

W20, Fall 2007: Crime Scene Imagination Short Writing -- Overview¹

Short Writings are pieces of about 500 words or two double-spaced pages that respond to course readings, apply a concept we have discussed in class to a particular text or phenomenon, or invite some form of reflection on your own process of writing.

Post all assigned Short Writings to the “Short Writings” folder in the Assignments section on Blackboard² **before class** on the day the SW is due. You will select five SWs to be handed in to me for a grade. When you have a SW for grading, give me a hard copy of that writing at the end of the class period when that SW is due.

Each graded SW is worth 2 points of a possible total of 10 points. ½ a point will be deducted from this total for each ungraded assignment that you do not hand in. Late SWs will not be accepted. See the syllabus (pgs. 4 & 6) for how the SWs fit into your overall grade for the class.

Short Writings are tied to your service as ‘point person’ two times over the course of the semester. You can volunteer for these dates,³ and feel free to set up an appointment to talk to me ahead of time so I can help prepare you for your session. You are responsible for posting your SW to your section’s File Exchange space **by Midnight the night before** so your classmates can download (and read) your piece prior to class. You should also bring extra hard copies of your SW to class and be prepared to teach us two things about what you did *well* in the writing. Also, be prepared to receive constructive feedback about your writing from your peers and myself. When you serve as point person, your SW will be graded automatically (serving twice means two graded SWs are pre-determined by your point person date selection).

Consider these SWs as mini-brainstorming opportunities as you prepare for each of your three larger essays. In this way, although they are “lower-stakes” point-wise, the engagement and potential they show is central to success on “higher-stakes” point-value assignments.

Posting Short Writings to Blackboard

1. Click on ‘Assignments’ link on the left-hand menu list.
2. Click on the ‘Short Writings’ folder.
3. Click on appropriate link for the SW that is due.
4. In the “Comments” field under “Assignment Materials” type the title you gave your SW. Be sure to name your document according to the formula given in the Syllabus (pg. 8): lastname.titleofassignment.draft#.doc (for example: odendahljames.SW1.D3.doc).
5. Click “Browse” under “Attach local file” to locate and attach your piece as a word document.
6. Click “Submit” (WARNING: If you click “Save” the assignment will **not** be uploaded to my Gradebook and, subsequently, will not be considered as submitted.)

¹ My thanks to Professors Kristin Solli and Matthew Brim for their input and assistance on the creation of this assignment.

² See Course Syllabus, pages 7-8 for how to upload documents.

³ See Course Calendar for options.

Short Writing 1

Due: 9/4 before class to the “Assignments” section on Blackboard. Please bring a hard copy of your writing to class as well. If you are serving as point-person, post your writing to both Assignments and your section’s File Exchange space by Midnight the night before. Bring some extra hard copies to class just in case they are needed.

Length: About 500 words. If you cite a long passage from one of the readings—i.e. more than a few sentences—exclude that passage from the word count.

Required Reading:

- **ER** Todorov, Tzvetan. “The Typology of Detective Fiction” (pgs. 42-52)
- **ER** Raskin, Richard. “The Pleasures and Politics of Detective Fiction” (pgs. 127-65).
- **ER** Roth, Marty. “Methodological Items: The Clue, The Trifle, and Dirt” (pgs. 179-204).

Suggested Reading:

- **ER** Snauffer, Douglas. “Crime Television—The 2000s” (pgs. 199-237)
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In his introduction to *Rewriting*, Harris argues that one of the key features of academic writing is that it engages with the work of other thinkers and writers. More specifically, a strong academic writer rarely simply summarizes another scholar’s text, but puts that text to work for her own purposes.

Pick one or two passages from one or more of today’s required readings, which explore the conventions of classic detective fiction. Put those passages to work as you make a case for at least two ‘classic’ conventions or ideologies of investigation you see engaged in the episode of a contemporary forensic investigation show that you watched for the class on 8/30.

For example, you might select one section of Raskin’s grid of “social and psychological functions of detective fiction for the reader (viewer)” (128-9). Then you could test his observations as you describe moments in the episode where particular kinds of “wish-fulfillment” (138-146) appear and offer your own ideas about how such psychological motivations or reader expectations frame contemporary stories of investigation and the collection and use of evidence.

As you connect the assertions of your selected scholar(s) to your show’s episode, consider the possible influence(s) visual features have on conventions and ideologies of investigation since the detective text at the center of *your* reading is a television show instead of a short-story or novel.

Short Writing 2

Due: 9/6 before class to the “Assignments” section on Blackboard. Please bring a hard copy of your writing to class as well. If you are serving as point-person, post your writing to both Assignments and your section’s File Exchange space by Midnight the night before. Bring some extra hard copies to class just in case they are needed.

Length: About 500 words. If you cite a long passage from Poe—i.e. more than a few sentences—exclude that passage from the word count.

Required Reading for 9/6:

- **BB** “The Mystery of Marie Rogêt” by Edgar Allan Poe (available online at http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/p/poe/edgar_allan/)

[A]lthough the understanding of natural science that we need does not depend upon the powerful political, economical and social forces that drive the activities producing it, we should not glibly set aside the methods enabling it to have a fact-stating capacity. In this respect, as in some others, the work of a scientist is analogous to that of a detective. A detective attempting to solve a crime is no doubt subject to many kinds of forces and influences, if only because he or she will part of an organization (sic) which acts upon, and reacts to, the society in which it exists. But when the detective successfully solves a crime, in the sense that he or she correctly identifies the person or persons responsible, an important part of the explanation for the success will be the extent to which the reasoning used to justify the identification is persuasive. If it were just a matter of identifying a person or persons then, no doubt, we could provide an adequate explanation for the choice made by reference to forces and influences of various kinds. However, correct identification would elude such an explanation. Similarly in the case of scientists. [...] If we wish to explain the success of the work of scientists we will have to refer to the methods they use; we will have to refer to the reasoning they use to justify their new knowledge.

--From *Scientific Method: A Historical and Philosophical Introduction* by Barry Gower
(New York: Routledge, 1996): 4-5. Emphasis added.

Poe’s ‘true-crime’ story¹ lacks the build-up of dramatic tensions anticipated in detective fiction. Dupin’s methodical analysis of minute physical evidence (or the lack thereof), however, is the hallmark of ‘ratiocination’ (meaning, forming judgments by a calculated process of logical reasoning), an investigative style favored by Poe. In this way, one can see the beginnings of a *CSI* ‘eye’ looking at crime scene evidence even as early as 1842.

In your SW, select two pieces of forensic evidence from Poe’s story and analyze how that evidence is uncovered, dissected, and presented by Dupin, or Dupin’s sources (newspapers, police documents), or the narrator. Conclude by offering your own take on Gower’s analogy between scientist and detective. In other words, is Dupin’s persuasiveness as a detective helped or hindered (or a bit of both) by his strict adherence to intricate and detailed reasoning for his theories?

¹ The still unsolved 1841 murder of New York City cigar-girl Mary Rogers is the inspiration for Poe’s narrative. The long passages of press coverage that Dupin studies are taken, almost verbatim, from newspapers at the time covering the Rogers’ case.

Short Writing 3

Due: 9/11 before class to the “Assignments” section on Blackboard. Please bring a hard copy of your writing to class as well. If you are serving as point-person, post your writing to both Assignments and your section’s File Exchange space by Midnight the night before. Bring some extra hard copies to class just in case they are needed.

Length: About 500 words.

Required Reading for 9/11:

- Chapter 1, “Coming to Terms” in Harris (pgs. 13-33)
 - **LL** Valverde, Mariana, Chapter 3, “Representations and their Social Effects: A Template,” in her *Law & Order: Images, Meanings, Myths* (pgs. 31-57)
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Harris suggests multiple steps of “coming to terms” as you *read* a text:

1. Identify passages that are “interesting, troubling, ambiguous, or suggestive” (20).
2. Select and dissect keywords that the author creates/offers and keywords that the author him/herself dissects/redefines (where she/he makes use of the work of others to present her/his ideas).
3. Note places in the text where the author defines his/her *project*. Look for more than a one-sentence thesis statement. A project is an articulation of the author’s *aim*, *method(s)*, and *materials*.
4. Consider the uses and limits of the author’s new project. To what kind of questions or topics does his/her approach relate most directly?

Your SW for today should “come to terms” with Valverde’s suggested methodology. Center your analysis on one or two passages where Valverde explores the work and ideas of other scholars. Explain how Valverde puts the work of others to use as she stakes out the parameters of *her* project, *her* approach to analyzing representation and its effect(s). In order to do this, you will need to give your reader a sense of her *aim*, *method(s)*, and *materials* as well as what *you* think the *purpose* (i.e. the uses and limits) of Valverde’s project might be.

Take a close look at Harris’ analysis of Gilligan’s engagement with Freud (pp. 17-18) or his explanation of how Brown and Duguid use the work of Nicholas Negroponte (pp. 25-26). In these examples are models of ways to “come to terms.” Use a mix of paraphrase and direct quotations in your writing. The section, “Quotation: Some Terms of Art,” (Harris 28-31) offers terrific advice about *philosophies* of quotation to consider as you reproduce the words of others in your own scholarship.

Short Writing 4

Due: 9/18 before class to the “Assignments” section on Blackboard. Please bring a hard copy of your writing to class as well. If you are serving as point-person, post your writing to both Assignments and your section’s File Exchange space by Midnight the night before. Bring some extra hard copies to class just in case they are needed.

Length: For each entry, about ten sentences (fifteen, maximum). Give the complete MLA citation for your both of your found texts (books or articles). Use Trimmer’s *A Guide to MLA Documentation* or the full *MLA Handbook* (6th edition) as a citation reference guide.

During your library research session on 9/13, you were asked to identify and check-out/print two texts (books or articles): one which centers its analysis on “evidence” **within** a natural science or legal context and one that explores that idea/term **outside** the sciences or legal frames. In this SW, provide annotations for each of your found texts that give your reader a sense of how the author is defining or using the term(s) “evidence” to frame his/her study or analysis. As you compose the entries, consider how the disciplinary frame of the author may influence his/her definition of or requirements for “evidence.”

Annotations provide excellent, concise reference material for scholars investigating the array of research on a particular topic. Annotated bibliographies are often organized around a particular author or theme such as “gender analyses of productions of Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*” or “literary criticism of British crime writers 1840-1880.” Summaries are written with this theme or focus in mind. The following is an example of an annotation from *American Studies: An Annotated Bibliography 1984-1988* by Jack Salzman (New York: Cambridge UP, 1990):

Beaver, Patricia Duane. *Rural Community in the Appalachian South*. Lexington: U of Kentucky P, 1986.

Based on ten years of fieldwork in three western North Carolina counties, this study focuses on the social patterns and cultural systems common to these and similar southern Appalachian rural communities. Beaver places the communities in historical and geographical context, tracing the gradual rise and decline of their economic self-sufficiency. She discusses the response to a 1977 flood as a typical manifestation of informal but powerful neighborhood associations of mutual aid and communication. She then examines the important relationship of extended kin ties and the resource of land, the dynamics of sex roles and the life cycle, and attitudes towards newcomers from the counterculture. A concluding chapter stresses the social and economic bases of the communities’ persistent myths of egalitarianism and independence and speculates on those communities’ uncertain future.

Short Writing 5

Due: 9/20 before class to the “Assignments” section on Blackboard. Please bring a hard copy of your writing to class as well. If you are serving as point-person, post your writing to both Assignments and your section’s File Exchange space by Midnight the night before. Bring some extra hard copies to class just in case they are needed.

Length: About 500 words. Exclude the bulleted list from the word count.

Required Reading for 9/20:

- *The Bone Collector* by Jeffrey Deaver
 - **LL** Panek, LeRoy Lad. Chapter 4, “The Scientist Hero?” in his *The Origins of the American Detective Story* (pgs. 70-90)
 - **LL** Valverde, Marina. Chapter 5, “The Authority of the Detective and the Birth of the Forensic Gaze” in her *Law & Order: Images, Meanings, Myths* (pgs. 75-89)
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Make a bulleted list of at least fifteen examples (include the page numbers) of evidence that is found, analyzed and used by Rhyme and Sachs.

Select one piece (or a short series—maximum three—of pieces) from this list of examples. Use the **either** Panek’s discussion of the scientist-detective-hero or Valverde’s description of the “rise of ... the ‘forensic gaze’ ” (83) to frame your own argument about the effect(s) of the collection, dissection, and application of this piece (or pieces) of evidence on

1. the investigators in *The Bone Collector*,
2. the solution of their case, and
3. the credibility of their work as detectives and scientists as perceived by you, the reader.

Short Writing 6

Due: 9/25 before class to the “Assignments” section on Blackboard. Please bring a hard copy of your writing to class as well. If you are serving as point-person, post your writing to both Assignments and your section’s File Exchange space by Midnight the night before. Bring some extra hard copies to class just in case they are needed.

Length: About 500 words. Consult Harris (28-31) when deciding how/when to use quotation of sources.

Required Reading for 9/25:

- Reichs, Kathy. *Déjà Dead*.
- **BB** Turrow, Joseph. “‘The answers are always in the body’: forensic pathology in US crime programmes.” (pgs. 54-55)
- **BB** Thomas, Ronald, sections from Chapter 1, “Devices of Truth,” from his *Detective Fiction and the Rise of Forensic Science* (pgs. 1-7 & 14-18).

Suggested Reading for 9/25:

- **BB** Lucas, Rose. “Anxiety and its Antidotes: Patricia Cornwell and the Forensic Body” (pgs. 207-22).

The criminal acts in *The Bone Collector* and *Déjà Dead* are unraveled by investigators who **read** the corpses of victims for evidence of the criminal’s identity and psychology. Ronald Thomas argues that this investigative process, assisted by specific forensic technologies (like the lie detector, the photograph, and the fingerprint), transforms the dead body into a **text** (4).

For today’s SW, dissect two interactions from **either or both** *The Bone Collector* and *Déjà Dead* between/among investigators and the corpses they examine. Use the observations of Turrow or Thomas (or Lucas) to forward your own idea(s) about the treatment, use, and presentation of the dead (consider both victims and perpetrators) in your story(ies).

Some questions to start your thought process (these are **not** questions that you **have** to answer within the SW):

If the anatomy of the victim is the central evidence to identifying the criminal, is the humanity of the victim evacuated? In other words, do investigators reduce the remains to only evidentiary value? Do investigators confer sacred status upon the dead body? If so, what effect(s) does such sanctity have on the actions of investigators and how the perpetrator is identified, captured, and punished?

ESSAY 1: The Anatomy of Evidence

For the first five weeks of the semester we will discuss “evidence” reflexively, exploring how evidence appears, is dissected and employed by fictional detectives **and** how scholars dissect detective fiction for evidence of particular generic features, political ideologies, scientific technologies, and human psychologies.

Over these five weeks, your daily writing assignments ask you to engage a set of writing “moves” (coming to terms, forwarding, countering) as you bring fictional texts and theoretical writings into conversation with each other and with your own observations and ideas.

In four to six pages, offer a theory of larger cultural meaning(s) about evidence gathered through empirical investigation that you argue is dramatized in one of the fictional texts (novels, short story, television drama) you have encountered so far. Pay particular attention to the ways at least three pieces of forensic evidence appear, are dissected and used by investigator(s) and their creator(s). Forward or counter the work of at least two other scholars we have read to support your observations. Address your writing to a reader who holds a basic familiarity with crime fiction (from classic pieces by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle to contemporary television serials like *CSI*) but who may not be familiar with literary theory, genre analysis, or forensic science/technologies.

Think about the theories of detective fiction that we read. Some scholars focus on form, arguing to know what a text *means* you have to dissect its formal elements, how it *looks*. Some scholars focus on content, arguing about the (in)accuracies in crime stories and their influence on real cases. Some scholars focus on context(s), arguing to know what a text means you have to dissect the times, places, and fields that surround it. Some scholars, like Valverde, insist on looking at all three spheres: form, content, and context. Consider how these approaches to textual analysis help you forward your own ideas and/or counter another scholar’s ideas about a text’s use and assertion of evidence, truth and reality.

Consider the value of evidence in the context of crime solving and criminal prosecution **and** in the context of academic writing. How might these contexts reflect and refute each other’s standards of proof, truth-claims, and persuasive communication?

Consider the short daily writing assignments (in parts or whole) and our in-class discussions as steps taken towards the crafting of this first essay. The following is a way of thinking of those items as a sequence of particularly relevant thinking and writings:

- 8/30: explore the term “evidence” and its contexts – how does thinking about the word unlock ways of crafting compelling argument about evidence, especially as it relates to academic writing and detective fiction/criminal investigations.
- 9/4 & 9/6: explore scholarly critiques of detective fiction – how do these observations about the content, form, and/or context(s) remain the same and change over time and across medium (novel to television show, true-crime story to feature film)
- 9/11: consider the relationship between empirical reasoning and criminal investigation – how do these meet in forensic-centered detective novels and what does their collaboration *mean*?
- 9/20 & 9/25: consider the assertions made about evidence, truth and reality in detective fiction – how do formal elements (plot, narration, character development, scientific language) influence

the stories' cultural contexts (historical era, race, soci-economic class, gender, sexual orientation, religious traditions/beliefs, national identity, scientific discoveries, and legal precedents)?

You may use short or longer sections of your daily writings in this essay; however, take care to cite your own work. There are a couple of acceptable formats for such citation.

1. If you use ideas from previous writing but have revised them dramatically, offer a footnote early in the paper (maybe after the title) that marks their origin. For example, "Some of the central arguments in this essay appeared in previously unpublished assignments: "Evidence and Empiricism," "Holmes and Grissom: Separated at Birth?", and "Science as Social Construction." List those pieces in your Works Cited page, with you as the author, just as you would list the work of other scholars or artists.
2. If you are attached to the specific phrasing you used in a previous paper, cite yourself within the body of your essay, "As I argued in "Evidence and Empiricism," ... [insert relevant text here]" (the parenthesis should include the corresponding essay page number).

If you choose this method, create a full bibliographic entry for this quoted essay on your Works Cited page:

Odendahl-James, Jules. "Evidence and Empiricism." Writing 20. Duke U. 20 Sept. 2007.

Short Writing 7

Due: 10/16 before class to the “Assignments” section on Blackboard. Please bring a hard copy of your writing to class as well. If you are serving as point-person, post your writing to both Assignments and your section’s File Exchange space by Midnight the night before. Bring some extra hard copies to class just in case they are needed.

Length: About 500 words. Consult Harris (28-31) when deciding how/when to use quotation of sources.

Required Reading/Viewing for 10/16:

- **LL** Biressi, Anita. Chapter 1, “ ‘True Stories Only!’ ” from her *Crime, Fear and the Law in True Crime Stories* (pgs. 15-40).
- **BB** Ingebresten, Edward J. “The Monster in the Home: True Crime and the Traffic in Body Parts” (pgs. 27-34).
- An episode of a ‘true-crime’ television news magazine/documentary program: *Dateline* (NBC), *American Justice* (A&E), *Dominick Dunne’s Power, Privilege and Justice* (Court TV), *Crime Stories* (Biography Channel), *Cold Case Files* (A&E), *Notorious* (Biography Channel), *48 Hours* (CBS), or *Primetime* (ABC). If you have another program that falls under this category, let me know.
 - My own copies of *American Justice* episodes “A Woman Scorned: The Betty Broderick Story” and “Under Suspicion: The Catherine Shelton Story” are on reserve in Lilly.
 - You can find video clips and full episodes of *Dateline NBC* and *48 Hours Mystery* programs online. Check the External Links page on Blackboard.

For this SW, write an analysis of the content and form of your selected ‘true-crime’ program in light of the contexts of true-crime stories’ narrative conventions and political ideologies outlined by Biressi or Ingebresten. Whether you choose to forward or counter the arguments your selected author is up to you.

In other words, your piece should consider in what ways – if any – can Biressi or Ingebresten help you (and by extension, your readers) understand the content, form, and contexts of your selected program. In what ways – if any – does the work of Biressi or Ingebresten fall short in terms of helping you understand the selected program.

Your goal is not to prove your selected scholar ‘right’ or ‘wrong,’ but to use his/her text to present your ideas about how we might understand the program as a challenge to, an evolution in, or a faithful example of true-crime stories.

Think back to our in-class exercise with Harris’ terms: ‘forwarding’ and ‘countering’. While it is probably easier to think of ways in which you can forward an idea from your selected scholar, spend some time thinking about how the episode you watched might counter aspects of that scholar’s arguments. Countering takes a bit more thinking than forwarding. As Harris explains, countering is not necessarily a matter of dismissing or rejecting an argument as a whole, but more a matter of pointing out how an argument offers only a “partial” understanding of a particular phenomenon (56). A key ‘partiality’ to consider for this SW is that these scholars’ analyses focus on literary texts or newspapers versus television shows, which walk the line between documentary film and tabloid journalism.

Short Writing 8

Due: 10/18 before class to the “Assignments” section on Blackboard. Please bring a hard copy of your writing to class as well. If you are serving as point-person, post your writing to both Assignments and your section’s File Exchange space by Midnight the night before. Bring some extra hard copies to class just in case they are needed.

Length: About 500 words. Consult Harris (28-31) when deciding how/when to use quotation of sources.

Required Reading for 10/18:

- Capote, Truman. *In Cold Blood*.
- Chapter 4, “Taking An Approach,” Harris in his *Rewriting* (pgs. 73-97). Remember you read the “Reflexivity” section—pages 85-93—for 8/30)
- **LL** Trilling, Diana, “Capote’s Crime and Punishment” in Waldmeir & Waldmeir’s *The Critical Response to Truman Capote* (pgs. 121-27).
- **LL** Tynan, Kenneth, “The Kansas Farm Murders” in Waldmeir & Waldmeir’s *The Critical Response to Truman Capote* (pgs. 129-34).

Both Trilling and Tynan raise points for and against Capote’s “approach” to reportage about the Clutter murder case. Capote himself argued that he was exempt from traditional rules (regarding form and ethics) of journalism because his account was an entirely new genre of literature—the non-fiction novel—a form where the blurring of fact and fiction would provoke the reader’s own critical faculties and produce more informed public discourses about crime, punishment, and human nature.

In your SW for today, use Trilling’s or Tynan’s critique to investigate your own reaction to at least two moments in or features of Capote’s story. What aspects of “the novel” and “the news report” does Capote employ and to what effect on you as a reader? Do you feel as if you are being encouraged to read objectively the violent events of mid-November 1959, the subsequent investigation, trial, and final conclusion? Have you gotten the *whole* picture of this case? Or (and, if so, how/when) does Capote manipulate events and their retelling to encourage you to read in a particular way?

Short Writing 9

Due: 10/23 before class to the “Assignments” section on Blackboard. Please bring a hard copy of your writing to class as well. If you are serving as point-person, post your writing to both Assignments and your section’s File Exchange space by Midnight the night before. Bring some extra hard copies to class just in case they are needed.

Length: About 500 words.

Required viewing for 10/23:

- Richard Brooks’ film *In Cold Blood* (1967).

The trailer for *In Cold Blood* (1967) emphasizes the exacting care that director Richard Brooks takes to reproduce, in precise detail, the people and places of Capote’s story (even going so far as to film at the Clutter farmhouse). Such assertions give both the film and Capote’s version of events an air of authority and value.

With Brooks’ docudrama approach in mind, cull the versions of the ‘true crime’ event you found in your library visit on 10/11. For your SW today, take about a paragraph to note similarities and differences in the coverage of the case you have noticed so far. Then, take another paragraph or so to approach the case as if you were a screenwriter.

What details would you expand/extend in a feature-length movie about the case? How would you approach the facts of the case—i.e. would you, like Brooks, focus on authenticity or conscientiously divorce the central themes and characters of the story from the real events? Give some specifics of how/who would you cast to play the various characters and explain your choices. What central theme or moral would guide the narrative’s tone and organization? How would the film conclude and explain what kind of *effect* you would want the conclusion to produce in the viewer and why?

Short Writing 10

Due: 10/25 before class to the “Assignments” section on Blackboard. Please bring a hard copy of your writing to class as well. If you are serving as point-person, post your writing to both Assignments and your section’s File Exchange space by Midnight the night before. Bring some extra hard copies to class just in case they are needed.

Length: About 500 words.

Required Viewing for 10/25:

- Bennett Miller’s 2005 film, *Capote*
 - Dan McGrath’s 2006 film, *Infamous*
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Your SW for today has two parts.

1. Give a short synopsis of each film’s version of Capote’s persona and motivations as well as his investigation into and reporting of the Clutter murder case.

2. Consider these films and Capote’s own text, *In Cold Blood*, as you reflect on the writing move, “taking an approach.” How might a writer cross the line from mirroring or writing in the voice of another scholar and fall into plagiarism? Creative writing takes greater liberties, is allowed greater leeway, in the manipulation of evidence for artistic effect. In disciplines where the interpretation of texts and events are constantly questioned, are there interpretations of texts or events that are just *wrong*? If so, how might a reader identify unsupported arguments? What are the differences between interpretations and distortions? How can a scholar make allowances for varying and intertextual interpretations of a text or an event and still present his/her argument as valid, important, and original?

ESSAY 2: (Re)Constructing ‘True’ crime.

During your library research session on 10/11, you will begin searching for a crime case (one that received a trial judge or jury verdict¹) from twentieth or twenty-first century America that you can follow through at least four levels of coverage: local newspaper, national newspaper, national printed or online magazine or blog and national television news outlet/news magazine program.

In four to six pages, re-trace the presentation of your case through these four outlets, concentrating your analysis on how *evidence* is found, discussed, analyzed, and sometimes transformed as the story shifts venues, authors/investigators, even mediums. Imagine your reader as a regular viewer of television news (local and national) and a sometimes subscriber to mainstream newspapers and/or online news sources. Your goal is not to categorize one source as “true” and the others as “false.” Your goal is an analysis of how the narratives of criminal cases change according to the expectations of the researcher/reporter and his/her audience, as they progress over time and through the legal system, and as they are heard in and evaluated by the court of public opinion.

Pay particular attention to how each source asserts particular evidence and a particular tone of address to authorize its version and convince its audience. Your imagined reader may or may not be a skeptical reader; your job is to focus their attention on *how* these outlets report the story and offer some reasons for *why* the differences in coverage are important to note or *what* those differences signify about evidence, truth, and reality.

You may look at sources as they cover the same moment in the case such as the initial report or the trial verdict. You may look at different outlets as the case progresses over time, i.e. look to the local news for the initial story, then the national news as a suspect is identified, then a magazine article as the case goes to trial, and the national news program at the case’s conclusion. It might be beneficial to begin your research at the case’s *end* then go back through national and local sources for details.

Consider the genesis of *In Cold Blood*: Truman Capote notices a crime story reported in *The New York Times*. He journeys to Kansas to uncover the “real” story, to contextualize and understand an apparently random and sense-less act of violence. The biographical films *Capote* and *Infamous* illuminate Capote’s manipulations of individuals and evidence. These re-tellings of Capote’s motivations call his objectivity into question at the same time they show him profoundly changed by the people, events, and ideas he encounters.

Consider how much news outlets share information. Notice if a local newspaper does its own reporting/investigation or does it re-present material from larger news organizations (like the Associated Press or Reuters).

Just as you did in preparation for Essay 1, consider our class discussions and short daily writing assignments (in parts or whole) as steps taken towards the crafting of this second essay. The following is a way of thinking of those assignments as a sequence of particularly relevant thinking and writing:

¹ The event known in many newspapers as “The Duke Lacrosse case” was dismissed by North Carolina Attorney General Roy Cooper before a trial jury was empanelled. It is not eligible for this assignment.

- 10/16: In what ways do “true crime” conventions endure and/or change from those described by Biressi, Knox, and/or Ingebresten?
- 10/18: What makes ‘true’ crime stories true? How do they present, authorize, and analyze evidence? What kinds of evidence take center-stage in a true crime narrative?
- 10/23: When a ‘true’ crime moves out of the frame of journalism and into the realm of television news magazine or docudrama what pressures are exerted upon the evidence of the case? What features of crime *dramas* (i.e. *CSI*) reappear in crime *reporting*?
- 10/25: How can a reflexive analysis of the idea of ‘taking an approach’ unlock readings of the ‘true’ crime narrative? The choices a researcher makes about his/her subject influence arguments. How is this (dis)similar to the ways in which a criminal case is argued in the court of public opinion?

Again, you may use short or longer sections of your daily writings in this essay; however, take care to cite your own work. See the assignment sheet for Essay 1 for citation guidelines.

Short Writing #11

Due: 11/6 before class to the “Assignments” section on Blackboard. Please bring a hard copy of your writing to class as well. If you are serving as point-person, post your writing to both “Assignments” and your section’s “File Exchange” space by Midnight the night before. Bring extra hard copies to class just in case they are needed.

Length: 500-600 words.

Required Reading for 11/6:

- A peer’s Essay #2 from among your small group members. Remember you should submit the final copy of your Essay 2 (on 11/4) to both the “Assignments” link **and** your Small Group’s File Exchange space (both on Blackboard).

Essay 2 asks you to follow the coverage of a true-crime case through four separate venues and to analyze the large and small ways the story changes as the case’s evidence is presented by different writers for different audiences.

This short writing asks you review a peer’s Essay 2. Address your writing to an audience beyond the writer, beyond our class. This means you will need to summarize both the demands of the assignment (as you interpreted them) and the approach and argument of the author (as you have assessed it) as she/he completed the assignment.

Analyze the following aspects of the author’s writing at some point during your review:

- Essay title—how does it encapsulate (or not) the central idea(s) under analysis?
- Essay organization—in what order are points made? How does the author link (or not) ideas together?
- Essay detail—what information from his/her sources does the author analyze? Are examples selected that illustrate and authorize the author’s main point(s)? Are there examples that appear to contradict or confuse the author’s main point(s)?
- Essay revision—offer at least two suggestions for ways the author might revise a detail within the essay or the entire piece towards greater clarity, stronger articulation of points, or more evocative discussion of primary text material.

Short Writing #12

Due: 11/8 before class to the “Assignments” section on Blackboard. Please bring a hard copy of your writing (along with the two images you xeroxed) to class as well. If you are serving as point-person, post your writing to both Assignments and your section’s File Exchange space by Midnight the night before. Bring some extra hard copies of both your writing and your images/section to class just in case they are needed.

Length: About 500 words.

Required Reading/Viewing for 11/8:

- Your own selection of a chapter or section of David Owen’s *Hidden Evidence: Forty true crimes and how forensic science helped solve them*.

OR

- Peruse at least two of the on-reserve photo collections:
 1. *High Fashion Crime Scenes* (Melanie Pullen).
 2. *Police Pictures: The Photograph as Evidence* (Sandra Phillips).
 3. *Scene of the Crime: photographs from the LAPD archive* (Tim Wride).
 4. *New York Noir: crime photos from the Daily news archive* (William Hannigan).
 5. *Weegee’s New York* (Arthur Fellig).
 6. *Least Wanted: a century of American mugshots* (Michaelson & Kasher).
 7. *Shots in the dark: true crime pictures* (Gail Buckland).
 8. *Aperture Magazine* Special Issue 149: “Dark Days: Mystery, Murder, Mayhem.”
 9. *Evidence* (Luc Sante).
 10. *The Nutshell Studies of Unexplained Death* (Corinne May Botz).

You’re a cop! What do you know about art?

--Gary Sinclair to Detective Robert Goren, “The Posthumous Collection,” *Law & Order: Criminal Intent*, Season 4, Episode 68.

In “The Posthumous Collection,” Detectives Robert Goren and Alexandra Eames investigate the death of a high-fashion photographer, Gerhardt Heltman, whose final work was a series of staged(?) murder scenes of dead women. Goren argues that the photographs reflect Heltman’s desire to reconnect with the *beauty* of suffering and death. Heltman, a German national, lost family in the Holocaust. Heltman’s killer, Gary Sinclair, on the other hand, is unmasked because Goren recognizes a different desire in *his* pictures ... the desire is to connect with the *violence* of suffering and death because he endured a childhood of abuse at the hands of his older sisters.

Some of you have already examined David Owen’s high-gloss forensic investigation textbook. Select one entry/case from that text to review closely. Or, conversely, select a couple of the ten photographic collections I have placed on reserve in Lilly (see list above) and Xerox **two** images from among these collections that you find striking (for whatever reason).

After you have found your section/images, **forward** an idea about the relationship between aesthetics, evidence/investigation, and violence that you see illustrated therein. You can discuss the individual images separately or compare/contrast them. If you’re working with the Owen text, be sure to focus your attention on the visual elements of the section you’ve read.

Most importantly, imagine a specific *reader* for your writing. This can be an individual known to you (parent, friend, sibling, mentor) or someone unknown to you but who is a member of a particular community who might have occasion to examine or investigate these images (journalists, artists, police officers, victims of violent crime, prisoners, art critics). Think about how your selection of a reader impacts your vocabulary, tone, even the *form* of writing.

ESSAY 3
ANNOTATION PROJECT* EXPLORING THE VISUAL CULTURE OF CRIME
INVESTIGATION

PART ONE: INDIVIDUAL ESSAY/“ANNOTATION” (15 POINTS)

Since Week 1 of the semester, you have been asked to maintain a ‘forensic file’ of cultural texts that strike you as evidence of intertextual engagement with the form, content, and contexts of criminal investigation. In my feedback, I encouraged you to pay particular attention to the *visual* aspects of these found texts: how they employ particular aesthetic techniques and technologies to explain and authorize means of investigation (fictional and non-fictional).

In the previous prompt for this essay, I described your final product as emulating the form of a *photo-essay*, where a set or series of images would be arranged with accompanying analytical or evocative text. This format would require you to compose on two levels, producing a piece of visual rhetoric that also analyzed the rhetorical impact of visual forms. However, I am altering this format slightly, in an effort to give you more time to work on textual composition. Instead of creating a *photo-essay* along the lines as *Let Us Know Praise Famous Men* or *The Innocents Project*, you will craft a piece emulating *Harper’s Magazine’s* “Annotation” segment. I showed you an example of this format when we met for instructor conferences during the week of Oct. 30. You can find further examples under the “Course Documents” link on the class’ Blackboard site (titled “Required Reading for 11/13”).

There are four basic features of the “Annotation” segment as it appears in *Harpers*.

1. The writing consists of 6 separate yet thematically connected paragraphs.
2. Each paragraph is roughly 5-7 sentences long. Each sentence varies in length and complexity.
3. Each paragraph is connected to a central image/object via lines resembling the ‘Track Changes’ formatting in Microsoft Word. Sometimes the connection between text and image/object is factual or descriptive; sometimes the connection is more evocative—extending an idea about the image/object as a whole to larger or separate ideas/concepts.
4. The whole piece is given a two-part title, where one phrase is often a central metaphor that the essay explores and the other phrase is more specific/descriptive about the essay’s central content.

To these four features, I am adding three more requirements for *your* Annotations.

1. You must follow the MLA guidelines for citations: in-text parenthetical documentation with a Works Cited page.
2. You must make use of a minimum of 5 supporting sources (a maximum of 8) when crafting your prose.
 - a. One of these will be the primary visual text at the center of your “Annotation.”
 - b. One must be a source from class readings.
 - c. A maximum of two sources can come only from online sources. (This restriction does not impact the use of online resources for images files; however, all visual sources should be cited completely.
3. One of the six paragraphs must be written in first-person, offering a self-reflexive meditation on the image/object your interest in it as a demonstration/evocation of crime investigation.

* My thanks to Dr. Erik Harms for directing me to the “Annotations” feature in *Harper’s* and for the use of his “Zoom IN: Describing Urban Space” assignment sequence in the crafting of this essay prompt.

As the first step towards crafting your Annotation, I urged you to look through what you have collected in your Forensic Files, so far, and select one item or idea that could become the centerpiece of your writing. The image could be of an item that would lend itself easily to division into various small topics/observations. The image could be more evocative of a series (television, books) or field (forensic anthropology, DNA analysis) that you would break down into a limited set of analytical points, factual details, evocative musings.

You could still work from the example I included on the first version of this essay prompt. If you were interested in *Bones*'s representation of forensic anthropology, you might place a screen capture from an episode at the center of your annotation and craft surrounding paragraphs that discuss:

- The origins of the series in the real-life work of Kathy Reichs, forensic anthropologist
- The series' unique visual signature—the hologram—used to reconstruct bodies and crimes.
- The 'team' of investigators, headed by Temperance Brennan, and their collective approach to crime solving
- The differences between the TV series and the book series (remember you've read *Deja Dead*, the first book Reichs' wrote). These differences might include the changes to Tempe's character, biography, position in the government, etc.

PART TWO: THE PEER REVIEW/"LETTER TO THE EDITOR" (10 POINTS)

After you make your initial decision about the central object/image/topic for your Annotation, you will be assigned a peer partner or peer group within your section. These assemblies will be formed based on commonality of objects/images/topics. Within these pairs/groups you will decide a peer whose Annotation you will review.

Since the essay itself emulates a magazine feature, your peer review will echo another type of writing found in print publications, the letter to the editor. Such epistles are sometimes motivated by a specific point of contention or feeling of admiration a writer wishes to convey to a publication regarding the work of an author/journalist. Sometimes other experts write in to point out factual errors or ongoing developments that were not included in a piece because of time constraints or lack of rigorous research.

Since you will share some aspect of your peer's research you will be speaking from a space of mutual education. While you can choose whether you will support or critique the positions or observations your peer presents in his/her "Annotation," you must include the following in your letter:

- A brief synopsis of the author's central point(s).
- A point of analysis you feel she/he expressed with particular acumen.
- A point of analysis you feel she/he could have expressed more clearly, succinctly, or evocatively.
- An idea that you had not considered about the central topic/object until reading his/her piece.
- A suggestion for future research/investigation.
- A suggestion for further development of his/her writing skills.

This letter must be **at least one printed page in length** that adheres to business letter formatting. Do not treat this writing as a "fill-in-the-bullet-point" assignment. These letters will be graded and displayed attached to your peer's Annotation essay as part of the public presentation of your work on the last day of class.

Schedule for Drafts of “Annotation” and “Letter to the Editor”

Tuesday, Nov. 13. Large Group Workshops on Annotation, Draft 1.

Draft 1 should be, at a minimum, a rough sketch (literally) of your central object/item and one sentence of description/approach for each of the six potential/imagined paragraphs that will surround it. Bring this sketch completed in cut & paste, hand-drawn or word-processed form; it should look similar to a rough magazine layout of a *Harper's* “Annotation.”

Thursday, Nov. 15. Workshop in Multimedia Project Studio, 115 Lilly Library

Each section will meet during class time in the Multimedia Project Studio, for a workshop with CIT to assist you in the cutting/pasting/editing of your central image/object. If possible, bring your own computers (especially those of you with MACs) so you can work on your items directly on your personal machines.

On Tuesday, Nov. 13, you will sign up for dates/times for small group workshops for Nov 19 & 20 (Mon. & Tues.) and 27 & 28 (Tues. & Wed.). Once this schedule has been finalized, amendments can only be accommodated in extreme unforeseen circumstances. The primary reason for this policy is so group members can submit drafts (in-progress) to peer groups the night *before* your scheduled meeting time.

Monday, Nov. 19 Small Group Workshops on Annotation, Draft 2.

For Draft 1 you were asked to identify the central object/image and give a one sentence of description for each of the six paragraphs connected to that image. For Draft 2, flesh out each of those six paragraphs with additional full sentences. Remember that some paragraphs might serve informative purposes (filled with factual, research-based detail), some might be descriptive (either close readings of the object/image), some might be critical (making a case for why, or why not, this object/image is representative of a particular strand or approach to crime investigation and/or fiction or non-fiction representations of crime investigation); at least one paragraph must be self-reflexive (where you use first-person and talk to your reader directly about your chosen item/topic and what draws you to it or how it exemplifies ideas you've encountered over the semester).

Tuesday, Nov. 20 Small Group Workshops on Annotation, Draft 2. See notation regarding form of Draft 2 associated with Mon. 11/19 above.
NO FORMAL CLASS MEETING

Thursday, Nov. 22 THANKSGIVING BREAK. NO FORMAL CLASS MEETING

Tuesday, Nov. 27 Small Group Workshops on Annotation, Draft 3.
NO FORMAL CLASS MEETING

For Draft 3, continue to refine and revise the prose from Draft 2 (taking into account suggestions received from your instructor, peer group, other outside readers). Pay particular attention to the arrangement/sequence of paragraphs. Make at least **two** versions of the completed Essay, each with differences in arrangement/sequence of ideas. Be prepared to discuss your thought process behind each version with your small group.

Wednesday, Nov. 28 Small Group Workshops on Annotation, Draft 3. See notation regarding form of Draft 3 associated with Tues. 11/27 above.

Thursday, Nov. 29 In-class small group workshops Annotation, Draft 4.

Draft 4 should be as close to 'finished' as you can possibly be; however, bring a list of three nagging questions or problems you feel still plague the piece (individual parts or the whole). The bulk of your in-class discussions should be trying to answer and/or solve these problems. You should also bring in a semi-complete version of your Works Cited page.

Letter to the Editor, Draft 1.

You will be given at least ten minutes toward the end of class to sit and make notes about this draft of your assigned peer's "Annotation." During this time, craft a list of points/details that you feel important, well-expressed, still incomplete, evocative.

Sunday, Dec. 2 @5pm Final drafts of Annotation due to Peer Reviewer and Instructor.

Tuesday, Dec. 4 In-class small group workshops on Letter to the Editor, Draft 2.

Now that the final draft of "Annotations" have been submitted, bring your own copy of that document to class along with the list of details you made on Thursday, Nov. 29. The goal of today's class is to have a second version, this time following the format/tone of a 'letter to the editor,' of your peer review.

Thursday, Dec. 6 Public Exhibition of Annotations & Letters to the Editor, All Sections.

Bring the final (for grading) 'letter to the editor' draft in hard copy form to the class exhibit space (TBD). It will be secured to the hard copy version of your peer's "Annotation."