

**SYLLABUS**  
**SWEDISH CRIME FICTION**

**Instructor:** Erik Cardelús, [erik.cardelus@swedishprogram.org](mailto:erik.cardelus@swedishprogram.org)

The purpose of the course is to provide students with basic knowledge of the tradition of Swedish crime fiction and to stimulate interest and critical reflection in this subject. The genre has been commercially successful worldwide in the 2000s, and this course offers an overview of this success story. A selection of acclaimed Swedish crime novels provides the main material of the course, but as student, you will also get acquainted with selected film adaptations and the ongoing discussion of the crime genre in the marketplace.

The course takes its starting point in the influential author duo Maj Sjöwall & Per Wahlöö, creators of emblematic character Martin Beck. We will take this work as the catalyst for the success of Swedish crime fiction and the inspiration for the use many Swedish authors make of crime fiction as a genre to highlight societal problems and political issues. While we will discuss the genre Swedish crime fiction from several points of view, our primary point of departure will be the relationship of literature to society (e.g. issues concerning class, gender, ethnicity, and power and the (re)presentation of Sweden as a society and Swedes as a nation in these texts).

**Literature**

The books will be provided by the Swedish Program. Apart from the novels, which should be the main focus of your reading, we will use Kerstin Bergman *Swedish Crime Fiction: The Making of Nordic Noir*, 2014, as our course book. It will provide the necessary basic background knowledge on most of the literature we read on the course. Moreover, you are advised to read several research articles about the literary works at hand. These are meant to give an enriched insight into Swedish society, the conventions of the Swedish crime fiction genre and present a set of different approaches of analyzing it. These articles you will find in a folder on the Google classroom homepage of the course. You will also be supplied with *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, by J. A. Cuddon (5 ed. rev. by M.A.R. Habib), Penguin, 2014. This compact volume is not meant to be read cover to cover, but to be used as a handbook – a tool for actualizing different terms of literary analysis that can qualify our seminar discussions (which entries are to be read in this will be told during the course). There is also a folder for additional

reading. Reading of them is not mandatory, but they are supplied to offer an enriched context, that may be useful e.g. for the purpose of writing your midterm essay.

### **Class requirements**

This is a discussion-based course. Therefore, your regular attendance is required, and your active participation is expected. Please bring primary and secondary readings to class.

All classes take place on Tuesdays, 13:15-16:15, at the Stockholm School of Economics. However, the classrooms will differ, so please check the exact classroom before each class.

An unexcused absence may negatively affect your final grade. Your grade will not be affected if you miss a class due to illness or in the case of a (documented) emergency situation. If you have a personal or family event that conflicts with a class, and cannot be re-scheduled, you may ask your instructor for an excused absence. Such a request should, if possible, be made at least one week prior to the class in question. Please complete all readings by the date noted in the syllabus, and come to class prepared to engage fully with the materials. You are more than welcome to bring in additional materials of interest to the class.

### **Academic dishonesty**

Any form of academic dishonesty is a violation of our code of conduct and will result in disciplinary actions. Plagiarism or other forms of cheating will result in an automatic F for the assignment and may also result in an immediate F for the course as a whole, based on the assessment of the Director of Studies and the Executive Director. If you want to use AI to assist your writing, you must adhere to the following guidelines: AI-assisted writing is permissible as long as its use is properly documented and does not substitute for students' doing the actual writing work. For all written take-home assignments, students who have used AI to assist them are required to submit a summary describing how they have used AI to help them complete the assignment (producing text, proofreading, finding citations, etc). In addition, students also must clearly indicate which passages have been produced or assisted by AI, for example in a footnote that details how AI was used in that particular instance. Failure to acknowledge one's use of AI to complete an assignment will count as academic dishonesty and be subject to the same penalties as outright plagiarism or other forms of cheating.

### **Exams:**

Exams must be taken at the date and time specified in the syllabus. For a midterm exam, if you are unable to take the exam at the scheduled time, you must reschedule the exam with your instructor's permission before that time. If you need to reschedule a final exam, you must first contact the Head of Administration, who will then contact your instructor to find an alternative date and time for the exam. No outside materials or devices, including notes, phones, and computers, are allowed during the exam unless explicitly permitted by the instructor. Anyone caught using a device or consulting outside materials during the exam will automatically fail the exam. No one is allowed into the classroom once the exam itself has commenced. A student who arrives late for an exam will be permitted to take a make-up exam at a later time only if the instructor deems that the student had a valid reason for being late.

### **Late assignments**

Assignments that are submitted after the deadline and without prior agreement will be marked down. The late penalty will be progressively more severe the later the assignment is submitted.

### **Laptops & phones**

You may only use electronic devices for note-taking and solving group assignments. One [can not be engaged in the class](#) while scrolling social media or browsing the internet (even if only to look up something relevant to the class discussion). Moreover, it is distracting for other students and discourteous toward them. Phone use is not allowed in class unless I say otherwise.

### **Grades are based on the following criteria:**

- **Active participation in class and preparatory reading-journal entries** (quality and timely submission): 25%
- **Midterm essay** (due October 24; details to follow): 25%
- **Final exam** (to be written during exam week in December): 50%

The final exam summarizes the entire course and is therefore crucial for your overall grade.

## Bibliography Novels

### **Ekman, Kerstin.**

*Blackwater*. Translated by Joan Tate. London: Chatto & Windus, 1996.  
(Original work published as *Händelser vid vatten*, 1993, Bonnier.)

### **Läckberg, C.**

*The Ice Princess*. Translated by Steven T. Murray. London: HarperCollins, 2008.  
(Original work published as *Isprinsessan*, 2003, Forum.)

### **Larsson, S.**

*The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*. Translated by Reg Keeland. London: MacLehose Press, 2008.  
(Original work published as *Män som hatar kvinnor*, 2005, Norstedts.)

### **Lindqvist, J. Ajvide.**

*Let the Right One In*. Translated by Ebba Segerberg. New York: Thomas Dunne Books / St. Martin's Griffin, 2007.  
(Original work published as *Låt den rätte komma in*, 2004, Ordfront.)

### **Mankell, H.**

*Faceless Killers*. Translated by Steven T. Murray. London: Harvill Press, 1997.  
(Original work published as *Mördare utan ansikte*, 1991, Ordfront.)

### **Persson Giolito, M.**

*Quicksand*. Translated by Rachel Willson-Broyles. London: Simon & Schuster, 2018.  
(Original work published as *Störst av allt*, 2016, Wahlström & Widstrand.)

### **Sjöwall, M, & Wahlöö, P.**

*The Abominable Man*. Translated by Thomas Teal. New York: Pantheon Books, 1972.  
(Original work published as *Den vedervärdige mannen från Säffle*, 1971, Wahlström & Widstrand.)

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## Bibliography Literary theory

**Berglund, K.** “Detectives in the Literary Market: Statistical Perspectives on the Boom in Swedish Crime Fiction.” *Scandinavica: An International Journal of Scandinavian Studies*, vol. 51, no. 2, 2012, pp. 38–57.

**Berglund, K. (2021).** Genres at work: A holistic approach to genres in book publishing. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 24(3), 757–776. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13675494211006097>

**Bergman, K. (2014).** *Swedish crime fiction: The making of Nordic noir*. Mimesis Edizioni.

**Cuddon, J. A., & Habib, M. A. R. (2014).** *The Penguin dictionary of literary terms and literary theory* (5th ed.). Penguin.

**Erdmann, E.** (2009). *Nationality international: Detective fiction in the late twentieth century*. In M. Krajenbrink & K. M. Quinn (Eds.), *Investigating identities: Questions of identity in contemporary international crime fiction* (pp. 11–26). Brill / Rodopi

**Forsås-Scott, H.** (2014). *Telling Tales. Testing Boundaries: The Radicalism of Kerstin Ekman's Norrland*. *Journal of Northern Studies*, 8(1), 67-89.

**Hutcheon, L.** (2012). *Beginning to theorize adaptation: What? Who? Why? How? Where? When?* In *A theory of adaptation* (2nd ed., pp. 1–32). Routledge

**King, S., & Gulddal, J.** (2020). Genre. In J. Allan, J. Gulddal, S. King, & A. Pepper (Eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Crime Fiction* (pp. 13-21). Routledge

**Leffler, Y.** (2015, July 6). *Lisbeth Salander as Pippi Longstocking*.

Post45. <https://post45.org/2015/06/lisbeth-salander-as-pippi-longstocking/>

**Messent, P.** (2010). *The police novel*. In C. J. Rzepka & L. Horsley (Eds.), *A companion to crime fiction* (pp. 175–186). Wiley-Blackwell.

**Nestingen, A. K.** (2008). *The burned-out policeman: Henning Mankell's transnational police procedural*. In *Crime and Fantasy in Scandinavia: Fiction, Film, and Social Change* (pp. 223-254). University of Washington Press.

**Nilsson, L.** “A Cosmopolitan North in Nordic Noir: Turning Swedish Crime Fiction into World Literature.” In: Helgesson, S. et al. (eds.), *World Literatures: Exploring the Cosmopolitan Vernacular Exchange*. Stockholm: Stockholm University Press, 2018, pp. 340–354.

**Squires, C.** “The Genre in the Marketplace.” In *Marketing Literature: The Making of Contemporary Writing in Britain*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, pp. 70–101.

**Stougaard-Nielsen, J.** (2017). Foreigners in the welfare state: Henning Mankell's *Faceless Killers*. In *Scandinavian crime fiction* (pp. 89–100). Bloomsbury.

**Tapper, M.** (2014). The 1960s and 1970s: Sjöwall and Wahlöö. In *Swedish cops: From Sjöwall and Wahlöö to Stieg Larsson* (pp. 61–106). University of Chicago Press.

**Todorov, T.** (1977). *The typology of detective fiction* (pp. 42-52). In *The Poetics of Prose*. Cornell University Press.