

## *Murder Mysteries*

### *The Emergence of British Crime Fiction, 1883-1937*

**Lecturer:** PD Dr. Stefan L. Brandt, Guest Professor

**Basic information:** Hauptseminar, 2 SWS, ECTS-Studium, ECTS-Credits: 7; application at KOS.

**Place and time:** AR-B 2014/2015 - Thursdays, 10-12.

**First session:** April 3, 2008.

**Modules:** LCMS-BA-M2.1 (Textstrukturen) ab 2; EL-2 (Theorie, Geschichte und autorenspezifische Ausprägungen literarischer Gattungen) ab 2; AL3 (Organisationsformen literarischer Texte und ihre Geschichte / Textanalyse und -interpretation) ab 2; ENG-GHR-M1.2 (Gattungspoetik und Gattungsgeschichte) ab 2; ENG-BK-M1.2 (Gattungspoetik und Gattungsgeschichte) ab 2.

**Maximum number of participants:** 50

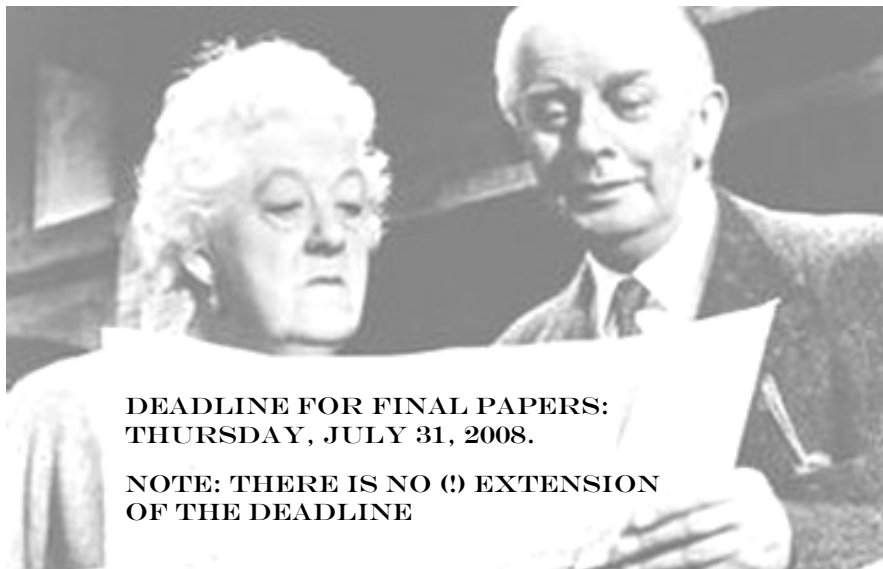
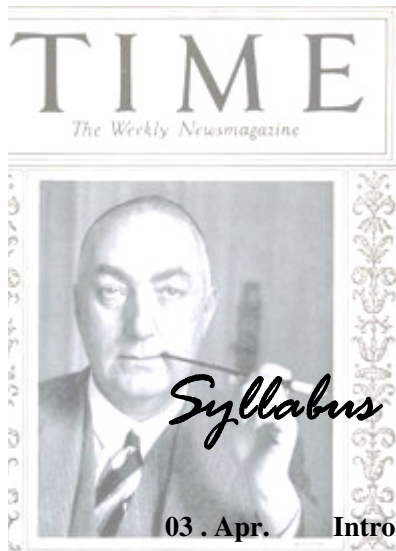
**Short description:** Our contemporary crime fiction (in literature and on television) is literally teeming with eccentric lead characters and humorous plots (e.g., *Murder She Wrote*, *Columbo*, *Monk*). Here we meet detective characters which seem to resist standards and norms and thus fascinate us with their unusual charisma. All these figures, however, have predecessors that can be traced back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century: Sherlock Holmes, Miss Marple, Hercule Poirot, and others. The era between 1883 and 1937 saw the emergence of a new genre of detective fiction which, until today, has retained its unique charm and apparent lightness. Writers such as Wilkie Collins, Arthur Conan Doyle, Gilbert K. Chesterton, Agatha Christie, Edgar Wallace, and Dorothy Sayers have helped to generate this special form of mystery fiction. In discussions of texts as diverse as *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1892), *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902), *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926), *The Murder at the Vicarage* (1930), and *Death on the Nile* (1937), this course will examine the cultural function of classic mystery novels as well as the narrative techniques (style, symbolism, etc.) deployed in them. A final section will scrutinize the aesthetic implications of British crime fiction as well as its general impact on mainstream culture. This is not a lecture course, which means that you will have to read all crucial texts, respectively watch the films. Regular attendance as well as active participation is obligatory if you want to receive a ›Schein‹ in this class.

It is highly recommended that you purchase the novel *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* by Agatha Christie (e.g., via [www.amazon.de](http://www.amazon.de)).



#### **Credit requirements:**

For 5 or 7 credit points: regular attendance, lively participation in class discussions, and at least 9 entries in the discussion forum before the session (1/3), an oral presentation as part of an expert group (1/3), and a final paper (8-10 pp. / 13-15 pp.) (1/3). For 2 credit points: attendance, participation in class discussions, and 8 entries in the discussion forum before the session (50%), oral presentation as part of an expert group (50%).



**DEADLINE FOR FINAL PAPERS:  
THURSDAY, JULY 31, 2008.**

**NOTE: THERE IS NO (C) EXTENSION  
OF THE DEADLINE**

**03 . Apr. Introduction**

**10. Apr. The Sensational Beginnings**

Wilkie Collins, »Love's Random Shot« (1883), 1-12 (available online).

**17. Apr. The Birth of the Master Detective - Sherlock Holmes and John Watson**

A.C. Doyle, »The Adventure of the Speckled Band« (1892), 1-18 (online).

**24. Apr. The Gothic Tradition in British Crime Fiction**

*The Hound of the Baskervilles* (dir. Terence Fisher, 1959), based on A.C. Doyle's novel (1901). \*

**01. May Labor Day & Ascension Day**

No class! Relax and enjoy!

**08. May The Invention of the Cleric Detective – Father Brown**

Gilbert K. Chesterton, »The Secret Garden« (1911), 1-14 (online).

**15. May The Hardboiled Genre**

Edgar Wallace, »The Treasure Hunt«, from: *The Mind of Mr. J.G. Reeder*(1925), 2-14 (online).



**22. May Corpus Christi Holiday (Fronleichnam)**

Relax and enjoy!

**29. May The Self-Reflexive Crime Tale**

Dorothy L. Sayers, »The Man Who Knew How« (1932), 35-51 (online).

**05. June The Spinster Detective – Miss Marple**

*Murder at the Gallop* (dir. G. Pollock, 1963), based on A. Christie's *After the Funeral* (1953)\*

**12. June The Small Town as a Typical Setting of British Crime Narratives**

A. Christie, *Murder at the Vicarage* (1930), especially ch. I-VI, IX, XII; XIX; XXIX-XXXII (online).

**19. June The Cultivation of Logic and Wit – Hercule Poirot**

A. Christie, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926), ch. 1-12 (buy this book).

**26. June Challenging the Reader – An Unusual Dénouement**

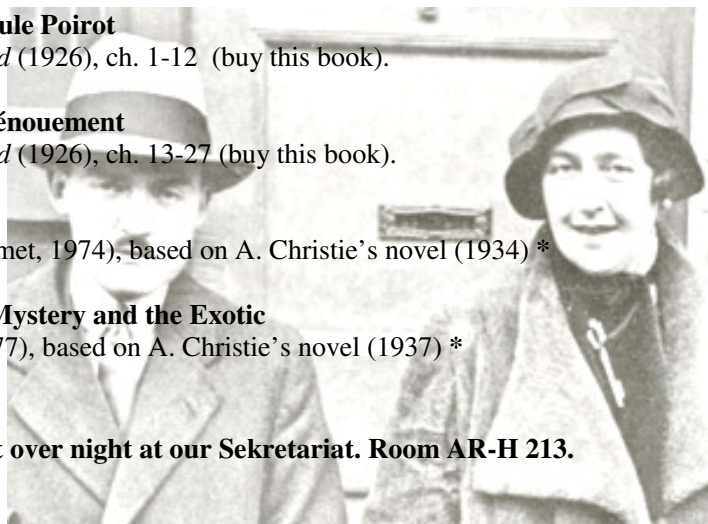
A. Christie, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926), ch. 13-27 (buy this book).

**03. July The Locked-Room Mystery**

*Murder on the Orient Express* (dir. S. Lumet, 1974), based on A. Christie's novel (1934) \*

**10. July Colonial Designs – The British Murder Mystery and the Exotic**

*Death on the Nile* (dir. J. Guillermin, 1977), based on A. Christie's novel (1937) \*



\* These films are available on DVD. They can be checked out over night at our Sekretariat. Room AR-H 213.