Description
How do we study the city (i.e., Los Angeles or the El Paso/Juarez borderlands) through noir fiction and films? How do cultural representations of the social problems that plague most metropolises function as an "archive of the city" (Ranjani Mazumdar)? How is the night symbolic of those aspects of our cultural history that many choose not to see, particularly sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, human trafficking, police brutality, and prostitution? How does the noir detective's journey through the labyrinth of these crime signify our own struggles with what Gloria Anzaldúa calls our "Shadow Beast"? This upper-division seminar will explore the literary and visual representations of noir, queer, and LatinX Los Angeles in detective fiction and films. In addition to reading novels by Latinx writers, watching noir films, and supplementing our critical and textual analyses with secondary texts, there will also be a literary mapping component and a literary project. Your “final paper” will be an original Noir Latinx story.

Learning Objectives and Outcomes
- To study theories of representation
- To deconstruct the metaphor of “night” as a trope of violence and forgetting
- To practice semiotic and comparative analysis between films and novels
- To practice “listening” to stories via a radio podcast
- To learn how to use GIS and Google Fusion for mapping

Grading Structure
- Thick Mapping Exercise 10%
- Blog 10%
- Two short papers (500 words; 10% each) 20%
- Oral presentation on one secondary source from Category B 20%¹
- Final Project: Original Mystery Story (includes workshop blogging, Participation and public reading) 40%

Required Books (**indicates available as an ebook)**
1. *Wired for Story* by Lisa Cron**
2. *Desert Blood: The Juárez Murders* by Alicia Gaspar de Alba**
3. *Buenas Noches American Culture: Latino/a Aesthetics of Night* by María De Guzmán
4. *The Hidden Law* by Michael Nava**
5. *The Zoot Suit Murders* by Thomas Sánchez
6. *Blood Daughters* by Marcos M. Villatoro**

¹ Graduate students will prepare TWO oral presentations at 10% each, one Oral Book Review on books from Category B and one Oral Movie Review on one of the films from Category C.
Category B Texts: Secondary Sources (select ONE only)

A. *Dark Borders: Film Noir and American Citizenship* by Jonathan Auerbach
B. *The Philosophy of Neo-Noir* edited by Mark T. Conard
C. *Detours and Lost Highways: A Map of Neo-Noir* by Foster Hirsch
D. *Brown Gumshoes: Detective Fiction and the Search for Chicana/o Identity* by Ralph E. Rodriguez

“Thick-Mapping” Exercise (10%)
Using digital humanities methodologies—GPS coordinates and Google Fusion—you will create a map of the specific neighborhood where you grew up, beginning with your “home address,” and expanding it to include the places you most inhabited: school, church, grocery store, mall, park, etc. For each location, write a short memory that took place there. Label your map with your first name, for example, Profe’s Memory Map. Your map will be uploaded to the course website and will become the location of your original noir story.

Blog (10%)
Every week, you will have a specific blog entry to write responding to one of the prompts listed in the syllabus on page 4. Only a couple of these will be written in-class; the rest should be done for homework. Most of your blog entries will focus on aspects of your original noir story. URL for Blog will be on Blogspot, so make sure you have a gmail address.

Short Papers (10% each; 20% total)
Consider these papers holistic personal and analytical responses to the materials for weeks 2-5 and 6-9/You can select whichever texts you want from each of these periods, but be sure you include a novel and a film to comment on, analyze, and perhaps argue with or deconstruct. For full credit, your single-spaced 2-page response must address both types of “texts” studied in that module of the course—the novel and film as primary texts. Extra credit will be given if you can effectively integrate a secondary source into your paper. Here are some sample prompts that may prove useful to get you started.

1) How is the city or metropolis represented by these texts? What do these representations say about the social problems plaguing Los Angeles (or any metropolitan city, i.e., homelessness, poverty, police violence, drug-trafficking, sexual assault)? Provide examples from each text.
2) Study the detective in each text. Who are they? What’s their motivation or driving desire? What’s their fatal flaw? How do they find or lose themselves in the process of investigating the crime? Provide examples from each text.
3) In what ways is “night” symbolic of the darker, more dangerous, forgotten (i.e., hidden, obscured, covered-up) aspects of human nature and/or the city that the sleuth has to confront and expose? How is the detective’s quest to solve the crime representative of what Gloria Anzaldúa calls confronting our “Shadow Beast”? Provide examples from each text.

Each paper must be single-spaced (not 1.5), set with 1-inch margins all around, and printed front and back, if possible. You may integrate no more than two short quotes from the readings, and these must be footnoted at the bottom of the page where each note appears. Please proofread your work, especially if you tend to have grammar issues, punctuation and/or spelling mistakes, typos, and poor syntax. If your writing requires help in any of these areas, I will ask you to go to the Writing Center for assistance.
Oral Presentation (Prezi) (20%) 
You and your teammate(s) will be preparing an Oral Presentation on a secondary source in Category B. Even though it’s not mandatory, I highly recommend that you purchase your secondary source, as it will make preparing this presentation much easier. This reading will be in addition to the scheduled readings for the day your team presents. Think of this presentation as an Oral Book Review.

1. Undergraduate and Graduate Students: Oral Book Review of one of the secondary sources in Category B. Google <How to Write a Book Review> and follow their directions. You must turn in a one-page outline of your presentation on the day you present, as well as the link to your presentation and your team’s written review. Your review should begin with your argument about the book (i.e., How useful is this text for learning about the noir genre? What new idea did you learn about noir in this book? What does this secondary source teach us about the use of “place” in noir literature?) Your review should also include a brief synopsis of each chapter in the book. In your conclusion, be sure you answer the following question: Why would you/not recommend this book to other scholars of noir? Please send me the link to your presentation before class so that I can add it to our course website. Time limit: 15 minutes, plus 5 minutes of Q&A. Your team will be graded collectively on this assignment, so make sure everyone on the team does their share of the work. NB: graduate students will do individual presentations.

2. Graduate Students only: For their second oral presentation, graduate students will do some original research on specific locations related to the novel of the week in which they present. For example, in Week 2, we will be reading and discussion my Desert Blood. If you choose to present in Week 2, your assignment is to Thick-Map the El Paso/Juarez frontera as depicted in Desert Blood. 15 minutes, plus 5 minutes of Q&A. NB: We will discuss Thick-Mapping throughout the course.

Original Story (40%) 
For your Final Project, you’re going to write an original noir mystery story with a social justice theme, following the mystery formula. What social justice theme pertinent to the Latinx community motivates your own research, your own reasons for wanting to get a college degree that can help you make a difference? This will be the theme of your story. It’s always easier to write about something you’re passionate about. If you don’t have a social injustice that you want to expose in your mystery, find one. It’s essential to your sleuth’s quest in your story.

Final Exam Day: TBA 
Final Revised Story Due Today. 
For the “final exam,” we will be meeting in the Presentation Room at YRL, which we’re going to transform into a noir speakeasy, where we have wandered in after a long 10-week search for the meaning and motives of Latinx noir stories. To our surprise, we have come on Reading Night, and you have been selected to stand up and read an excerpt of your original noir story to the audience. To create the mood of a speakeasy, try to dress the part. Wear something noir-ish (I’ll be wearing my fedora hat and “gumshoes,” for example). N.A. beverages and snacks will be provided. The reading is free and open to the public.
Peer Evaluation Questions

1. What impact did this story make on you?
2. Which of the elements of NOIR are present in this story, and which are absent?
3. What characters does the sleuth interact with that could be thought of as the protagonist’s Sidekick, Enemy, or Mentor? Evaluate the Villain. Is there an Accomplice?
4. Which characters were the strongest, better-developed, three-dimensional? Explain why.
5. Which characters were the weakest, less-developed, stereotypical, one-dimensional?
6. Evaluate the plot of the story. What is the mystery? What drives the sleuth to want to solve the mystery? What’s at stake for the sleuth? What clues—both false and real—did the writer include?
7. What suggestions do you have for the story’s revision?

Online Resources

  - [https://michaelnavawriter.us3.list-manage.com/track/click?u=4a67d797f35ed815df3fa2a67&id=4c9f0e5e61&c=f02fb64be1](https://michaelnavawriter.us3.list-manage.com/track/click?u=4a67d797f35ed815df3fa2a67&id=4c9f0e5e61&c=f02fb64be1) (iTunes)
  - [https://michaelnavawriter.us3.list-manage.com/track/click?u=4a67d797f35ed815df3fa2a67&id=6ace0086e4&c=f02fb64be1](https://michaelnavawriter.us3.list-manage.com/track/click?u=4a67d797f35ed815df3fa2a67&id=6ace0086e4&c=f02fb64be1) (Deezer)
  - [https://michaelnavawriter.us3.list-manage.com/track/click?u=4a67d797f35ed815df3fa2a67&id=1b4cd48398&c=f02fb64be1](https://michaelnavawriter.us3.list-manage.com/track/click?u=4a67d797f35ed815df3fa2a67&id=1b4cd48398&c=f02fb64be1) (Radio Public)
  - [https://michaelnavawriter.us3.list-manage.com/track/click?u=4a67d797f35ed815df3fa2a67&id=0bdf2fb04a&c=f02fb64be1](https://michaelnavawriter.us3.list-manage.com/track/click?u=4a67d797f35ed815df3fa2a67&id=0bdf2fb04a&c=f02fb64be1) (Spotify)
  - [https://michaelnavawriter.us3.list-manage.com/track/click?u=4a67d797f35ed815df3fa2a67&id=14e8a723fe&c=f02fb64be1](https://michaelnavawriter.us3.list-manage.com/track/click?u=4a67d797f35ed815df3fa2a67&id=14e8a723fe&c=f02fb64be1) (Stitcher)
  - [https://michaelnavawriter.us3.list-manage.com/track/click?u=4a67d797f35ed815df3fa2a67&id=89ad498bad&c=f02fb64be1](https://michaelnavawriter.us3.list-manage.com/track/click?u=4a67d797f35ed815df3fa2a67&id=89ad498bad&c=f02fb64be1) (Audio Boom)

BLOG ENTRIES (IC=in class, HW=homework)

1. First, write an introductory paragraph about yourself and provide a picture. Write in third person (she/he/they) and make it sound like an author blurb on the back of a book. HW
2. Freewriting on the Juárez femicides: How did reading Desert Blood make you feel? IC
3. Write a scary scene of something that happened to you at night. Use details and sensory perceptions. Avoid summaries, abstractions, and over-use of adjectives. HW
4. Write character sketches on your Sleuth/Protagonist, Villain/Antagonist, and First Victim. Who are they? What do they love? What do they hate? What do they want? What do they look like? What’s their family like? What’s their weakness, or fatal flaw? HW
5. Write character sketches on your Sleuth’s Sidekick and Mentor and the Villain’s Accomplice. Who are they? What do they look like? What’s their relationship to the Sleuth or the Villain? What are they going to get out of the situation in this story? HW
6. Write out the Story Arc of your Sleuth’s quest to find the Villain and solve the mystery. HW
7. Thick-map The Hidden Law using Google Earth and Google Fusion. IC
8. Write two HIGHLY EMOTIONAL/DRAMATIC scenes involving your Sleuth, one of them alone and the other interacting with another main character. HW
9. Thick-map the area of L.A. where your First Victim gets discovered. HW
10. Write the FULL FIRST DRAFT of your story. HW
SYLLABUS
L.A.tinx Noir and the City at Night

NB: To be prepared for class, be sure you do your reading and come in with at least one good question every week for the class to discuss. All texts will be discussed on the day they appear on the syllabus. Blog entries listed as “homework” should be done BEFORE you come to class, and those listed as in-class will be done in-class. Please note that you may use your laptop computer or similar device to read material for the class only. If you’re using your device for anything else, I will ask you to leave the class or will hold on to your device until the end of the class period.

Week One: Introduction to the Genre
- What is Noir? (a poem)
- Website reading: Before you come to the first class, please read the three short online essays linked under Week 1 of the course website.
- Watch: Touch of Evil (1958)
- Discussion: The elements of noir as literary genre and film genre.
- Listen to Podcast on Latino Noir
- What is Thick-Mapping?
- Blog Entry 1: Homework

Week Two: Femicide and The El Paso/Juárez Metropolis
- Discuss your L.A. neighborhood maps
- Presentation on the Juárez Femicides and the Anti-Detective Novel by: La Profe
- Thick-Mapping La Frontera (grad student presentation)
- Blog Entry 2: In-Class

Week Three: Night as Trope
- Read: Buenas Noches, American Culture, Intro, Chapters 1-4, Conclusion
- Blog entry 3: Homework

Week Four: Writing Workshop on Your Cast of Characters
- Read: Wired for Story, chapters 1-5
- Writing Workshop
- Prezi presentation on Dark Borders by Jonathan Auerbach by:
  _______________________________________________________________________
  - Watch: Memento (2006)
  - Blog entry 4: Homework

Week Five: Thick-Mapping L.A.
- Read: The Zoot Suit Murders (1978)
- Watch: Devil in a Blue Dress (1995)
- Thick-Mapping L.A. in the 1940s (graduate student presentation)
- Blog Entry 5: Homework
Week Six: Writing Workshop on Structure and Story Arcs
  ● Read Wired for Story, chapters 6-9
  ● Writing Workshop
  ● Prezi presentation on Detours and Lost Highways: A Map of Neo-Noir by Foster Hirsch
  ● by: ______________________________________________________
  ● Blog Entry 6: Homework
  ● SHORT PAPER 1 DUE TODAY

Week Seven: Queer [Noir] Aztlán
  ● Read: The Hidden Law (1992)
  ● Prezi presentation on Brown Gumshoes by Ralph Rodriguez by:
    •
  ● Listen: Henry Rios Mystery Podcast, Episodes 1 & 2 of Lay Your Sleeping Head
  ● Thick-Mapping Gay L.A. (graduate student presentation)
  ● Blog entry 7: In-class

Week Eight: Writing Workshop on Plotting, Conflict, and Emotional Drama
  ● Read: Wired for Story, chapters 10-12
  ● Writing Workshop
  ● Prezi presentation on The Philosophy of Neo-Noir by:
    •
  ● Listen: Henry Rios Mystery Podcast, Episodes 3 & 4 of Lay Your Sleeping Head
  ● Blog entry 8: Homework

Week Nine: Human Trafficking
  ● Read: Blood Daughters (2011)
  ● Watch: Black Dahlia (2006)
  ● Thick-Mapping the Grim Sleeper crimes in South L.A. (graduate student presentation)
  ● Listen: Henry Rios Mystery Podcast, Episode 5 of Lay Your Sleeping Head
  ● Recap on the elements of Noir
  ● Blog entry 9: Homework

Week Ten: Final Writing Workshop
  ● Blog entry 10: To participate in the final writing workshop, you must submit a full first draft of your noir story to the course website by the due date. Only complete first drafts will be able to participate in this workshop. Homework.
  ● Go online and read at least one of your classmates’ stories and provide some feedback on the draft based on the peer evaluation questions on page 4.
  ● Remember, to participate in today’s workshop, you must submit your full first draft of your original noir Latinx story to the course website by the due date.
  ● SHORT PAPER 2 DUE TODAY

Finals Week: Public Reading. Time and Place TBA. See bottom of page 3 for more details.
FINAL PROJECT DUE TODAY.