

Crime Stories: Eastern European Fiction from Crime to Punishment

Instructor: Anna Krakus

In this course we will devote our energy to exploring stories from primarily Eastern Europe and Russia that concern crime, legal conflict, and punishment. Starting with Shakespearian legal influences, we make our way via Soviet show trials, to contemporary laws and debates about the death penalty. We will read texts from the perspective of the criminal, the police, victims, and juries of various kinds of peers and examine and put on trial exemplary texts from 19th century through today. The unique history of the region opens for exceptional narratives and contexts that we will encounter from humanistic and philosophical angles according to the theories of several vibrant areas of research, including Law and Literature and Law and the Humanities.

Each week we will read a small number of engaging works of fiction and non-fiction, watch films and television programs as the basis for our discussions. These works include formerly secret police files from the Soviet Union, dramatic plays, short stories from the communist era as well as selections from classics by Dostoevsky and Kafka. Although this is a class primarily focusing on Eastern Europe and Russia, we will engage with British and American sources as well in order to draw inspiration and comparisons for our discussions.

Below is a *preliminary* syllabus. Titles followed by *** will be posted online or distributed by the professor and **do not** need to be purchased! Films will be screened in class, as is also reflected below, and need not be acquired by students.

INTRODUCTION: What is Law and the Humanities?

- Shakespeare *The Merchant of Venice*
- Kafka “Before the Law”
- Binder and Weisberg, *Literary Criticisms of Law*, (selections)***

THEME ONE: The Crime

-Pt. 1: What is a criminal act and who decides it?

- L. Buczkowski, *Forbidden Songs*, (Screened in class)
- M. Heyward ed., *On Trial: The Soviet State versus “Abram Tertʒ” and “Nikolai Arʒhak”* (selections)***
- M. Kundera, *The Joke*
- A. Wajda, *Man of Iron* (Screened in class)

-Pt. 2: Who is a criminal?

- F. Lang, *M* (1931) (Screened in class)
- C. Lombroso, *The Criminal Man*, (selections)***

THEME TWO:

-Police procedure

- A. Conan Doyle, *The Sign of Four*
- *Law and Order: Special Victims Unit* (Screened in class)
- R. Bugajski, *The Interrogation* (Screened in class)
- Peter Brooks, *Troubling Confessions, Speaking Guilt in Law and Literature*, (selections)***
- FBI manuals on interrogation techniques***
- Isaak Babel's NKVD Interrogation***
- Bertolt Brecht's FBI file (selections)***

-The Secret Police

- F. Henckel, *The Lives of Others* (Screened in class)
- Herta Müller, *The Appointment*
- C. Vatulescu, *Police Aesthetics****

THEME THREE: The Trial

- F. Kafka, *The Trial*
- Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, book xii, "A Judicial Error,"
- N. Mikhalkov, *12*, 2007 (Screened in class)

THEME FOUR: Punishment

- J. Dos Passos, *Facing the Chair: Sacco and Vanzetti* ***
- K. Kieślowski, *A Short Film about Killing*, 1988 (Screened in class)
- E. Morris, *The Thin Blue Line*, (Screened in class)

THEME Five: Reform and Revenge

- F. Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, 1866, Epilogue
- Heinrich von Kleist, *Michael Kohlhaas*:
- M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* ***

Bibliography:

Literary Works:

- J. Dos Passos, *Facing the Chair: Sacco and Vanzetti*, 1927***
- F. Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, 1866, only epilogue
- F. Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, 1880, only chapter 12
- A. Conan Doyle, *The Sign of Four*
- F. Kafka, *The Trial*
- M. Kundera, *The Joke*, 1967

- H. Muller, *The Appointment*, 2009

Theoretical Texts, selections from:

- Binder and Weisberg, *Literary Criticisms of Law****
- Peter Brooks, *Troubling Confessions, Speaking Guilt in Law and Literature****
- M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 1975***
- C. Vatalescu, *Police Aesthetics*, Stanford University Press, 2010***

Filmography (to be screened in class):

- L. Buczkowski, *Forbidden Songs*, 1946/1947
- R. Bugajski, *The Interrogation*, 1981/1989
- F. Henckel, *The Lives of Others* (2006)
- K. Kieslowski, *A Short Film about Killing*, 1988
- F. Lang, *M*
- N. Mikhalkov, *12*, 2007
- E. Morris, *The Thin Blue Line*, 1988
- A. Wajda, *Man of Iron*, 1981

Supplementary Material:

- Isaak Babel's NKVD interrogation***
- Bertolt Brecht's FBI file***
- FBI manuals on interrogation techniques***