C-	70-73
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	84-86	D	64-66
B-	80-83	D-	60-63
C+	77-79	F	0-59

Course Schedule:

Week 1:

- 1) what is the history of pulp fiction, and how does it develop, from early nineteenth-century dime novels right up to the proliferation of mass-produced paperbacks;
- 2) what are the links between “canonical” works and writers of pulp fiction? Here we will foray into Paris, where a number of famous writers got their start by writing notoriously bawdy fiction for the consumption of Parisian tourists.

Week 2:

- 3) how does pulp fiction relate to such terms as “national romance,” “obscene literature”, “the culture industry,” “mass culture,” and “smut”?
- 4) what do we learn from pulp fiction about plot-driven narratives, the so-called cliff-hangers, and what this means about the genre.

Week 3:

- 5) what do “pulp” and “popular” have in common? This will lead us into discussions of populism,

mass culture, subculture, the “people,” and the politics of style.

6) what do we learn about pulp fiction through our examinations of the detective novel, adventure story, science fiction, the romance, the spy thriller and the western, among others;

Week 4:

7) The idea of pulp fiction finds its way into the commercial space, in particular in advertisements. This is unsurprising, given the popularity of the genre, but it’s also linked to work from more historical genres, such as the Historical Avant-Garde, which we will discuss.

8) We will focus upon the question of how pulp fiction intersects with other popular mediums such as radio, television, music, and.

Week 5:

9) Pulp Fiction and Film brings us into both screen adaptations of important works of pulp fiction, and also explorations of the broader genre. As such, we will examine Quentin Tarantino’s Pulp Fiction, and then we’ll look to works that use similar themes and tropes, including Bryan Singer’s “The Usual Suspects” and Christopher Nolan’s “Memento,” Soderbergh’s “Out of Sight”, and John Cusack vehicle “Grosse Pointe Blank”.

10) Conclusions.

