

**History 6687: American History Through Crime
Spring 2017**

Professor: Steve Goodson

Place and Time: TLC 3205; Thursday 5:30-8:00

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Office: TLC 3224

Office Hours: MW 1:30-3:30. TTH 2:00-5:30; or by appointment.

Course Description: In this course we will look at how historians and others have written about, analyzed, and drawn insight from crime in American history. Through films, documentaries, TV and radio programs, and music we will also discuss the role that crime has played in American popular culture.

Requirements: There are three principal requirements on which each student's final grade will be based.

1. **Class Participation** (35%): Your willingness to actively participate will be central to the success of this class. In order to participate, it will be absolutely necessary for you to keep up with the required readings so you can discuss them in an informed manner. Your ideas and your responses to the readings are important, and you should feel free to talk about them. On the other hand, please remember that you are not the only student in the class – help make sure that everyone gets the opportunity to talk, and listen courteously and attentively to what other students have to say. The quality of what you say is more important than the quantity of your comments. Failure to keep up with the readings will severely damage your final grade.

2. **Book Review** (15 percent): In addition to the readings we will do as a class, I would like you to choose one book to read and review on your own. You can kill two birds with one stone by choosing a book that you can use in researching and writing your final paper. So begin thinking about what topic you would like to cover in your final paper, and look for books that will be relevant to that topic. Choose one of these books, and review it in a 4-6 page paper. All book reviews are due by **March 30**.

3. **Final Paper** (50 percent): This will represent the largest chunk of your final grade. For the final paper, you should choose a topic related to crime in American history that you would like to explore in more depth. This could be any area that we will cover this semester, or it can be another area if you have a particular interest you would like to pursue. You have two options for the final paper. You will write either a review essay or a paper based on historiographical reading and primary research. (18-23 pages)

Reading List:

Amy Gilman Strebnick, *The Mysterious Death of Mary Rogers: Sex and Culture in Nineteenth-Century New York*

Joan Jacobs Brumberg, *Kansas Charley, the Boy Murderer*

Erik Larson, *The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, and Madness at the Fair That Changed America*

Steven Oney, *And the Dead Shall Rise: The Murder of Mary Phagan and the Lynching of Leo Frank*

Gregg Olsen, *Starvation Heights: A True Story of Murder and Malice in the Woods of the Pacific Northwest*

Kevin Boyle, *Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age*

William Bradford Huie, *The Execution of Private Slovik*

Truman Capote, *In Cold Blood*

Hampton Sides, *Hellhound on His Trail: The Electrifying Account of the Largest Manhunt in History*

David Simon, *Homicide: A Year on the Killing Streets*

Class Schedule

Date and Required Reading

January 19 -- Amy Gilman Strebick, *The Mysterious Death of Mary Rogers*

January 26 -- Joan Jacobs Brumberg, *Kansas Charley, the Boy Murderer*

February 2

February 9 -- Erik Larson, *The Devil in the White City*

February 16 –

February 23 – Steve Oney, *And the Dead Shall Rise*

March 2 -- Gregg Olsen, *Starvation Heights*

March 9 -- Kevin Boyle, *Arc of Justice*

Preliminary Topic Description/Bibliography Due

March 16 -- William Bradford Huie, *The Execution of Private Slovik*

March 20-24 – Spring Break

March 30 – **Book Review Due**

April 6 -- Truman Capote, *In Cold Blood*

Detailed Outline Due

April 13 -- Hampton Sides, *Hell Hound on His Trail*

April 20 – **Draft of Final Paper Due**

April 27 -- David Simon, *Homicide: A Year on the Killing Streets*

Draft Returned With Suggested Revisions

May 4 -- **Final Paper Due**

Things to Think About While Reading

Why did the author choose this particular story? Simply because of the drama or mystery, or for other reasons?

How good a job does the author do of creating a historical context and situating the story within it?

What does the story reveal about the times in which it took place, and how do the times shape the story?

Does the author present an argument? If so, how strong and well supported is that argument?

How well supported by documentation is the story the author tells? Does he or she take liberties by making assertions or by presenting material that is not supported by the documentation?

