  

**German Crime Stories**

German 312

Spring 2025

10:50 – 12:05

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Office hours: Mon. 1:30 – 2:30, Tue. 1:00 – 2:00 OR by appointment

This course synthesizes the four essential components of language learning (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) with cultural artifacts such as literary texts, film, and television on the topic of German crime stories. We will explore German-language mystery and detective stories through various mediums. The German *Krimi*, short for *Kriminalgeschichte/Kriminalfilm/Kriminalliteratur*, has a significant position in the body of fictional works of literature, film, and television in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. Today the *Krimi* is a main staple of the cultural life in German-speaking countries, but it also has a long history. All work will be done in German.

**Learning Outcomes and Goals**

In addition to honing language skills in the areas of speaking, listening, reading, and writing, students will develop their ability to approach the genre of crime fiction analytically. Through close readings of the materials, class discussions, writing assignments, presentations, and group work, students will enhance their interpretive abilities by assessing narratives in different media. Students will be able to define and apply critical terms of crime fiction, but also identify and contextualize the deeper cultural and social commentary in the narratives. In a way, each of you will become literary detectives paying close attention to details and clues in the texts!

**Expectations**

**A =** The student is always prepared, attentive, eager to contribute to discussion and in group work, always volunteers answers, completes all assignments with distinction, always in attendance.

**B =** The student is prepared, mostly always attentive, contributes to discussion, usually asks questions in class, does well on written assignments, has a good record of attendance.

**C =** The student pays attention but can be distracted, occasionally eager to participate, sometimes unprepared, misses class.

**D =** The student is often distracted, often unprepared, rarely participates, seems disinterested, excessive absences.

**Course Materials**

All course materials except for one novel will be provided via the Moodle course page. Please check Moodle for all homework, updates, assignments, and study materials.

\*\* To purchase: Friedrich Dürrenmatt. *Der Richter und sein Henker*. Rowohlt Verlag. **ISBN: 9783499101502** [please use this edition]



(You should be able to obtain a copy of the novel inexpensively online. I would recommend calling the book service IBIS. [https://www.ibiservice.com/product-p/9783499101502.htm] They have a number of copies in stock for about $10 + shipping)

**Grading**

Attendance and Participation: 25%

*Tatort* Assignments: 10%

Presentations/Discussion Lead: 20%

Book Review/Midterm: 30%

Final Project: 15%

**Attendance and Participation**

This course is a seminar, so it relies on the active participation of each student every class. Keep in mind that we will be discussing fictional texts that are open to analysis; in short, there are no right or wrong interpretations. The best way to succeed is to come to class prepared, be ready to discuss the materials, be attentive to everyone in the class, and ask as many questions as possible. Since participation is so essential to our seminar, attendance is mandatory. **After more than one unexcused absence, your grade will drop half a letter grade**, and for each subsequent unexcused absence the same. If you have a time conflict, please let me know in advance, and we can work something out.

***Tatort* Writing Assignments**

*Tatort* is a weekly made-for-tv *Krimifilm* that celebrates this year its 55th anniversary on air. *Tatort* remains today the most viewed German-made television series of all time, with millions tuning in each Sunday evening to watch the latest episode. As a staple of German *Krimikultur*, we will be regularly viewing episodes and analyzing them for their plots, as well as the social commentary they provide on contemporary German culture. You will be provided a *Tatort* worksheet, which you will complete before class in preparation of the class discussion.

**Presentation/Discussion Lead**

Each student will give a presentation on a relevant course topic, as well as take part in a group discussion lead on the days that we discuss a *Tatort* episode. For the individual presentations there will be a list of topics that pertain to what we are discussing in class that you will sign up for. Each presentation of about 10 minutes should have a visual element (i.e., PowerPoint with slides), followed by a prepared series of questions that facilitate discussion for another 10 minutes. The group discussion lead will entail the discussants doing some online research in order to establish the critical reception that particular episode of *Tatort*. The group discussion should introduce the episode, its plot, themes, critical reception, and then follow with a series of questions that facilitate discussion.

**Midterm**

There will be an in-class midterm exam that consists of short written answers pertaining to themes, questions, and ideas that are central to the class.

**Book Review**

After finishing our discussion *Der Richter und sein Henker* there will be a book review of about 700–1,000 words. The book review should assess the novel on its merits as an example of *Krimiliteratur*, rather than summarize the narrative. How does the plot function as a *Krimi*? What kind of a detective is the main character? How does it match up to other works?

**Final Project**

The class’s final project will be to produce a *Hörspiel*, a radio drama for which you and your assigned group will produce a script about a crime story and record it. Additionally, you should provide an accompanying listener’s guide that provides a rationale for any influences, plot choices, and social commentary in your script. More details to follow.

**Students with Academic Accommodations**

Trinity College is committed to creating an inclusive and accessible learning environment consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students with disabilities who may need some accommodation in order to fully participate in this class are urged to contact the Student Accessibility Resource Center, as soon as possible, to explore what arrangements need to be made to assure access.

If you have approval for academic accommodations, please notify me by the end of week two of classes. For those students with accommodations approved after the start of the semester, a minimum of 10 days’ notice is required. Please be sure to meet with me privately to discuss implementation.

Student Accessibility Resources can be reached by emailing [SARC@trincoll.edu](mailto:SARC@trincoll.edu).

**Semesterplan**

(*See Moodle for class schedule and all assignments*)