**ENGL 1355 First-Year Seminar—Film and Literature: American Crime Stories (CRN 19479)**

Fall 2019, 9-9:50 AM MWF, Irby Hall 201

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Office Hours: 10:00-11:00 AM MWF, 3:00-4:00 PM W; 11:00 AM-12:00 PM, 2:30-3:30 PM TTh; and by appointment

**Course Description and Goals:**

This course is part of the Critical Inquiry component of the Lower-Division Core. Critical Inquiry courses promote the ability to analyze new problems and situations to formulate informed opinions and conclusions. Because our focus will be fictional representations of people facing real-world problems and situations, the course satisfies the Humanities requirement within Critical Inquiry.

This section is also designated as a First-Year Seminar [FYS] course. The purpose of the first-year seminar is to provide a small-class learning environment to facilitate engagement in academic study at the collegiate level, make a connection to the university, and reinforce the importance of written communication skills. We’ll accomplish these goals through discussion, individual writing assignments, and group presentations in class, with the aim of enhancing your ability to develop and present ideas logically and effectively, both on your own and in collaboration with diverse individuals and groups.

For more information about the structure and purposes of the UCA Core, consult

http://uca.edu/core/.

**Texts:**

*Scarface: A Bloody, Bullet-Spatter Novel Based on Al Capone*, by Armitage Trail

*Film Studies: An Introduction*, by Ed Sikov

**NOTE: These texts are required for the course. Students who fail to bring a book to class when a reading in it is assigned for that day will be counted absent.**

**READING, VIEWING, AND WRITING SCHEDULE**:

August 23 Introduction to goals & methods of the course

Week 1 Introduction continued, read and discuss *Scarface: A Bloody, Bullet-Spatter* etc.

Weeks 2-3 Read Sikov introduction and chapters 1 and 10, watch and discuss film version of *Scarface*

Weeks 4-5 Read Sikov chapter 6, watch and discuss film *High Sierra*

Weeks 6-8 Read Sikov chapters 2 and 4, watch and discuss film *The Godfather*  
**First essay due Monday, October 7**

Weeks 9-10 Read Sikov chapters 5 and 9, watch and discuss film *Thelma and Louise*

Weeks 11-12 Read Sikov chapters 7 and 8, watch and discuss film *American Gangster*  
**Second essay due Monday, November 11**

Weeks 13-15 Read Sikov chapter 3, watch and discuss film *Hell and High Water*, begin work on group project

Wednesday, Dec. 11 **Final Exam, 2 PM—group project due**

**ATTENDANCE**: Attendance—**on time**—is mandatory. Four or more absences will lower your class-participation grade, as will recurrent late arrival. If you miss five classes, you'll have one week after the last absence to see me with a believable excuse and a promise to sin no more; if you don't make this deadline, you'll be dropped from the course. And if you miss a sixth class following our conference about the four absences, you'll likewise be dropped. **Important note: “Attendance” in this class is defined as being present mentally as well as physically. If you spend the greater part of a class period sleeping, chatting with those around you, doing homework for another class, texting, or in any other way failing to engage with the class discussion, you’ll be marked absent for that period. All materials not essential to your participation in the class must remain in your backpack during class; this includes laptops, iPads, phones and other communication devices, books and notebooks for other classes, etc.**

**ESSAYS**: There are no in-class exams in this course; instead, you’re required to turn in two essays written outside of class on the dates specified in the reading schedule above, as well as doing a group project at the end of the term. I’ll hand out detailed instructions for each assignment later, but, generally speaking, they’ll ask you to relate our in-class discussions of books and films to a text or film from outside of class coverage. **You have the option to rewrite one of the first two essays for a higher grade if you’re dissatisfied with the outcome of the first version; I’ll average the grade of the revision with the grade of the original for your final score on that paper.**

**JOURNALS**: Each student must keep a journal of his or her thoughts on the assigned readings and films, usually with one entry devoted to each work before we discuss it in class (we’ll adjust this requirement for days when we both finish watching and start discussing a film). Ordinarily, I’ll pose several questions for you to respond to in each entry, **with that response consisting of at least three paragraphs**, and ask you to end by saying what you think is the most important element of that work to discuss in class, whether because you found it confusing, very interesting, or something else altogether. Beyond that requirement you're also free to write as much as you wish about whatever intrigues you, inspires you, confuses you, or upsets you about the work in question, and about this work's relationship to other works you've read or seen and its relevance to human life in general and your own life in particular. **The first journal assignment, on the book version of *Scarface*, is printed at the end of this handout**.

There are two goals to this assignment, both of which you're probably already aware of. First, the act of writing stimulates thinking: even if at the outset you feel you have nothing at all to say about a given work, you'll find that putting fingers to keyboard will bring ideas forth; if you do have some ideas to start with you'll find that writing them down will cause you to extend and refine them. Second, as might be obvious from what's just been said, these entries will prove a rich source of class discussion and essay topics.

Usually, you'll submit these journals by e-mail to the address listed for me at the top of the syllabus, **no later than 24 hours prior to the first class meeting during which we'll discuss that work** (I’ll give a more precise deadline with each specific assignment, as you can see for the first one below). **I won’t accept a journal entry after the due date, but you are allowed to miss one journal with no penalty.**

I'll grade you for each submission: if your entry shows an honest, thoughtful effort to come to grips with the work, you'll get somewhere from 8 to 10; if it shows a solid but not all that insightful effort, you'll get somewhere from 4 to 7; if you don't do the entry, or if you blow it off with superficial comments, you'll get somewhere from 0 to 3. At the end of the semester, I’ll figure your final journal grade by taking the ratio of the total points you’ve earned to the total points possible. If we do twelve journals, for instance, then the total possible score will be 120; if you earn 100, then your percentage is 84, which means a B for your final journal grade. (My grading scale is 91-100=A, 80-90=B, 70-79=C, 60-69=D, below 60=F.)

**GRADES**: Your final grade will come from the following percentages:

Attendance/  
Participation: 20%

Journal : 20%

Essay 1: 20%

Essay 2: 20%

Group Project 20%

**COURSE EVALUATIONS** (in which *you* get to grade *me*): Student evaluations of a course and its professor are a crucial element in helping faculty achieve excellence in the classroom and the institution in demonstrating that students are gaining knowledge. Students may evaluate courses they are taking starting on Monday, November 18, through the end of finals week by logging in to myUCA and clicking on the Evals button on the top right.

**The Fine Print:** Please refer to your Student Handbook for academic and sexual harassment policies. The University of Central Arkansas adheres to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you need an accommodation under this Act due to a disability, please contact the UCA Office of Disability Services at 450-3613.

The University of Central Arkansas affirms its commitment to academic integrity and expects all members of the university community to accept shared responsibility for maintaining academic integrity. Students in this course are subject to the provisions of the university's Academic Integrity Policy, approved by the Board of Trustees as Board Policy No. 709 on February 10, 2010, and published in the Student Handbook. Penalties for academic misconduct in this course may include a failing grade on an assignment, a failing grade in the course, or any other course-related sanction the instructors determine to be appropriate. Continued enrollment in this course affirms a student's acceptance of this university policy.

Title IX Disclosure

If a student discloses an act of sexual harassment, discrimination, assault, or other sexual misconduct to a faculty member (as it relates to “student-on-student” or “employee-on-student”), the faculty member cannot maintain complete confidentiality and is required to report the act and may be required to reveal the names of the parties involved. Any allegations made by a student may or may not trigger an investigation; each situation differs and the obligation to conduct an investigation will depend on the specific circumstances. The determination to conduct an investigation will be made by the Title IX Coordinator.  For further information, please visit: https://uca.edu/titleix. Disclosure of sexual misconduct by a third party who is not a student and/or employee is also required if the misconduct occurs when the third party is a participant in a university-sponsored program, event, or activity.

An Emergency Procedures Summary (EPS) for the building in which this class is held will be discussed during the first week of this course. EPS documents for most buildings on campus are available at http://uca.edu/mysafety/bep/. Every student should be familiar with emergency procedures for any campus building in which he/she spends time for classes or other purposes.

**First journal, on book version of *Scarface*, due via e-mail by about noon on Tuesday, August 27:** The narrator of the story tells us several times that Tony is intelligent and has strong leadership abilities, attributes that would make him successful in a lawful line of work. What are the reasons, then, that the narrator gives us for Tony’s becoming a criminal instead? (There are a lot of those, so don’t worry about getting the “right” one or listing all of them; just note the three or four that seem most significant to you.) Then, state the one aspect of this story that you feel is most important to discuss in class, whether that’s because you’d like to understand it better or for any other reason.