

**Full Name: ENU33055: True Crime and Contemporary Culture**

**Short Name:** True Crime

**Lecturer Name and Email Address:** Prof. Bernice M. Murphy (murphb12@tcd.ie)

**ECTS Weighting:** 10

**Semester Taught MT/HT:** HT 2026

**Year JS/SS:** JS

**Module Content:**

In the twenty-first century, true crime has become firmly established of the most high-profile – and most influential – genres existing within literary and popular culture. True crime documentaries proliferate both on mainstream TV channels and on various streaming outlets. Hundreds – perhaps thousands – of true crime channels can be found on YouTube, Instagram and TikTok. Thanks to the success of shows such as *My Favourite Murder*, *Casefile*, *Red-handed*, *My Favourite Murder*, *Sword and Scale*, *They Walk Among Us* and *Serial*, true crime podcasting is a phenomenon. The formal characteristics and narrative conventions of the true crime narrative are also, increasingly, shaping works of fiction and film. This module will explore the cultural impact which selected high-profile true crime narratives have had upon works of literature, non-fiction, popular literature and film. It will explore the various ways in which certain real life crimes have inspired a range of cultural responses. Issues pertaining to race, gender, class and sexuality will also be an important course component.

The module will incorporate weeks on classic non-fiction true crime texts such as Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*, *Columbine* by Dave Cullen, *The Stranger Beside Me* by Anne Rule and *A Thread of Violence* by Mark O'Connell as well as works of film, literary fiction and popular fiction inspired or influenced by real-life cases. These texts will include *Dark Places* by Gillian Flynn, *Penance* by Eliza Clarke, and the films *Zodiac* (Dir: David Fincher), *Heavenly Creatures* (Dir: Peter Jackson) and *Anatomy of a Fall* (Dir: Justine Triet).

**Learning Outcomes:**

- Students will develop transferable skills in literary media and literary analysis to a high level.
- Students will become familiar with the formal characteristics and narrative conventions of true crime.
- Students will engage with relevant critical, historical, and theoretical material.

**Learning Aims:**

**On successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:**

- Demonstrate familiarity with significant true crime narratives from around the world (including Ireland, France, the US, New Zealand and the UK) as well as the historical and cultural factors informing these texts.
- Be familiar with the origins and development of the contemporary true crime narrative.
- Evaluate and discuss the position of the true crime narrative within the contemporary cultural landscape, and across a number of mediums.

**Assessment Details:**

- Number of Components: 1
- Name/Type of Component(s): Essay
- Word Count of Component(s): 5,000
- Percentage Value of Component(s): 100%