

# **HIST 31592: DEFINING THE DEVIANT**

**Crime and British Society, 1888-2000**



**Course Convenor: Dr Eloise Moss (specialist in histories of burglary, detectives, gender, sexuality and urban culture. Film geek and crime fiction fan.). Office: Room W2.15. [Eloise.Moss@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:Eloise.Moss@manchester.ac.uk)**



**‘I don’t want anybody to inform me that crime doesn’t pay.’**

‘Gentleman’ George Smithson, alias George Ingram, legendary burglar responsible for burglaries at over fifty London mansions, writing in 1930.

## **What this course is about:**

This course explores the history of Britain during the late-nineteenth and twentieth century through the prism of debates about the nature of crime and criminality. It challenges students to assess prevailing attitudes towards, and practices of dealing with, those defined as ‘criminal’, particularly reflecting on themes of marginalization and exclusion of groups due to racism, sexism, and other prevailing forms of discrimination. We explore a range of primary sources: including legal and criminological texts, fiction (Sherlock Holmes!!) and films, newspapers, and police and Home Office case files. In so doing, the course guides students to critically examine the ways in which historians have approached writing histories of crime and society to date and through what media. It also invites students to identify the role of the global and transnational in shaping modes of regulation via new technologies of communication and mass media.

## **Key questions we address:**

- 1) What were the historically-specific conditions out of which different acts were defined as crimes, when either previously or later on these actions were made legal?
- 2) Who gets to decide what is and isn’t a crime at a given period in history? Was this power located solely in institutions like the legal and judiciary system, or to what extent have public opinion, the media, and commercial businesses had a role to play?
- 3) Why were there changes and consistencies in the physical, psychological and emotional characteristics attributed to both criminals and victims, and how are these related to contextual factors such as wealth, class, social position, gendered identity, sexuality, race, and age?

## Weekly Topics

Week 1: Jack the Ripper: the birth of the twentieth century?

Week 2: Introducing the Criminal Classes... Criminology, Social Surveys and the 'Recidivist.'

Week 3: The Ascent of the Detective? Policing from Sherlock Holmes to Z Cars.

Week 4: Punishing Political Protest: Criminalising the Suffragettes.

Week 5: War and Crime. (Conscientious Objectors and Black Market Profiteers).

Week 6: Buried beneath the sands: Empire and 'colonial villainy.'

Week 7: Defining and Dealing with Discrimination? The 1968 Race Relations Act and the Murder of Stephen Lawrence.

Week 8: Technologies of urban surveillance: space and identity from the street lamp to CCTV at the Greater Manchester Police Museum.

Week 9: Who dares speak? Sexual assault and the rape of knowledge (how sexual consent has been negotiated in relation to the decriminalisation of homosexuality and abortion).

Week 10: Crimes against the planet? CND, Greenpeace and the stigmatisation of environmental protesters.

Week 11: 'Hooligans' or Heroes? The Hillsborough Disaster and the Criminalization of Football Supporters in Historic and Contemporary Contexts.

Week 12: Exams revision workshop.

### **Assessment:**

Assessment Task	Length	Weighting within unit
Case Study Analysis	1,500 words	40%
Essays	2,500 words	60%

### **Indicative Reading/Primary Source Material:**

**Films:** *Sanders of the River* (1935); *The Blue Lamp* (1950); *Sapphire* (1959); *Victim* (1961).

**Fiction:** Sir Arthur Conan Doyle 'The Adventure of the Cardboard Box,' in [Sherlock Holmes novel] *His Last Bow* (London, 1917).

### **Historiography:**

Neil Davie, 'Criminal Man Revisited? Continuity and Change in British Criminology, c. 1865-1918,' *Journal of Victorian Culture* 8:1 (2003), 1-32.

Anindita Ghosh, *Claiming the City: Protest, Crime and Scandals in Colonial Calcutta, c. 1860-1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight* (Chicago, 1992): chapter 'Jack the Ripper.'

Christine Grandy, 'The Empire and Human Interest: Popular Empire Films, the Colonial Villain, and the British Documentary Movement,' *Twentieth Century British History* (Feb 2014), 1-24.

Stuart Hall, 'Scarman to Stephen Lawrence,' *History Workshop Journal* 48 (1999), 187-197.