

Crime Films

4-week course (first 4 weeks)

Spring 2024

Instructor: Sandy Camargo (scamargo04@gmail.com)

Introduction:

Hollywood and Violence
Crime Films
The Gangster Film

Agents of Disorder: The Gangster

screening: *Scarface* (Howard Hawks, 1932; 95 minutes)

the gangster as a figure in popular culture

Warshow: "The Gangster as Tragic Hero"

Scarface purposely the most violent film yet made in Hollywood

the Production Code: Crime must not pay!

problematics of the gangster as protagonist: shift from gangster to G-man

quick pace, short running time → the gangster's meteoric rise and fall

The Godfather undoes all of this in 1972

Agents of Order: The Detectives

The Amateur Detective: the Great Brain

screening: *The Spanish Cape Mystery* (Lewis Collins, 1935; 73 minutes)

the classic problem mystery: Poe's stories in 1840; Collins and Doyle

the Detection Club's Ten Commandments

crime as a game or puzzle to be solved

key tropes

the amateur detective

the police paradox

the criminal mastermind

the huge market for crime stories in the 1930s

Ellery Queen as writer and detective

The Cop: From the squad to Dirty Harry

screening: *The Naked City* (Jules Dassin, 1948; 95 minutes)

the wartime documentary film

post-WWII docudramas, e.g., *The House on 92nd Street*

voiceover narration in both forms

location shooting in New York City

the photographs of Weegee (1930s and 1940s)

Vidocq and the formation of a professional police force

the classic police procedural in the 1940s

Classic cop heroes

Film title → NYC as a character in the film

The Private Eye:

screening: *Chinatown* (Roman Polanski, 1974; 130 minutes)

classic films: the private eye and film noir

The Maltese Falcon; *Murder My Sweet*, etc.

1970s and the “progressive genre film” in the New Hollywood

Chinatown and subversion

Jake Gittes versus Sam Spade

“neo-noir”