

American Detective Fiction

Course Description

Who has committed the murders in the Rue Morgue and who is blackmailing General Sternwood? – In this seminar we will join famous fictional detectives in their endeavor to solve puzzling cases whilst also investigating the development of the particular genre of American detective fiction. We will take into focus detective stories of three centuries and centrally explore the fascination with and the logic of both reader and characters investigating a variety of criminal offences. In doing so, this seminar will shed light on distinct formats such as the Whodunit, the locked-room mystery, or the American hard-boiled novel. We will also touch upon issues such as the rise of the female detective as well as digitalization, gender stereotypes and ethnic diversity in American detective fiction. Theoretical explorations of means and key concerns will be discussed in connection with selected short stories and novels including Edgar Allan Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841), the Nick Carter short story "The House with the Open Door or The Double Crime of Madison Avenue" (1904), Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep* (1939), and Jane Pek's *The Verifiers* (2022). Requirements for this course comprise taking and passing short reading quizzes, participating in an expert group, and, if required by the individual's study program, handing in a term paper at the end of the semester.

***Announcement:** While copies of short stories will be provided, students are required to lend or purchase their own text editions of Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep* and Jane Pek's *The Verifiers*.

***Warning:** Please note that material studied in this course contains representations of violence as well as strong language!