

English 200e: The World of Sherlock Holmes

Condon Hall: 125

Professor: Jesse Oak Taylor

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Office Hours: T/Th 2:20-3:30 PM (or by appointment)

Padelford A-405

Sherlock Holmes is perhaps the most recognizable literary character ever created. The Holmes stories have spawned innumerable adaptations for the stage, radio, television, and film. The fame of detective himself has long since outstripped that of his creator, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Holmes's iconic image with deerstalker hat and pipe appears in advertisements, neighborhood watch signs, political cartoons, and the tiles of the Baker Street stop on the London Underground. Many people continue to believe he was real.

Holmes's London was capital of the world's first industrial society, heart of a vast empire, and arguably the first instance of an environment in which even the weather was a product of human action. The great detective emerged at a time when the bounds between nature and culture, human and animal, science and religion were being challenged, and that the changes wrought upon the physical environment by industrial modernity were becoming increasingly clear. Holmes's cases deal explicitly with the dazzling new complexities of modern existence: dark secrets are brought home from distant lands, strange animals and foreign substances are loosed upon the metropolis, technological inventions from the telegraph to the military submarine to the automobile make their appearances alongside Holmes's invariably "malodorous" chemical experiments. Above all, the Holmes stories reveal the city of London itself—its teeming millions, its secrets, "outré" occurrences, its opaque complexities, shrouded in the "dun-coloured fogs" curling at the windows of 221b Baker Street.

Reading many of the major Holmes stories and novels, this course will the late-Victorian era in which Holmes emerged as well as his ongoing relevance and appeal. In the process, this course will help us think about the way literary studies rubs against an array of fields, from urban studies to the history of science and technology, empire, postcolonial studies, and cosmopolitanism. Reading detective fiction in this context is particularly productive because the cases not only reveal so many of the cultural anxieties prevalent in the late-Victorian era, but also dramatize Holmes's "reading" of the situation and weighing of evidence. Thus, they offer a paradigm for the methods of literary and historical inquiry. Over the course of the term, we will explore various modes of reading while at the same time, considering Holmes himself as a model for the ideal reader.

Course Texts: I have ordered *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Stories with Illustrations from the 'Strand' Magazine* (Wordsworth Editions) to the University Bookstore. However, you are welcome to use another collected edition of the Holmes stories, provided that it is complete. Additional supplemental readings will be posted as PDFs on the course CANVAS site.

Grade Breakdown:

Participation & In-class Writing: 30%

Paper 1 (3-4 Pages): 30%

Paper 2 (3-4 Pages): 30%

Response Papers (2 @ 1 page each): 10%

Participation: This course is a collaborative enterprise. You are expected to speak up in class, raise questions, join in small group activities, and generally make your engagement with the material known. At the end of each class session, you will hand in a brief note (a couple of sentences or a paragraph at most) with a thought, comment, or question pertaining to that day's class or readings. These will contribute to your participation grade, but are not intended to take the place of active contribution to class discussions.

Computers and Electronics: Unless you have a very specific reason for needing them, I request that you not use computers or electronics in class. Almost all the readings will be drawn from the Holmes collection, so you should acquire a physical copy of the complete novels and stories. On the few occasions when we will be reading supplemental essays, please print the readings and bring them with you to class. You will be asked to do short, in-class writings, so you should bring a pen or pencil and paper with you every day.

Papers: You will write two essays for this course, as well as two short response papers. The response papers, due in Weeks 2 and 4, will be graded only on a complete/ incomplete basis. However, they can serve as drafts and/or practice runs for your longer essays. The first essay will focus on a specific formal feature of the story in question (e.g. Clues, Setting, Evidence). The second will ask you to develop a more unified reading of one of the stories, in which you link its formal features to a broader interpretation.

All papers will be submitted through the course CANVAS page. They must: have a title, use a standard (i.e., Times or equivalent) 12 pt. font, be double spaced with 1-inch margins, and have numbered pages.

Given the shortness of the summer term, I will give extensions only if arranged at least 24 hours in advance, and only for two full days (i.e., papers due on Friday will instead be due Monday). If you have not previously arranged an extension, late work will lose ½ letter grade per day.

Reading Schedule:

Week 1

Th. 7/23/15 Introductions: *A Study in Scarlet*, Ch. 1-2.

Recommended: BBC *Sherlock*, Episode 1 "A Study in Pink" (On Reserve in Suzzallo Library Media Center, and available for purchase on GooglePlay:

<http://www.canistream.it/tv/series/176941/sherlock?season=1&episode=1>)

Week 2

M. 7/27/15 *A Study in Scarlet* Ch. 3-7

T. 7/28/15 *A Study in Scarlet* Ch. 8-14

W. 7/29/15 "The Five Orange Pips" & "The Cardboard Box"

Th. 7/30/15 "A Case of Identity" & "The *Gloria Scott*"

F. 7/31/15 **Response Paper 1 Due**

Week 3

M. 8/3/15 “A Scandal in Bohemia” & “Charles Augustus Milverton”

T. 8/4/15 “The Dancing Men” & “The Musgrave Ritual”

W. 8/5/15 “The Norwood Builder,” “The Priory School,” & “Silver Blaze”

Th. 8/6/15 “The Greek Interpreter” & “The Bruce-Partington Plans”

F. 8/7/15 **Essay 1 Due**

Week 4

M. 8/10/15 *The Sign of Four*, Ch. 1-6

T. 8/11/15 *The Sign of Four*, Ch. 7-12

W. 8/12/15 “The Speckled Band” & “The Crooked Man”

Th. 8/13/15 “The Devil’s Foot” & “The Dying Detective”

F. 8/14/15 **Response Paper 2 Due**

Week 5

M. 8/17/15 *The Hound of the Baskervilles*

T. 8/18/15 *The Hound of the Baskervilles*

W. 8/19/15 “The Final Problem,” “The Empty House” & “His Last Bow”

Th. 8/20/15 Auden: “Notes on the Detective Story, By an Addict” & Moretti “The Slaughterhouse of Literature”

F. 8/21/15 **Essay 2 Due**