

From Sherlock Holmes to CSI: A History of Forensics



- *'You know my method. It is founded upon the observation of trifles.'* – Sherlock Holmes
- *'I tend not to believe people. People lie. The evidence doesn't lie.'* – Gil Grissom, *CSI*

We all know what a Crime Scene looks like today – hooded, white-suited investigators carefully searching for trace evidence from behind police tape. But what do we know about its history? What did a crime scene look like a century ago, and what happened in it?

'CSI' is just one of the many examples of forensic practices that we will study in this unit. We will look at a wide range of forensic investigation techniques – from lie detectors to DNA 'fingerprinting' – and an equally wide range of historical sources – from detective fiction and news reports of murder trials to TV forensic dramas. We will ask questions such as: how are claims to forensic truth made; by whom?; and with what tools and techniques?

This unit **does not** require prior scientific, legal or historical knowledge, just a curiosity about styles of forensic investigation, past and present.

TEACHING: One-hour weekly lecture, one-hour weekly seminar.

ASSESSMENT:

- 10-credit: a 1500 word essay and a final exam, each 50% of the overall mark.
- 20-credit: a 1500 word essay, a final exam and a research project (3000 words); the project contributes 50% to the mark, and the short essay and exam 25% each.

WANT TO KNOW MORE? Please contact Prof Ian Burney
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Or join a ZOOM DROP-IN INFO SESSION, June 14, 2023