

English 147a
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Film Noir

Summer 2024

NOTE: THIS IS A DRAFT AND A PRE-SYLLABUS

Noir can mean classic noir or it can include neonoir. Whenever I teach this course in the summer I consult with students about what balance they would like. This is what we did two summers ago, but we can alter the balance this summer depending on student interest.

We're meeting via Zoom: <https://brandeis.zoom.us/j/97366420827>

Please note that while classes will be recorded for those forced to miss them or who want to review them, this is a synchronous class

The dates below indicate when you should have watched the assigned movie (and in two cases read the assigned essay). If I give a surprise quiz or two, I will expect you to be caught up to whatever date I give the quiz on. Unless otherwise noted, all films should be available in the Latte video block.

Week 1: Intro, *Exterior Night* (class screening)
Detour (on Youtube), *The Maltese Falcon*
The Killers

Week 2: *Double Indemnity*
Out of the Past
The Big Sleep

Week 3: *The Hitchhiker*, *Kiss Me Deadly*; Warshow: [“The Gangster as Tragic Hero” \(essay\)](#)
Sweet Smell of Success
Touch of Evil

Week 4: *Odds Against Tomorrow*, *Breathless*
Blade Runner
Devil in a Blue Dress

Week 5: *Dark City*; Simmel: [“The Stranger” \(essay\)](#)
Brick

Grading will be based on 10 pass fail responses to 10 movies. Each response should be 250-500 words long.

These responses should point out something interesting in the movie that wouldn't necessarily be obvious – the sort of thing it would be worth writing a blog post about or an email to a friend

whom you'd seen the movie with. In other words, you want to say something that you noticed and thought was interesting and that you would think maybe most people didn't – that it to say, that would be worthwhile pointing out to the friend you'd see the movie with.

Final grades will be based on this simple table:

Number of Passes	Final Grade
10	A
9	A-
8	B+
7	B
6	B-
5	C+
4	C
3	C-
2	D
1	D-

You must get your response in before we discuss the movie in question.

Class participation can always help on your final grade.

The rest of this syllabus is required boilerplate but comes down to: The class is about extending your knowledge of film noir (including neonoir); don't plagiarize or cheat because that will get you into real trouble; let me know if you need accommodations; each hour of class time should correspond to about three hours of out-of-class work.

Boilerplate:

Learning Goals:

To read and discuss some noir and neonoir movies and to go more deeply into them.

The Brandeis administration requires all teachers to include the following information on their syllabi, and since I am not a cynical or hardboiled professor I do so joyfully:

Credit Hours:

Success in this four-credit course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of three hours of study time per hour of scheduled class time, in preparation for class (readings, papers, online assignments).

Accommodations

Brandeis seeks to welcome and include all students. If you are a student who needs accommodations as outlined in an accommodations letter, the university seeks to support you.

In order to provide test accommodations, I need the letter more than 48 hours in advance.

Accommodations cannot be provided retroactively. If you have questions about documenting a disability of requesting accommodations, please contact Student Accessibility Support (SAS <https://www.brandeis.edu/accessibility/>) at 781.736.3470 or access@brandeis.edu.”

Academic Integrity

Every member of the University community is expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. A student shall not submit work that is falsified or is not the result of the student's own effort. Infringement of academic honesty by a student subjects that student to serious penalties, which may include failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension from the University or other sanctions (see section 20 of R&R). Please consult Brandeis University Rights and Responsibilities for all policies and procedures related to academic integrity. Students may be required to submit work to TurnItIn.com software to verify originality. A student who is in doubt regarding standards of academic honesty as they apply to a specific course or assignment should consult the faculty member responsible for that course or assignment before submitting the work. Allegations of alleged academic dishonesty will be forwarded to the Department of Student Rights and Community Standards. Citation and research assistance can be found at Brandeis Library Guides - Citing Sources (<https://guides.library.brandeis.edu/c.php?g=301723>).

Student Support

Brandeis University is committed to supporting all our students so they can thrive. The following resources are available to help with the many academic and non-academic factors that contribute to student success (finances, health, food supply, housing, mental health counseling, academic advising, physical and social activities, etc.). Please explore the many links on this Support at Brandeis page (<https://www.brandeis.edu/support/undergraduate-students/browse.html>) to find out more about the resources that Brandeis provides to help you and your classmates to achieve success.

Course Materials

If you are having difficulty purchasing course materials, please make an appointment with your Student Financial Services or Academic Services advisor to discuss possible funding options and/or textbook alternatives.

Library

The Brandeis Library collections and staff offer resources and services to support Brandeis students, faculty and staff. These include workshops, consultations, collaboration, materials and instruction on emerging trends in technologies such as machine learning, emerging trends in research such as data visualization, and emerging trends in scholarship such as open access. Librarians at the Circulation Desk, Research Help Desk, Archives & Special Collections, Sound

& Image Media Studios, MakerLab, AutomationLab, and Digital Scholarship Lab are available to help you. <https://www.brandeis.edu/library/about/index.html>