

**School of Cinematic Arts
The John Wells Division of
Writing for Screen and Television**

**CTWR 431: Crime Drama: Tales of Transgression from In Cold Blood to The
Night Of**

Spring 2018

Instructor: Kary Antholis
Class Schedule: Tuesdays (6:00pm-10:00pm)
Class Location: SCI 106
Office Hours: TBD
Contact Information: antholis@gmail.com

Course Objective:

We will begin with the premise that the book In Cold Blood and the film based on it were watershed events in the presentation of crime stories in media... We will explore this premise with writers, creators, directors and producers of various types of crime drama (primarily in television) and then explore the values that underlie these shows.

Course Description:

The name of the class is Crime Drama: Tales of Transgression from In Cold Blood to The Night Of.

Each class will begin with a screening of between 45 and 150 minutes of films, television episodes, interviews and/or podcasts. We will then proceed to approximately 90 minutes of Q&A with invited guests. The last 15 minutes of the Q&A session I will be open to students questions.

The first class begins with a discussion of Truman Capote's revolutionary concept of the "non-fiction" crime novel and the Richard Brooks film of In Cold Blood. This discussion suggests the philosophical approach that underlies the planning for the class. In other words our premise is that the book and the film represent a watershed moment in the telling of crime stories, after which realism and empathy in artistic approach leads to a much more complex depiction of the moral landscape in which the criminality takes place. Veteran screen and television writer, and USC faculty member Howard A. Rodman will join me for this class as a co-lecturer.

This quote from an interview that George Plimpton did with Capote gets at the heart of my intention in teaching the class...

"...above all, the reporter must be able to empathize with personalities outside his usual

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imaginative range, mentalities unlike his own, kinds of people he would never have written about had he not been forced to by encountering them inside the journalistic situation. This last is what first attracted me to the notion of narrative reportage.”

We will also spend some time discussing *In Cold Blood* as a watershed moment in the depiction of crime in popular culture... particularly in film and then (a decade or so later) in television... In so doing, we will juxtapose the values underlying the iconic cop and plot oriented landscape *Dragnet* of the 50's and 60's against those underlying the more complex, character-oriented and novelistic aesthetic of 70's era *Hill Street Blues*.

This will lead to a weekly discussion with writers, creators, directors and producers of various types of crime drama (primarily in television) and the values that underlie these shows.

When I say “ values“, I mean...

“Why was the show made?“

“What drew the writers to the material, and what were their intentions when they started working on the project?“

“Who is the intended audience?“

We will also explore many of the following questions with our invited guests...

“What are the rules of the show?“

“Why is it structured the way it is?“

“What was the writing process and what were the challenges of developing and making the show?“

“What was the relationship between writer/producer and director on the show?“

“What was the role of the producer/director on the show?“

“Why did you select the episodes that we screened this evening?“

“Who were your consultants and what kind of research did you do to create the world and the stories depicted in the show?“

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“Were there cinematic and/or literary influences or inspiration?”

“Please describe your working relationships with (including key contributions made and/or obstacles presented by) other producers, studio and network executives on the show.”

“Please take us through some of the pivotal moments in your journey through your craft.”

We will also discuss audience reaction to the show as well as any impact it may have had on American culture outside of the TV world.

Most of the classes will focus on individual scripted shows with criminality at their center. But we will spend one or two weeks exploring podcasts and documentary serials as alternative crime drama formats.

The first few weeks will focus on procedurals – CSI, Criminal Minds, Without a Trace and Law and Order – as the inheritors of the original paradigm of television drama. (Though I will argue that even these shows inherited a realistic edge to character depiction from post-in-cold-blood shows like Hill Street Blues that their predecessors in the procedural genre like Dragnet did not have.)

We will then pivot to exploring crime dramas that are the true inheritors of Capote’s aspirations.

This class will primarily serve as an opportunity to deconstruct the process of making crime dramas so that we can better understand the values that underlie their creation, but as you can see, given the questions about format and structure and filmmaker background, there promises to be much valuable information for students eyeing professions in film and television.

Course Material:

Screening material is listed below within the class schedule. After each class, we will make the screening material available in the department library. Before exams, we will endeavor to make audio recordings of each class available on the blackboard site for review/study purposes. However students should consider the availability of those recordings only as a supplement to (and not a substitute for) attendance, attention and notetaking in the classes.

Background reading material will be available on the blackboard site. Currently collecting this reading material at the following dropbox site:

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Grading Criteria:

Participation, attentiveness:	10%
Mid-term:	30%
Final:	60%

The exams will be in a multiple choice and/or short answer format. They will cover background reading material, as well as material screened or discussed in class. Exams will be open notes, however you must turn in your notes with the exam. Students may form study groups of up to four people, and may share one set of notes among those four students. The names of the four students in the study group must be listed on the notes. The notes of each study group must be unique to that study group.

As per Writing Division policy the following is a breakdown of numeric grade to letter grade:

A	100% to 94%	C	76% to 73%
A-	93% to 90%	C-	72% to 70%
B+	89% to 87%	D+	69% to 67%
B	86% to 83%	D	66% to 63%
B-	82% to 80%	D-	62% to 60%
C+	79% to 77%	F	59% to 0%

Industry Guests:

Over the course of the semester several guests will join us during class. These guests are taking time out of their hectic schedules to speak about their experiences. Please be respectful of the guests' time and ask respectful questions.

Guests love to speak candidly to students. Our classroom will be a "cone of silence." Anything discussed in the class should not be shared with people outside of the class, posted on facebook, tweeted, snap chatted, blogged, or placed in any public forum. We also ask that you put away all electronics including cell phones and laptops anytime a guest is present in the room.

You are more than welcome to thank the guest after their Q & A. However you may not ask them to read your material, meet for coffee/drinks, or utilize them as a networking opportunity in any way.

Expectation of Professionalism:

All material is expected to be turned in on time and in the proper format. Assignments will be penalized for grammatical mistakes, spelling errors, format mistakes, and typos. Please proof your assignment prior to submission.

Internet Policy:

Material discussed in the room is considered private and should not be blogged, tweeted, posted, snapchatted, or be posted anywhere else on the internet.

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Laptop and Cell Phone Policy:

There will be no usage of laptops or cell phones or tablets during the class. All notes should be taken by hand. Our guests are volunteering their valuable time and we want to create an environment of attentiveness for them.

Writing Division Attendance Policy:

Students are expected to be on time and prepared for each class. Two unexcused absences will result in your grade being lowered by 5%. Your grade will be lowered by 5% for every absence after. Two late arrivals equates to one full absence.

In order for absence to be excused the student must have approval from the professor and provide documentation at the next attended class session.

Please note that if you are a Writing for Screen and Television major/minor you must receive a grade of a C or better in order to receive degree credit. If you have any questions about the minimum grade required for credit please check with your home department.

If you have an emergency and must miss class please contact your professor prior to class or contact the Writing Division at 213-740-3303.

Class Schedule:

Please note that all dates are subject to change at the discretion of the professor.

Week 1: Jan. 9 – IN COLD BLOOD / Howard Rodman confirmed...

Screening material:

In Cold Blood (film)

Interviews with Richard Brooks and Truman Capote

Week 2: Jan. 16 – CSI: NEW YORK, CSI: CYBER / Pam Veasey confirmed

Screening material:

CSI: New York, Season 4; episode 16 - Right Next Door

CSI: Cyber, season 1; episode 3 - Killer En Route

Week 3: Jan. 23 – CRIMINAL MINDS / Ed Bernero confirmed

Screening material:

Criminal Minds, Season 4; episode 18 - Omnivore

Criminal Minds, Season 5; episode 9 - 100

Week 4: Jan. 30 – WITHOUT A TRACE / Hank Steinberg confirmed

Screening material:

Without A Trace, Season 2; episode 7 - A Tree Falls

The Nine, Season 1; episode 1 - Pilot

Week 5: Feb. 6 – THE PEOPLE VS. OJ SIMPSON / Scott Alexander & Larry

Karaszewski confirmed

Screening material:

THE PEOPLE VS. OJ SIMPSON, Season 1, Episode 1 - From the Ashes of Tragedy

THE PEOPLE VS. OJ SIMPSON, Season 1, Episode 9 - Manna From Heaven

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Week 6: Feb. 13 – LAW & ORDER / Peter Jankowski confirmed

Screening material:

Law & Order “Prescription for Death” Season 1 Episode 1 originally aired 09/13/1990

Law & Order: Special Victims Unit “The Undiscovered Country” Season 19 Episode 13
airing 02/07/2018

Week 7: Feb. 20 – Mid-term exam

Screening material:

THE NIGHT OF, Season 1, episode 1 - The Beach

Week 8: Feb. 27 – THE GOOD WIFE / David Zucker (in person) and Michelle & Robert King (via Skype) confirmed

Screening Material:

The Good Wife, Season 1, episode 18 - Doubt

After Q&A:

THE NIGHT OF, Season 1, episode 2 - Subtle Beast

HOMICIDE: LIFE ON THE STREET, Season 6, episode 5 - The Subway

Week 9: Mar. 6 – HOMICIDE / OZ / Tom Fontana confirmed

Screening material:

ANATOMY OF A HOMICIDE: LIFE ON THE STREET (Documentary)

OZ, Season 1, episode 1 - The Routine

Mar. 13 - NO CLASS (Spring Break)

Week 10: Mar. 20 - Screening Only of THE NIGHT OF

Screening material:

THE NIGHT OF, Season 1, episode 3 - A Dark Crate

THE NIGHT OF, Season 1, episode 4 - The Art of War

THE NIGHT OF, Season 1, episode 5 - The Season of the Witch

THE NIGHT OF, Season 1, episode 6 - Samson and Delilah

Week 11: Mar. 27 – BREAKING BAD / Michelle MacLaren and Vince Gilligan confirmed

Screening material:

BREAKING BAD, Season 4, episode 12 - End Times

BREAKING BAD, Season 5, episode 8 - Gliding Over All

Week 12: Apr. 3 – REVERSAL OF FORTUNE / Nick Kazan - confirmed

Screening material:

REVERSAL OF FORTUNE film

Week 13: Apr. 10 –THE WIRE / George Pelecanos (both George and Kary will appear via Skype from NYC) confirmed

Screening material:

THE WIRE, Season 3, episode 11 - Middle Ground

After Q&A:

THE NIGHT OF, Season 1, episode 7 - Ordinary Death

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Week 14: Apr. 17 – DIRTY JOHN (Podcast) / Christopher Goffard confirmed

Podcast material:

DIRTY JOHN, Season 1, episode 1 - The Real Thing

DIRTY JOHN, Season 1, episode 6 - Terra

Week 15: Apr. 24 (last day of class) THE NIGHT OF / Steve Zaillian confirmed

Screening material:

THE NIGHT OF, Season 1, episode 8 - The Call of the Wild

Excerpts from Georgetown Law School panel on The Night Of

Finals Week:

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” <https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

Support Systems:

Student Counseling Services (SCS) - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/>

Sexual Assault Resource Center

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: <http://sarc.usc.edu/>

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. <https://equity.usc.edu/>

Bias Assessment Response and Support

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/>

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The Office of Disability Services and Programs

Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. <http://dsp.usc.edu>

Student Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/>

Diversity at USC

Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. <https://diversity.usc.edu/>

USC Emergency Information

Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, <http://emergency.usc.edu>

USC Department of Public Safety – 213-740-4321 (UPC) and 323-442-1000 (HSC) for 24-hour emergency assistance or to report a crime.

Provides overall safety to USC community. <http://dps.usc.edu>

**PLEASE NOTE:
FOOD AND DRINKS (OTHER THAN WATER) ARE NOT PERMITTED IN ANY
INSTRUCTIONAL SPACES IN THE CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX**

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