

# *Moravian College*

## **WRIT 100 – From Noir to Now: The Tough Guy Motif in American Cinema**

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PPHAC 317**

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**Office Hours: M 4-6 & W 1-2 / 3:30-4:30 or by appointment**

### **Required Text:**

- Hacker, Diana. *The Bedford Handbook for Writers*, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 2002.
- Supplemental readings as necessary (also see BlackBoard [Bb])

### **Materials:**

- 8 ½" X 11 Spiral Notebook (our bound book)
- Three-Ring Binder

### **Films:**

- *The Public Enemy (1931)*
- *Key Largo (1948)*
- *High Noon (1952)*
- *Superfly (1972)*
- *The Godfather (1972)*
- *Unforgiven (1992)*

### **Course Description:**

This course will examine the changing nature of the criminal as depicted in 20th century American cinema as a vehicle for written expression. Starting with James Cagney's groundbreaking performance as Tom Powers in *The Public Enemy* (1931) through the more contemporary work of directors such as Gordon Parks, Clint Eastwood, and Quentin Tarantino, we will explore the gangster dynamic from a wide range of socio-cultural as well as political perspectives while incorporating these ideas into a solidly grounded framework for better writing strategies.

## Course Objectives and Purpose:

- To trace the evolution of male/female relations through 20<sup>th</sup> century American cinema
- To explore the vast realm of character archetypes and their collective significance, especially in terms of male-female relationships
- To deconstruct the means with which a visual medium explains masculinity to the world
- To combine all of the above in order to create better strategies for writing based on a variety of styles, audiences, techniques as befitting a college-level writer

## Course Requirements:

Students will be required to keep a writer's almanac (minimum of five entries per week), write a research paper (topic to be negotiated) with an annotated bibliography, write several essays of varying length, submit a final portfolio, and perform other tasks as befitting an introductory college writing course including. Fair warning will precede any and all due dates.

Using a traditional grading scale, the breakdown of grades is as follows:

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|---|-----|
| • Writer's Almanac (to be checked periodically) | 20% |
| • Portfolio                                     | 20% |
| • Research Paper (with Annotated Bibliography)  | 20% |
| • Essays Combined                               | 20% |
| • Participation and Other Misc. Tasks           | 20% |

As I typically employ letter grades on written assignments, I offer the below list of how each letter translates numerically:

- A+=100/A= 96/A-=92
- B+=89/B=86/B-=82
- C+=79/C=76/C-=72
- D+=69/D=66/D-=62
- F=59-50 [actual score depends on the severity of the error(s)/student will be notified]
- Failure to turn in work translates into a *ZERO*

## Classroom Decorum and Expectations:

**Attendance** – Class attendance is mandatory and vitally important to your success. Failure to attend on a regular basis not only puts your grade in jeopardy but may also be met with a lowered mark for participation.

- **Remember** – there are no excused absences. If you have a legitimate emergency, it is your responsibility to bring it to the attention of your instructor at your earliest convenience.

**Tardiness** – Tardiness to class is not only detrimental to the learning process but quite disruptive and unfair to those who make it to class on time regularly. Recurring tardiness shows a lack of respect for the classroom, the instructor, and one's fellow students and will not be tolerated. Therefore, once the door has been shut, you will not be permitted to enter.

- **Deadlines** – Assignment deadlines are exactly that. Students are expected to comply with deadlines in accordance with all rules, guidelines, and expectations of each assignment proffered. Failure to do so will result in a tendering of no-grade for work not done to expectation or submitted on time. The policy for late papers is as follows:
  - On minor assignments, you will be allowed to turn in one late assignment as long as it is within twenty-four hours for a ten point deduction. After your one exception, you will no longer enjoy this luxury

**Participation** – Classroom discussions are a big part of the learning process. Your participation is not requested—it is required. Failure to do so is both in bad taste and could conceivably be detrimental to your ability to learn effectively.

**Disruptions** – Disruptive behavior, including talking, unengaged behavior, i.e. reading a book, magazine, or newspaper, sleeping, chronic tardiness alongside loud entrances, and any other unfortunate breach will not be tolerated. Learning is an active process, and failure to actively engage not only threatens the individual's ability to learn but also affects those around him or her.

**Academic Honesty** – You are all responsible for knowing and adhering to the code of academic honesty here at Moravian College. For those of you unfamiliar with this code, it can be found on pages fifty-two through fifty-seven in your student handbook.

**Please note:** It is your responsibility to see to it that these expectations and guidelines are met satisfactorily and consistently. I take the classroom quite seriously, and I expect all of you to do the same as well.

### **Submission Expectations:**

Out of class work must include:

- a title page with a suitable title, your name, the course, section, and my name all spelled correctly

- 12 font (in black) with default margins and spacing set at 1½ to 2
- page numbers at the bottom center of each page
- a *References* section (if necessary) at the end of the work done in the most recent MLA form (for every unedited internet cite you must have at least **two** published sources)<sup>1</sup>
- with few exceptions, single & two-digit numbers (zero *through* ninety-nine) are to be spelled out; three digits are to be written numerically
- be wary of over use of abbreviations and/or contractions
- a staple in the upper left hand corner (no frilly covers)
- in-class work must be done in blue or black ink

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<sup>1</sup> Work not properly cited will not be graded. NO EXCEPTIONS!

*In popular culture in general,  
but especially in film culture,  
masculinity is an American possession.*  
-Gael McGear<sup>2</sup>

## **Schedule of Topics (STC):**

### ***Act One - The Public Enemy (1931)***

- **Scenes:** Getting Started (course expectations and guidelines documentary film); Establishing a Topic; The Paragraph; Narrative Writing

### ***Act Two - Key Largo (1948)***

- **Scenes:** The Thesis Statement; Explanatory Writing; Critical Reading; The Persuasive Essay

### ***Act Three - High Noon (1952)***

- **Scenes:** The Research Process; Reeves Library

### ***Act Four - Superfly (1972)***

- **Scenes:** The Poetry within Words; Writing for Readers & Listeners; The Letter

### ***Act Five - The Godfather (1972)***

- **Scenes:** Tweaking Voice & Style; Writing Dialogue

### ***Act Six - Unforgiven (1992)***

- **Scenes:** Putting It All Together

### ***Bonus Trailer - Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid (1982)***

#### ***Miscellaneous Tasks:***

*-multiple drafts, peer editing, oral presentation, group presentation, varying audiences*

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<sup>2</sup> from McGear, Gael. "A Perfect English Gentleman: Cary Grant and David Niven in Hollywood." Gael McGear Home Page. <http://members.aol.com/pollydact/grantniven1.html> Accessed 9 January 2006.