

HISTORY 2148A
Police Work and Forensics in Victorian Britain
[2024-25 | Fall 2024 | Winter 2025]

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This is a draft outline. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.

Course Description

Late Victorian Britain was the setting for Arthur Conan Doyle's fictional 'consulting detective', Sherlock Holmes, whose afterlife in television and film would have astonished his creator. We examine Holmes's world. Our subjects include the history of policing and detection and the nineteenth-century obsession with murder.

Course Syllabus

This lecture course explores the late Victorian British world, using the short stories of Arthur Conan Doyle, whose fictional 'consulting detective' has enjoyed an afterlife that would have astonished his creator, as a springboard. Criminal justice subjects include the real-life history of policing and detection, the nineteenth-century obsession with murder, the evolution of crime fiction, and the famously unsolved case of Jack the Ripper. We will also use the Holmes stories as points of entry for discussion of late Victorian empire; medicine, drink, and drugs; and male friendship. The course concludes with a brief examination of the ways in which those stories have been adapted, from the twentieth-century to the present day.

Students will write a book report based on the first Holmes story, an online mid-term test, and an online final exam.

On completion of this course students will:

Be familiar with the basic contours of late Victorian society

Possess an understanding of the history of Victorian policing and detection

Be aware of the discrepancies between crime and policing in the real world and their fictional representation

Have gained insight into the way history is reinterpreted and stories retold and remediated over time

Methods of Evaluation

Students must complete all coursework. Failure to complete all assigned coursework will result in a failing grade.

Attendance at lectures is necessary to pass the mid-term and final exam. I do not provide notes for students who have missed lectures.

Students will write a 2000-word report on the original Sherlock Holmes story, 'A Study in Scarlet', exploring the fictional portrayal of an amateur sleuth and his relationship with professional detectives. You are expected to meet the word-length specified; do not exceed it. Both print copies and OWL submissions are required. A late penalty of 2% per day, including weekends, will be assigned if the report is not received on the due date. Late papers will also be graded without comment. Extensions **must** be applied for via Academic Counselling. Requests for extensions made after the deadline will not be accepted. The mid-term and final exam will be submitted online via OWL within specific timelines. Emailed exams will NOT be accepted under any circumstances.

Book report (due 8 Oct.):	30%
Mid-term (29 Oct.):	35%
Final exam:	35%

Make-up tests, midterms, and exams can only be approved by Academic Counselling. Please see https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html for department procedures and requirements involving make-up tests and exams.

Course Materials

Required text:

Haia Shpayer-Makov, *The Ascent of the Detective: Police Sleuths in Victorian and Edwardian England* (Oxford, 2011)

<https://academic-oup-com.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/book/9433?login=true&token=eyJhbGciOiJub25lIn0.eyJleHAiOiJlE3MjAxMTkzMTQsImp0aSI6IjBmNDFIZmUzLTFjMWYtNDQ1Ny04NjgwLWMxYzUyMjEzNmEwNCJ9>.

Students will also be assigned Sherlock Holmes stories; these too can be accessed online.

Additional Statements

Audio or video recording of lectures is not permitted.

The best way to get in touch with me outside of the classroom is via email. I answer emails between 9 am and 5 pm, Monday to Friday. Please remember that office hours are not simply – or even primarily! – for dealing with problems. You are welcome to come and discuss course material in these hours.

As both the mid-term and final exams are conducted online, they are open book and you will have internet access.

All work submitted in this course must be your own. You may not make use of generative AI tools like ChatGPT for any assignments in this course.

Please review the Department of History's shared policies and statements for all undergraduate courses at: https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html for important information regarding accessibility options, make-up exams, medical accommodations, health and wellness, academic integrity, plagiarism, and more.