Pulp: Introduction to Popular Fiction

(5ECTS)

Co-ordinator: Dr Bernice M. Murphy

This course explores the growth and development of Popular Literature from the Victorian era up to the present day. Students will be introduced to key themes and theories of the popular as well as texts and contexts from a wide range of popular genres: crime fiction, fantasy, horror, science fiction, romance, and the newly emerged category of 'Domestic Noir' amongst them. Each text will be situated within the context of its genre as well as the historical/social context of the time at which it was written. Students will be encouraged to think about ideas of "popularity" and "canonicity" and to interrogate the reasons why certain texts and genres dominate the bestseller lists and the popular imagination at different times.

Course Content:

1. What is popular literature? (BM)
2. History and theories of popular literature (Clare Clarke)
3. The Victorian Bestseller: *The Beetle* by Richard Marsh (CC)
4. Fantasy: *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien (Dr Jane Carroll)
5. Crime: *Murder on the Orient Express* by Agatha Christie (CC)
6. Science Fiction: *The Body Snatchers* by Jack Finney (BM)
7. READING WEEK
8. Middlebrow Fiction: *Rebecca* by Daphne du Maurier (BM)
9. Romance – *Hidden Riches* by Nora Roberts (JK)
10. Horror: *The Shining* by Stephen King (BM)
11. Young Adult/Graphic Novel: text TBD (Dr Jane Carroll)
12. The Contemporary Bestseller: *The Girl on the Train* by Paula Hawkins (CC)

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will gain:

- close knowledge and understanding of a range of popular fiction from the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries
- critical skills in the close reading and analysis of texts
- an ability to demonstrate knowledge of a range of texts, authors, genres, and critical approaches to popular fiction
- an ability to discuss a range of popular texts in their intellectual, historical and critical contexts
- an ability to articulate knowledge and understanding of concepts and critical theories relating to popular genres
- an ability to demonstrate skills in critical reasoning, including the ability to assess other critical readings
- effective verbal and written communication skills