Spring 2019 Course Descriptions

Instructor: Anne Morey
Course: ENGL/FILM 351
Title: Advanced Film: Film Noir

Description: This course will investigate the phenomenon of the film noir as it appears in American cinema from the 1940s to the present. Film noir production from the early 1940s through the early 1960s will be emphasized, although we will also examine a number of so-called “color noir” films as samples of recent film noir production. Film noir has been variously termed a cycle, a movement, a genre, and a style. We will sift these attempts at defining film noir by examining its cinematic and literary antecedents (e.g., the gangster film, the hard-boiled detective novel), its connections to a variety of foreign cinemas (particularly to those of France, Germany, and Italy), its associations with documentary, and its interest in psychoanalysis as a mode of investigation and as a framework for narration. We will also consider film noir’s apparent misogyny and the variety of cultural pressures on film noir production, including changes in the studio system, the influence of a climate of political and social suspicion generated by Congressional investigations of Hollywood, and the Cold War generally.

Proposed Readings: James Naremore, More Than Night; selected BFI Film Guides; course pack on reserve; approximately 14 feature films from 1941 to the present