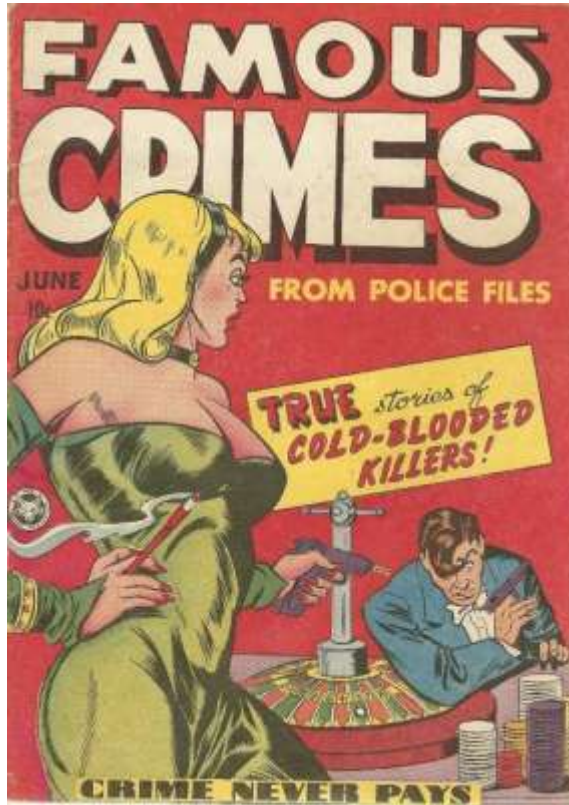


ENG 461, Senior Seminar: The Rhetoric of Crime
Dr. Rita Malenczyk
Fall 2011



"...the greater one's internal inadequacies, the the greater amount of evils one can load upon the back of 'the enemy'."

-Kenneth Burke

"Surely there was a guy in blue jeans driving a reddish pickup in Cline Falls State Park the night of June 22, 1977."

-Terri Jentz

This seminar will explore the intersections of rhetorical theory and popular narratives of crime, both "true" and fictive, and ultimately the social function of the crime narrative. We will explore the following questions, and more: Why does crime capture the popular imagination so? Why are there so many crime narratives that take so many different forms (think *Law and Order*, *CSI*, the mystery section of your local bookstore)? What is the persuasive, or rhetorical, function of the crime story? And what about the rhetoric of punishment?

This first several weeks of the seminar will focus on a study of the rhetorical theories that might be brought to bear on these questions. We will then practice rhetorical readings of texts and films about crime, and will develop proposals for the papers that will be the focus of ENG 462.

Readings/viewings may include Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*, Terri Jentz's *Strange Piece of Paradise*, Kerstin Ekman's *Blackwater*, Maj Sjowall and Per Wahloo's *The Laughing Policeman*, China Mieville's *The City and the City*, *Law and Order*, *The X-Files*, *Homicide*. No prior coursework in rhetoric--or criminal record!--is required for this course.