

History Practicum: Sherlock Holmes and the Empire of Reason  
HIS 3942, Section 09B4  
MWF 4 (10:40-11:30)  
Keene-Flint 105

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## **Introduction and Objectives of Course**

History, as a philosopher once wrote, is both the events of the past and the stories we tell about them. This class is intended to introduce you to how those stories get told, or more to the point, how those stories get made. We will do this by exploring the world of Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of Sherlock Holmes: late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain, and the ways in which the themes and values articulated by Conan Doyle were extended by later media—largely film and television-- through the present.

The writing of history involves both the recovery of the past through research and reading, and the reconstruction of that past through critical thinking and writing. In other words, history is a product of discovery but also active intervention on the part of the working historian.

In this course we will explore the basic building blocks of historical inquiry with the aim of providing you with the requisite tools to succeed in the history major. In the process we will address fundamental questions: What is history? Is it everything in the past? How do historians decide what is significant and what is not? What is a historical fact? What is historical evidence? What is a valid historical interpretation? And how do all of these, and more, become a historical narrative, the story we tell about the past? And we will discuss more practical questions, such as how to choose a viable topic of study, how to formulate a successful research project, how to do research, and how to go about turning that into a successful essay.

## **Organization of the Course**

The course is divided into a lecture and discussion component. Classes meet Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Mondays and Wednesdays will be largely devoted to lectures on the theme of the course, Sherlock Holmes in Victorian (and Edwardian) England, and Fridays will be devoted to discussions of the mechanics of historiography. However, this is not a rigid division, and more likely than not there will be serious overlap in each session.

### **Course Requirements:**

Attendance is mandatory. You may miss one lecture session and one precept session without negative consequence to your final grade. After that, every missed session will result in the lowering of your grade by a half grade (i.e., a B becomes a B-, a C+ becomes a C, etc.).

You must arrive to class on time. Anyone arriving more than ten minutes late will not be allowed to remain in the class that day, and this will be counted as an official absence.

Class participation is required. One of the best ways to insure successful class participation is to prepare beforehand by doing the required readings and coming to class prepared to engage with the material and with your fellow students.

Like any and all classes at the University, the assumption in this one is that you and those around you are here to learn. For this to occur, students must respect one another. Disagreement and debate are healthy, but please be civil during class discussions.

**Assignments:** There are 7 precept assignments, two midterms, and a research/bibliographic assignment. The due dates for the assignments and the dates of the midterms appear below in the schedule.

The details of the precept assignments and the research assignment will be provided to you separately, and will also be posted on CANVAS.

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### **Texts**

The required texts are the following collections of Sherlock Holmes tales. These are available for free on ibooks or elsewhere on the internet, so I have not required that you purchase them in book form.

Arthur Conan Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet*

Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*

Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*

There are also required articles that are pdf files. These are posted on CANVAS, which you can access through the University's website.

Optional (but very helpful): For students of history, Patrick Rael, *Reading, Writing, and Researching for History: A Guide for College Students* (Brunswick, ME: Bowdoin College, 2004).

For students of Sherlock Holmes, Zach Dundas, *The Great Detective: The Amazing Rise and Immortal Life of Sherlock Holmes* (2015). A lively and intelligent exploration of Conan Doyle, Holmes and Watson, and the reasons for the endurance of the stories for more than a century.

### **Grades:**

Class participation and attendance 20%  
Precept assignments 30%  
First in-class exam 15%  
Second in-class exam 20%  
Research project/annotated bibliography 15%

### **Grading Scale:**

A = 100-92.5	C = 77.4-72.5
A- = 92.4-90	C- = 72.4-70
B+ = 89.9-87.5	D+ = 69.9-67.5
B = 87.4-82.5	D = 67.4-62.5
B- = 82.4-80	D- = 62.4-60
C+ = 79.9-77.5	Fail = Below 60

### **Relevant University Policies:**

"Please do not hesitate to contact the instructor during the semester if you have any individual concerns or issues that need to be discussed. Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office ([www.dso.ufl.edu/drp/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drp/)). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation."

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Students with disabilities will of course be accommodated, so long as their requests are accompanied by an official letter from UF's Office of Disabilities.

"In writing papers, be certain to give proper credit whenever you use words, phrases, ideas, arguments, and conclusions drawn from someone else's work.

Failure to give credit by quoting and/or footnoting is PLAGIARISM and is unacceptable." Please review the University's honesty policy in your student handbooks or on the University's webpage.

"Student records are confidential. UF views each student, not their parent(s), as the primary contact for all communication."

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## Plagiarism

**PLEASE NOTE:** In writing papers, be certain to give proper credit whenever you use words, phrases, ideas, arguments, and conclusions drawn from someone else's work. Do not make the mistake of copying someone else's words and passing them off as your own. Failure to give credit by quoting and/or footnoting is PLAGIARISM and is unacceptable. **IF YOU ARE CAUGHT PLAGIARIZING YOU WILL AUTOMATICALLY FAIL THE CLASS AND MAY BE PROSECUTED FURTHER.** Please review the University's honesty policy and honor code at the University Registrar's website: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/conductcode.php>.

## Schedule

*Week I:* Introduction

Lecture: History and the Detective Story

Discussion: What is history and (why) is it important?  
The Historian's Craft

**Reading:** Arthur Conan Doyle, "The Musgrave Ritual" and "The Yellow Face," in *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*

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*Week II*

Lecture: Arthur Conan Doyle and the Re-Making of Modern Detective Fiction

Discussion: How to Succeed in the History Major

**Reading:** Arthur Conan Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet* (Part 1, chapters 1-7)

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*Week III*

Lecture: Holmes and Watson in Victorian England

Discussion: What is a historical fact? What is historical evidence? Defining Context

**Reading:** David Cannadine, "A Case of [Mistaken?] Identity: Conan Doyle, Sherlock Holmes, and Fin de Siècle London" (pdf file, on Canvas)

**Precept assignment #1 due (at start of class), January 22**

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*Week IV*

Lecture: Crime and Criminology I

Discussion: What is interpretation? What do we mean by historical significance or meaning? What is a narrative? What is causality?

**Reading:** Arthur Conan Doyle, "The Red-Headed League," in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*

Stephen J. Gould, "Measuring Bodies," from *The Mismeasure of Man* (pdf file)

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*Week V*

Lecture: Crime and Criminology II

Discussion: Reading, analysis and writing based on primary sources

**Reading:** Arthur Conan Doyle, "The Final Problem," in *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*

## **Precept assignment #2 due February 5**

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*Week VI*

Lecture: Jack the Ripper

Discussion: Reading, analysis, and writing based on primary sources

**Reading:** Judith R. Walkowitz, "Jack the Ripper and the Myth of Male Violence" (pdf file, in Canvas)

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*Week VII*

Lecture: British imperialism

Discussion: Reading, analysis, and writing based on secondary sources

**Reading:** Arthur Conan Doyle, "The Boscombe Valley Mystery, in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, and "The Crooked Man," in *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*

Ronald R. Thomas, "The Fingerprint of the Foreigner: Colonizing the Criminal Body in 1890s Detective Fiction and Criminal Anthropology" (pdf file)

## **Precept assignment #3 due February 19**

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*Week VIII*

Discussion: Taking and passing (hopefully with an "A") a history exam

**Midterm One: Wednesday, : bring blue book**

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*Week IX*

**Spring Break, No Classes**

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*Week X*

Lecture: Matters of Class: The Notion of Respectability

Discussion: Formulating research questions; discussion of bibliography project

**Reading:** Arthur Conan Doyle, "The Man with the Twisted Lip," in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*

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**Precept assignment #4 due March 11**

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*Week XI*

Lecture: Holmes and Watson, Sexuality and Gender

Discussion: History and the Emotions

**Reading:** "A Scandal in Bohemia," in *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*

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*Week XII*

Lecture: Reason and Spirit

March 28 Discussion: Varieties of historical sources

**Reading:** Philip Shreffler, "A Spiritualist Crusade" (pdf file)

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**Precept assignment #5 due March 25**

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*Week XIII*

Lecture: Holmes in film and television

Discussion: What is a Usable Past?

**Reading:** Michael Saler, "Clap if You Believe in Sherlock Holmes': Mass Culture and the Re-enchantment of Modernity, c. 1890-c. 1940," *The Historical Journal*, 46, 3 (2003), pp. 599-622.

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**Precept assignment #6 due April 1**

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*Week XIV*

Lecture: Holmes in film and television (continued)

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*Week XV*

Discussion: Taking and passing a history exam-- Again

**Precept assignment #7 due April 15**

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*Week XVI*

Monday, April 20 **In class Midterm Exam – bring blue books!**