

## Sophister Module Description Template 2024-25

**Full Name:** True Crime and Contemporary Culture

**Short Name:** True Crime

**Lecturer Name and Email Address:** Bernice M. Murphy (murphb12@tcd.ie)

**ECTS Weighting:** 10

**Semester Taught MT/HT:** HT

**Year JS/SS:** JS

### Module Content:

In the twenty-first century, true crime has become firmly established of the most high-profile – and most influential – genres existing within literary and popular culture. True crime documentaries proliferate both on mainstream TV channels and on various streaming outlets. Hundreds – perhaps thousands – of true crime channels can be found on YouTube, Instagram and on the video-sharing platform TikTok. Thanks to the success of shows such as *My Favourite Murder*, *Casefile*, *Red-handed*, *My Favourite Murder*, *Sword and Scale*, *They Walk Among Us* and *Serial*, true crime podcasting is a phenomenon. The formal characteristics and narrative conventions of the true crime narrative are also, increasingly, shaping works of fiction and film. This module will explore the cultural impact which selected high-profile true crime narratives have had upon works of literature, non-fiction, popular literature and film. It will explore the various ways in which certain real life crimes have inspired a range of cultural responses. The module will incorporate weeks on classic non-fiction true crime texts such as *In Cold Blood*, *Cries Unheard*, and *The Stranger Beside Me* as well as works of memoir, film, literary fiction and popular fiction which have been inspired by real-life cases, including *See What I Have Done*, *Lullaby*, *The Adversary*, and *The Silence of the Lambs*. Additionally, we will be engaging with the current true-crime podcasting landscape and other true crime media.

### Learning Outcomes:

- Students will develop transferable skills in literary media and literary analysis to a high level.
- Students will become familiar with the formal characteristics and narrative conventions of true crime.
- Students will engage with relevant critical, historical, and theoretical material.

### Learning Aims:

#### On successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- Demonstrate familiarity with significant true crime narratives from around the world (including Ireland, France, the US and the UK) as well as the historical and cultural factors informing these texts.
- Be familiar with the origins and development of the contemporary true crime narrative.
- Evaluate and discuss the position of the true crime narrative within the contemporary cultural landscape, and across a number of mediums.

**Assessment Details:**

- Number of Components: 1
- Name/Type of Component(s): Essay
- Word Count of Component(s): 5,000
- Percentage Value of Component(s): 100%

**Preliminary Reading/Viewing List (Subject to Change):**

Truman Capote, *In Cold Blood* (1965, USA)  
Gita Sereny, *Cries Unheard: Why Children Kill* (UK, 1998)  
Janice Malcom, *The Journalist and the Murderer* (1990, USA)  
Mark O'Connell, *A Thread of Violence: A Story of Truth, Invention and Murder* (2023)  
Derf Backderf, *My Friend Dahmer* (2012, USA)  
James Baldwin, *The Evidence of Things Not Seen* (1985, USA)  
Alia Trabucco Zerán, *When Women Kill: Four Crimes Retold*, (Chile, 2022)  
Patrick Radden Keefe, *Say Nothing: A True Story of Murder and Memory in Northern Ireland* (Ireland/USA 2018)  
John Carreryou, *Bad Blood: Secrets and Lies in a Silicon Valley Start-Up*, (2018, USA)  
Emmanuel Carrere, *The Adversary: A True Story of Monstrous Deception* (France, 2000)  
Sarah Schmidt, *See What I Have Done* (USA, 2017)  
Anne Rule, *The Stranger Beside Me* (USA, 1980)  
Leila Slimani, *Lullaby* (France, 2018)  
*The Silence of the Lambs* (Dir: Jonathan Demme, 1991)  
Alexandria Marzano-Lesnevich, *The Fact of a Body: A Murder and a Memoir* (2017, USA)  
Eliza Clarke, *Penance* (UK, 2022)  
*Anatomy of a Fall* (Dir: Justine Trier, 2023, France)  
Selected podcasts and true crime documentaries (tbd)

Please note:

- Curricular information is subject to change.
- Information is displayed only for guidance purposes, relates to the current academic year only and is subject to change.