

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

CTWR 431: Real Crime: True Tales of Transgression. Seminal works in documentary and non-fiction podcast.

Spring 2019

Instructor: Kary Antholis
Departmental Assistant: Monica Lucas
Class Schedule: Mondays (7:00pm-10:00pm)
Class Location: SCA-112
Office Hours: By appointment
Contact Information: antholis@gmail.com or monicalu@usc.edu

Course Objective:

The objective of this class is...

To explore the values and aims of storytellers as they craft non-fiction narratives that have crime and/or criminal justice at center of their stories. This class will primarily serve as an opportunity to deconstruct the process of making crime documentaries and podcasts so that we can better understand the values that underlie their creation, but there promises to be much valuable information for students eyeing professions in documentary filmmaking and podcasting.

Course Description:

The title of the class is... Real Crime: True Tales of Transgression. Seminal works in documentary and non-fiction podcast.

Each class will begin with a screening or audio playback of between 45 and 90 minutes of films, television episodes, interviews and/or podcasts. We will then proceed to approximately 75-90 minutes of Q&A with invited guests. The last 15 minutes of the Q&A session 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.

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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 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 and as arguably the most prominent example of what Tom Wolfe described in his manifesto on *The New Journalism* wherein he laid out the principles of applying the techniques of fiction (and cinema) to non-fiction writing, namely: point of view; status detail; scenes; character development; and dialogue.

Our second class will explore my own entry into the world of crime documentary with my work as a creative executive on the influential HBO documentary series *Autopsy: Confessions of a Medical Examiner*, and my aims and values as I took on the job of producing a film commemorating the experiences of the victims of the Nazis crimes against humanity through the story of one survivor.

This will lead to weekly discussions with the makers of seminal crime documentaries and podcasts. Our aim in studying groundbreaking works is to understand how these projects came into existence, the values that underlie them, and objectives that motivated their creators. We will discuss their process, rules, influences, aesthetics, and working relationships. We will also discuss audience reaction to the project as well as any impact it may have had on American culture.

We will also explore the creator's path into nonfiction storytelling... watershed moments in the development of their values and craft, key influences, important mentors, first jobs, big breaks etc.

And we will ask them the best piece of advice they have ever received or one bit of guidance that they can share with this class of budding storytellers.

One final note... Before we inquire about the values and aims of these filmmakers, we will explore the values and interests of you and your fellow students. Your first class assignment will be to fill out a questionnaire that will ask you to identify: your reasons for taking the class; your favorite crime films, tv

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dramas, documentaries and podcasts; the crime stories that have fascinated you; your favorite musical artists; go to websites; and who you follow on social media.

Your answers to the questionnaire will remain anonymous, but we will present the data back to you in a collated form so that you can begin to develop a sense of the interests of individuals who are interested enough in crime storytelling to commit to taking this class. In other words, you will begin to have a sense of who the audience is for this kind of material.

Class Schedule:

Please note that Professor Ted Braun will join me in moderating some of these classes. Also, all dates are subject to change at the discretion of the professor.

- **Week 1: Jan. 7 – IN COLD BLOOD** with Howard Rodman
- **Week 2: Jan. 14 - AUTOPSY: CONFESSIONS OF A MEDICAL EXAMINER and ONE SURVIVOR REMEMBERS**
- **Week 3: Jan. 28 - DIRTY JOHN (Podcast)** with Christopher Goffard
- **Week 4: Feb. 4 - CENTRAL PARK FIVE** with Dave McMahon
- **Week 5: Feb. 11 - Screening Only CONVERSATIONS WITH A KILLER: THE TED BUNDY TAPES and O.J.: MADE IN AMERICA**
- **Week 6: Feb. 25 - MAKING A MURDERER** with Moira Demos and Laura Ricciardi
- **Week 7: March 4 - MID-TERM EXAM and CONVERSATIONS WITH A KILLER: THE TED BUNDY TAPES** with Joe Berlinger
- **Week 8: March 18 - OJ SIMPSON: MADE IN AMERICA** with Ezra Edelman
- **Week 9: March 25 - THE JINX** with Marc Smerling
- **Week 10: April 1 - Listening Session Only SERIAL: SEASON 3 (Podcast)**
- **Week 11: April 8 - THE MURDER BOOK (Podcast)** with Michael Connelly
- **Week 12: April 15 - AMANDA KNOX** with Brian McGinn
- **Week 13: April 22 - SERIAL - SEASON 3 (Podcast)** with Sarah Koenig and Julie Snyder **and Wrap Up Conversation** with Ted Braun and Marc Smerling
- **Week 14: TBD – FINAL EXAM**

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 in a Dropbox folder 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 at the following dropbox site:

Grading Criteria:

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

Leading up to the midterm and the final exams, you will have assignments to submit several moments, ideas or thoughts which you found revelatory, insightful or interesting. In these submissions, you should use quotes from the audio recording of the class or from related reading and video material in the Dropbox folder to illustrate the moment.

These submissions will not be graded but thoughtful completion of the assignment will be counted towards the participation portion of your grade.

Again, you may draw these moments, ideas or thoughts from either the class sessions or the reading material available in the Dropbox folder:

From your submissions, Monica and I will create study guides for the midterm and final exams.

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 and the notes can include these study guides, but all notes must be printed on papers. Neither tablets, laptops nor smart phones will be permitted in the exam room.

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.

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 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.

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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.

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

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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/>

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