



上海财经大学

Shanghai University of Finance & Economics

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Shanghai University of Finance & Economics

2021 Summer Program

ENG 400 Pulp Fiction

Course Outline

Term: June 14 – July 09, 2021

Class Hours: 08:00-09:50 (Monday through Friday)

Course Code: ENG 400

Instructor: Robert Barsky

Home Institution: Vanderbilt University

Office Hours: TBA

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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. Students will also be given the opportunity to write their own 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**

Students might wish to look at some pulp-fiction inspired 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:

I am open to an array of possible essay topics. For example, you are invited to write about the history of pulp fiction, the history and biography of a famous pulp fiction writer, the relationship between pulp fiction and other genres. You can also write a pulp fiction story, imitating the style of a pulp fiction writer.

Participation 10%

Writing Assignment 1 (5-7 pages): 30%

Writing Assignment 2 (5-7 pages): 30%

Writing Assignment 3 (5-7 pages): Final 30%

Grading System (1 ~ 100)

A : 94 - 100 A- : 90 - 93

B : 83 - 89 B- : 80 - 82

C : 73 - 79 C- : 70 - 72

D : 63 - 69 D- : 60 - 62

F : Fail

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,” “the culture industry,” and “mass culture”?

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, and music.