

# Killers and Cults

## Leadership Gone Awry

LDST 390 (11150)

**Where:** Jepson Hall 103B

**When:** Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9-10:15am

**Instructor:** Dr. Lauren Henley (she/her)

**Office Hours:** Jepson Hall 234 (Tuesdays, 12-2pm)

**Contact Method:** Email (lhenley@richmond.edu)

### Course Description

Ted Bundy might be America's quintessential postmodern serial killer, but he also displayed many characteristics society affixes onto its most recognizable and respected leaders: charisma, intelligence, and attractiveness. Similarly, Jim Jones is often regarded as a heinous cult leader who facilitated unthinkable atrocities, but he was also appointed to the Indianapolis Human Rights Commission. This class takes seriously the preoccupation American society has with cults and serial killers as a productive lens for us to study the phenomenon of leadership. Approaching these topics from a historical lens will help us dismantle tropes we have about people who fit into these categories and force us to reckon with the uncomfortable truth that the line between "us" and "them" isn't as bifurcated as we might initially believe.

### Objectives

By the end of this class, you should be able to:

1. Defend a working definition of "cult" and "serial killer."
2. Display emotional intelligence when discussing victims *and* perpetrators of violent crime.
3. Apply a leadership studies lens to cults and serial killers.
4. Contextualize cults and serial killers (and coverage of these topics) using a socio-historical framework.
5. Use historical examples to analyze contemporary preoccupations with true crime.



### Framework

- We will critically examine two phenomena—cults and serial killers—through a historical lens
- We will create a space to explore social problems like racism, sexism, ageism, and more in the context of seemingly "deviant" behaviors
- We will consider how we make and unmake social norms, and what that process tells us about American society specifically and humanity generally

# What this class is...

## Necessarily unsettling

We will talk about violent and heinous acts...often. Be respectful and be intentional, but please know that nearly everything about this class carries a version of a trigger warning, so I will not be preempting discussions with disclaimers unless I believe the materials under consideration are *particularly* disturbing. Topics that may appear frequently in readings and class discussion include: murder (obviously), sexual assault/rape, cannibalism, dismemberment, necrophilia, child abuse, torture, mutilation, etc. If at any point during class you need to step away from the conversation, please display emotional intelligence by discreetly removing yourself from the trigger. If you need to step away for the entire class period, please send me an email as soon as possible so we can chat.

## Reading intensive

Seriously. You will notice that most of our class periods have 50+ pages of reading (typically from two different sources). While these readings tend to be accessible and often follow a narrative structure, there is no ignoring that 50 pages is 50 pages. If you are a slow reader and worry about keeping up, come see me during office hours so we can strategize. If you do not want to read a fair bit about cults and serial killers, please drop this class.



## Selective

There are lots and lots of groups that could be considered cults that we could be discussing. There are plenty of serial killers who make ripe fodder for classroom conversation. We're touching the tip of the iceberg in the time we have together. If you don't see someone or something on the syllabus that you expected us to cover, let me know. There's no guarantee we'll get to it this semester, but I am certainly open to modifications. I have tried to present a diversity of types of cults and types of killers, but there is only so much ground we can cover in a single semester.

# ...What this class isn't

## An academic version of *Mindhunter*

I'm not John Douglas. I have no desire to be. As such, though we will look into the way the FBI has shaped public perception of violent crime, we will not be tracking any contemporary serial killers or trying to infiltrate organizations suspected of being cultish.



## A true crime fan club

I get it. These topics are intriguing. But part of our goal is to figure out *why* and *how*. As such, I expect you to conduct yourself in a manner commiserate with the gravity of the subjects at hand. Be curious and open, but don't make crude or offensive jokes about the violent acts we will discuss.



## An indictment of religion

If you or anyone in your orbit is or has been a member of any of the communities under consideration, do not view our course materials as condemnation of their experiences or yours. The cults we are covering have been given that title by scholars who approach these groups with differing agendas and expertise. By the end of the semester you should be able to determine for yourself whether you believe this label has been appropriately applied.



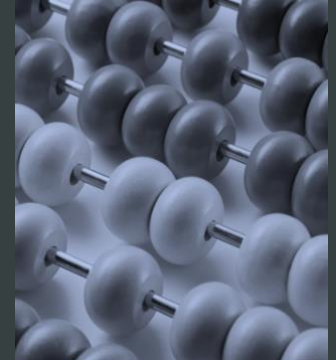
## Deliberately scary

I get that the topics under consideration can be frightening. I have not deliberately selected materials to elicit a fear response. That said, it is not fair to your peers to use fear as a reason you were unable to complete an assignment on time. If you know you scare easily, plan to do your reading in broad daylight and/or in public places until you get comfortable with the kind of materials that have been assigned.



# Assessment

This class approaches assignments and grading differently from many other classes. Research shows that traditional grading can hinder students' willingness to learn for the sake of learning. Instead, students tend to focus on the end result—the grade—and often prioritize getting a certain score or number of points. Because this class has the potential to be generative, enlightening, and rigorous, we owe it to one another to embrace learning for the sake of learning. To that end, this class is rooted in a collaborative assessment philosophy.



For every assignment you turn in this semester, you will be asked to assess yourself and/or your peers. Below is the breakdown for these various kinds of assessments, followed by descriptions of our assignments. You will notice that some of our assignments have multi-pronged assessments, meaning that your own reflection on your contributions factors into your grade as much as your peers' evaluations (or my evaluations). Overall, every assessment contributes 10% of your overall class grade and can only be connoted by a letter grade (A, B, C, D, or F, without pluses or minuses).

Given the nature of one of our activities (To Catch a Killer, outlined below), I will be giving out letter grades for this aspect of class in a semi-competitive format. As you will see in the explanation, the grades are not punitive but designed to replicate real-world expectations without significant consequences.



At two points during the semester, you will be asked to reflect on your overall experience in class. You will also be asked to reflect on your peers' contributions to class (including group work and in-class activities). When appropriate, you will assign grades to yourself and your peers, following a series of prompted questions. This means that you should take the processes of reflection, peer evaluation, and interpreting assignment requirements seriously. You have lots of autonomy in a collaborative assessment philosophy but must also be intentional, mature, and realistic about your contributions not only to our class, but to your own learning journey.

As a point of reference, it is worth knowing that I have high expectations. I want to see you succeed and will push you to think deeper, take risks, and hone your opinions. I believe you are all capable of immense growth this semester, regardless of where you're starting out. That's what I want to see and I will nudge you to step outside of your comfort zone. Many of the topics we cover this semester elicit a visceral response and cause us to reflect on the values we believe we hold, the assumptions we make about others, and the kind of world we think we inhabit (or perhaps wish to inhabit). Do not confuse a collaborative assessment philosophy with this class being an easy A.

# Components

DISCLAIMER: Late work has the opportunity to be assessed with a one-letter deduction per day it is late. There is no grace period for deadlines.

## Packback (20%)

- Reporter (10%): You will be the reporter once. You must complete both parts in a satisfactory manner.
  - Groupings + Thorough Report = A
  - Groupings + Sufficient Report = B
  - Either Groupings or Report late = C
  - Both Groupings and Report late = D
- Poster (10%): For ten weeks, you will be posting one question and two responses by 11:59pm on Wednesdays. The reporters' groupings determine the grade breakdown:
  - Exceptional: 153-180 = A
  - Average: 108-152 = B
  - Needs Improvement: 72-107 = C
  - Does Not Meet Expectation: 0-71 = D

## Zine (20%)

- Group Evaluation (10%)
- Class Evaluation (10%)

## To Catch a Killer (10%)

- First four students: A
- Next ten students: B
- Remaining students: C



## Podcast (30%)

- Product (10%)
- Self Evaluation (10%)
- Group Evaluation (10%)

## Woodland Cemetery (10%)

- 5 hours = A
- 4 hours = B
- 3 hours = C
- 2 hours = D
- 1 hour = F



## Participation (10%)

Excluding Covid-related issues, you may exercise two absences from class without consequence. These absences are automatically excused and carry an implicit no-questions-asked policy. You are young adults and I expect you to be able to manage your own commitments, health, familial situation, etc. Out of respect for our class dynamic, please communicate with me before you intend to miss class, if at all possible.

I get it. Emergencies happen. If you unexpectedly have to miss class, please reach out to me as soon as you are able, but not before you are safe and/or well enough to do so.

When you're in class, I expect you to be *in class*. I know you think you have the ability to multitask (and perhaps you think you're sneaky about it), but I'm well aware of when you're off task, even if I don't call you out in the moment. Be respectful, be present, and be honest.

# Reflections



## Mid-Semester Reflection (October 6<sup>th</sup>)

A key feature of humanistic enterprise is reflecting on how you know what you know, not memorizing facts to regurgitate at a specific moment in time. As a result, at the midpoint in the semester you will be asked to reflect on your experience in class so far. You will also assign grades to your zine group members based on guided questions. At the midpoint you will also receive an update on your Packback performance (though you may always request feedback earlier if desired). Overall, this reflection should be an earnest assessment of your learning and will provide you the opportunity to shape the direction of this class and future classes.

## Final Reflection (December 6<sup>th</sup>)

Completed after you've submitted all course materials, the final reflection will be similar to the mid-semester reflection but asks more robust questions about your class engagement, your progress throughout the semester, and areas where you still believe you could improve. You will also assign grades to yourself and your peers for your podcasts. For your zine assignment, grades from your non-group peers will be solicited during the last week of class and should factor into your final reflection. Similarly, your peers will listen to and evaluate at least one episode from each group's podcast during this week and provide feedback that should be incorporated into your final reflection. Finally, your reflection will include a short assessment of your time at Woodland Cemetery (and accompanying documentation proving you completed the requisite number of hours).

# Distribution



A+ 4.0	A 3.8-3.9	A- 3.6-3.7	Not Satisfactory
B+ 3.3-3.5	B 3.0-3.2	B- 2.7-2.9	F 0.0-0.6
C+ 2.3-2.6	C 2.0-2.2	C- 1.7-1.9	I 0.0
D+ 1.3-1.6	D 1.0-1.3	D- 0.7-0.9	V 0.0

# Assignments

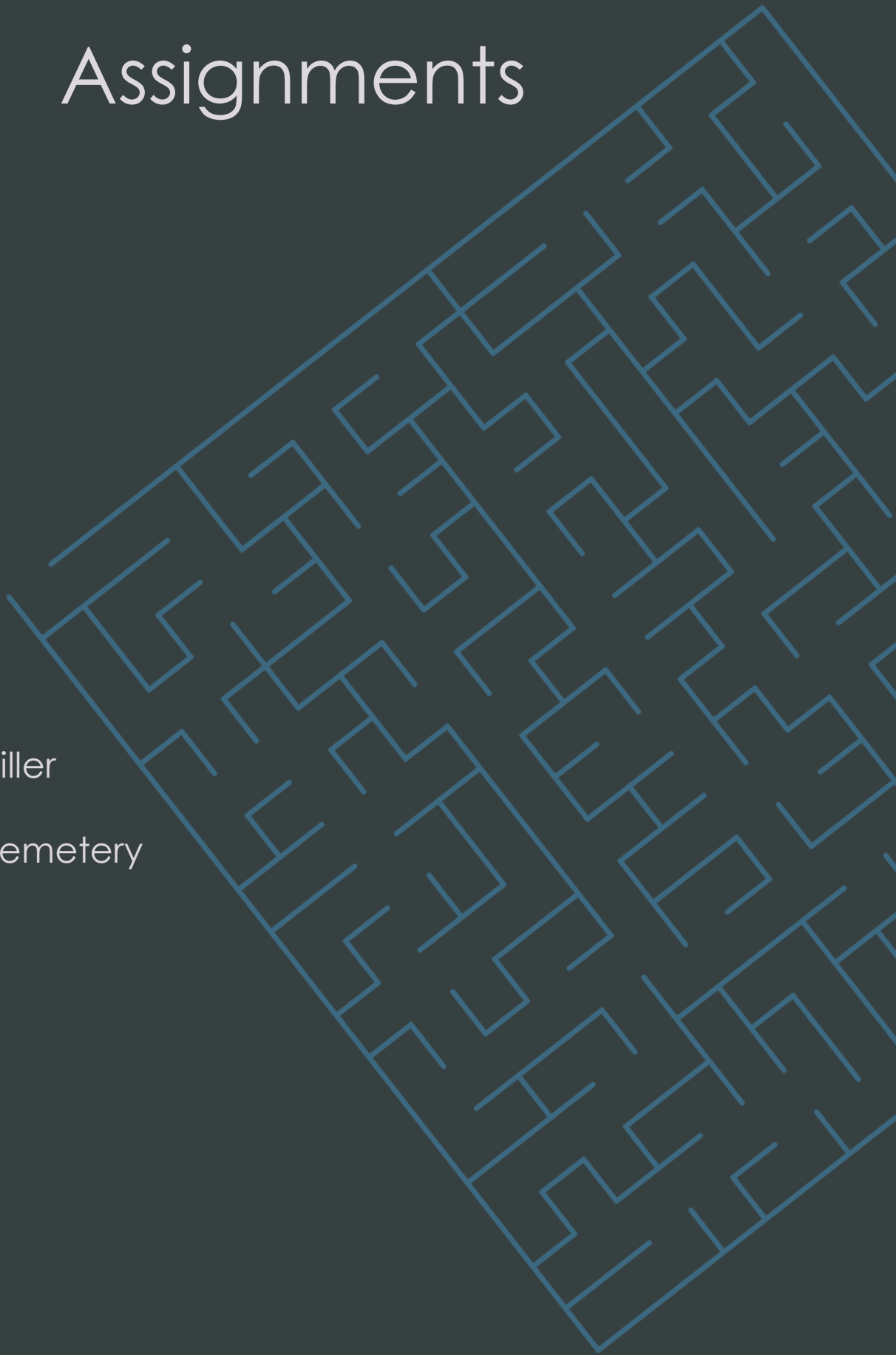
Packback

Zine

Podcast

To Catch a Killer

Woodland Cemetery



# Packback

Given the difficult and nuanced nature of subjects we'll be talking about in class this semester, we will need time and space to digest our readings, conversations, and activities. We will use Packback to facilitate dialogue between class sessions. Packback is an online discussion forum that encourages you to ask thought-provoking questions, engage with your peers, and make meaningful connections between course materials and other things that interest you. Most weeks, you will be expected to post one question and two responses. All Packback posts are due by 11:59pm on Wednesdays.



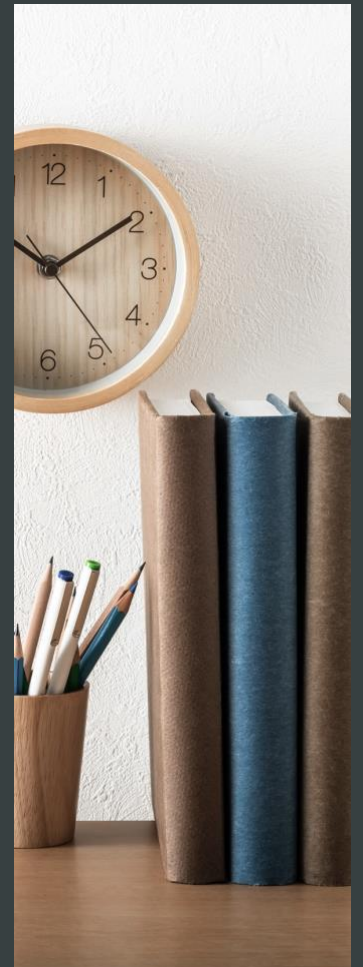
Note: We do not have Packback posts due the week of fall break, Thanksgiving, or the last week of class.

Note: If Packback is cost-prohibitive, please submit this form to apply for a Scholarship Access Code. You can also reach out to me so I can follow up with the appropriate party.

## Reporter

For one week, instead of posting on Packback, you will be assigned the role of Reporter. This assignment has two parts:

1. You must read through everyone's questions and responses on the platform and submit a 2-3-page summary report outlining major trends, themes, topics, etc. These reports are due on Sunday by 11:59pm for the previous week's posts. The reporters will have five minutes at the start of class on Tuesday to summarize their findings.
2. You must group you peers' posts into three categories: exceptional, average, needs improvement. No more than 1/4 of your classmates' posts can be deemed exceptional (otherwise we are falsely inflating our sense of what average looks like in our class). You may group your peers' responses and questions into different categories. If one of your peers did not post anything or posted after the deadline, you should invoke a fourth category: does not meet expectation.
  - a. There is a Reporter template on Blackboard for you to use for your groupings. The groupings correspond numerically as follows:
    - Exceptional = 3
    - Average = 2
    - Needs improvement = 1
    - Does not meet expectation = 0





# Zine

In small groups, you will be expected to create an accessible zine that takes on one of the cultish groups covered in the first unit of the semester. First, your zine should cover basic information about the group: who, what, where, and when without an opinion as to the morals or ethics of the group. Second, your zine should address how the group was received *in its time*. You are encouraged to draw from primary sources when developing these materials. If your group was/is controversial, be sure to present as many perspectives on its status as you can. Finally, your zine should contend with the significance of understanding your group in our current moment (perhaps in the context of totalitarian systems, debates about bearing arms, the purported separation of church and state, etc.).

## Formatting Details

Your zines will comprise five 8½" x 11" pieces of paper, for a total of 20 pages (including the front and back covers). You can include a combination of hand-drawn and digitally produced pages, though your finished product should be harmonious in style and tone. Although I encourage you to be as creative as possible with your zine, you should still ensure that you are using complete sentences and college-level grammar to convey your information. Do not mistake the ability to complete this assignment in a less-traditional manner to mean that it does not have to be rigorous. Your zine should include the following:

- Distinctive front and back covers
  - The front cover should have a unique title and captivating design
  - The names of your group members should appear on the back cover
- 5-7 pages detailing basic information: who, what, where, and when
  - In addition to these basics, you should cover the leader(s) and the core belief(s) that have drawn people to the community
- 4-6 pages elaborating on the group's reception
- 4-6 pages on the group's significance for modern audiences
- 0-3 pages covering any applicable updates on the group today (this may not be relevant for all the groups under consideration)

## Copyright

If there are images you wish to include in your zine, please pay attention to any applicable copyright laws. I recommend only including images that are in the public domain and/or have been produced by you (and are not an imitation or copy of a copyrighted image). If you have any questions about whether an image can or cannot be used, please reach out to the [appropriate librarian](#) based on media type.

## Assessment

During the last week of class, copies of your zines will be available for your peers to assess. Non-group members will provide anonymous feedback (including a recommended overall grade) on each zine that must factor into your final reflection. Recall, you will also complete peer evaluations to assess how your group worked together. Finally, copies of your zines will be archived by our Book Arts Studio.

# Podcast

In small groups, you will be expected to produce one season (8 episodes) of a podcast with episodes ranging from 12-15 minutes. Working with the studios in the Technology Learning Center (TLC), you will write, record, and produce high-quality content exploring one of the serial killers covered on the syllabus. Rather than simply participating in the over-saturation of the true crime market, however, your goal is to critique the genre and offer a fresh perspective on the topic of your choosing.



## Components

### **Annotated Scripts**

Each episode should be accompanied a detailed script that includes all of the audio materials present in the episode. Content footnotes using the Chicago Manual of Style should also be included. A sample script has been uploaded to Blackboard to serve as a template.

Note: Your last episode should be a “behind the scenes” look at how your group functioned together, the research you all completed while doing this project, and the ways you all decided to present the information you found. After this episode is completed, your group will submit anonymous peer evaluations.

### **High-Quality Audio**

Each episode should be recorded in a studio using high-quality equipment. Although the TLC can loan out equipment for student use, I highly discourage this approach unless absolutely necessary as the sound quality is often much poorer in dorm rooms and apartments than dedicated audio spaces.

### **Series Title and Tagline**

Throughout your entire series, you should create an opener that kicks off each episode. Your host should say the name of the podcast, their name (which can be a pseudonym if desired), and one line about the show.

### **Series Artwork**

For your entire series (not individual episodes), your group should create a thumbnail image that captures your content. A separate annotation explaining the image should be included with the script for the pilot episode.

# Logistics

Your group should use the TLC to record your podcast (and edit it too if you don't have the means to do so on a personal device). You will need to book the AV rooms in advance using [this link](#). I recommend determining a day and time that works for your group at the beginning of the assignment and reserving multiple sessions ahead of time. Given the roles required, everyone in your group *does not* need to be present at every recording session.

As there should be continuity throughout the entire season of your podcast, the same voice(s) should appear as a consistent thread. Your group can decide to have one or two hosts, depending on the format, and can opt to interview other group members if needed.

## Roles

- Host(s)
- Editor(s)
- Scriptwriter(s)
- Researcher(s)

## TLC Hours

- Sunday: 2-11pm
- Monday-Thursday: 9am-11pm
- Friday: 9am-5pm
- Saturday: Closed

\*See [website](#) for holiday hours



On average, it should take you approximately one hour to record an episode in the TLC. This time accounts for multiple takes, re-dos, sound checks, and breaks. Studio time should only be booked when you have an entire script written.



## Tips

At a comfortable listening cadence, about 140-160 words per minute is sufficient. If your podcast is more conversational, you can slow this pace to 120 words per minute if that feels more natural. This means that your scripts will generally have between 1,440 and 2,400 spoken words, in addition to sounds, directions, etc. Your pace will also be driven by the kinds of words you choose to use. Words with more syllables take longer to say. Do not use deliberately superfluous words that hinder comprehension. Remember, quality matters far more than quantity.

Sketching a general outline of your season's narrative arc *before* you start producing scripts will be helpful in mitigating against any anxiety you have regarding this assignment.

# Tentative Schedule

Here is a tentative schedule of what your podcast production *could* look like. Our serial killer unit is comprised of 7 weeks before Thanksgiving break. This schedule is based on one episode produced per week and a final episode produced during the last week of classes. Groups will be selected on or before October 4<sup>th</sup>.

Dates	To Do
10/2-10/8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create group chat, divide up roles, and begin researching your killer               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Make a list of topics/themes you'd like to cover and decide on the format of your podcast</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Draft a general outline of your entire season's narrative arc               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ What makes your podcast different from others (i.e. what's the hook that you're dropping in your pilot)?</li> <li>◦ Are you going to explore different crimes in each episode or cover all of the (known) crimes in your pilot?</li> <li>◦ Are you focusing on what actually happened or what society has decided happened (even if it's not true)?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Create a title and tagline</li> <li>• Book two hours at the TLC for the end of this week (and reach out to them if you need tech support and/or training)</li> <li>• Draft, edit, and finalize the script for your pilot episode</li> <li>• Create season artwork and accompanying annotation</li> <li>• Record pilot (<u>Note</u>: The first couple of episodes will take the longest to record, so please plan accordingly)</li> </ul>
10/9-10/15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Edit pilot</li> <li>• Upload pilot to Blackboard by October 14<sup>th</sup></li> <li>• Draft, edit, and finalize the script for episode 2</li> </ul>
10/16-10/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Edit and upload episode 2</li> <li>• Draft, edit, and finalize the script for episode 3</li> </ul>
10/23-10/29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Edit and upload episode 3</li> <li>• Draft, edit, and finalize the script for episode 4</li> </ul>
10/30-11/5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Edit and upload episode 4</li> <li>• Draft, edit, and finalize the script for episode 5</li> </ul>
11/6-11/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Edit and upload episode 5</li> <li>• Draft, edit, and finalize the script for episode 6</li> <li>• Note: November 10<sup>th</sup> is a podcast workday during class, so please take advantage of this allotted time to work as a whole group</li> </ul>
11/13-11/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Edit and upload episode 6</li> <li>• Draft, edit, and finalize the script for episode 7</li> </ul>
11/20-11/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Edit and upload episode 7</li> <li>• Note: this is the week of Thanksgiving and I do not expect you to work over the break</li> </ul>
11/27-12/3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft, edit, and finalize the script for episode 8</li> <li>• Record episode 8 (remember, this is the "behind-the-scenes" episode)</li> <li>• Edit and upload episode 8</li> <li>• Upload any remaining episodes to Blackboard</li> <li>• Complete anonymous peer evaluations on Blackboard</li> </ul>

# To Catch a Killer

One of the most important distinctions of serial murder is time. There is this frustrating tension investigators experience where they recognize that having more victims often provides more evidence regarding a killer's modus operandi, signature, and victimology. At the same time, law enforcement agencies do not want additional homicides to occur at all, let alone in their jurisdiction.



To allow you all to experience these tensions in real time, every week throughout the semester, there will be a clue placed somewhere in Jepson Hall. You will know an item is a clue because it will be in either a red folder or red box and will include "Henley – LDST390" somewhere on it. Although it would be disingenuous to tell you exactly what kinds of clues to expect as investigators don't have that luxury, you may have the ability to seek additional information as the semester progresses.

It will be your responsibility to locate the clue(s) at some point that week (our weeks will run Tuesday to Tuesday). I will not remind you to find clues beyond the first couple of weeks of the semester. There may be some weeks when more than one clue is available, but there will be no clues during the week of Thanksgiving or the following week. It is at this point that you will be expected to solve the case. Details are in the debriefing booklet on Blackboard.

Given the competitive nature of this exercise, it does not necessarily behoove you to help your classmates locate clues. If you miss a clue one week, you will likely be at a disadvantage going forward. There are no "make up" clues. This exercise is designed to provide a real-world simulation that carries some risk (i.e. grades) but is neither overly punitive nor actually dangerous.

The first four people to correctly identify the killer(s) will earn an A for this exercise. The next ten people will earn a B. The remaining group will earn a C. You must submit your guess via Blackboard for it to count. I strongly encourage you to consult the To Catch a Killer booklet on Blackboard throughout the semester rather than the week guesses can begin.

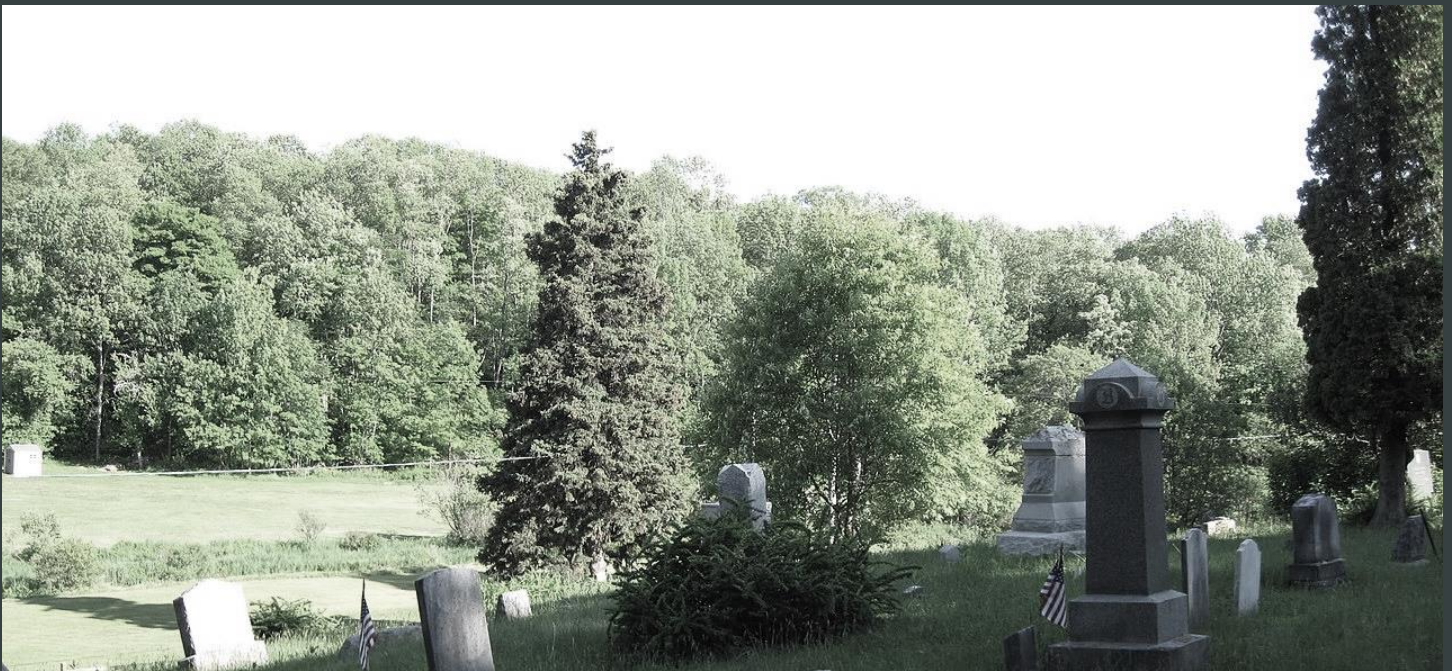


**When you find a clue, photograph it but DO NOT remove it from its location.** If you move the clue, not only are you compromising the investigation, but you are robbing your peers of this experience. As this activity heavily relies on an honor system, if it goes awry, I will assign a traditional research paper instead.

Note: The only classroom where clues could be located is our own. Clues will never be located in a gendered bathroom or the Jepson Student Lounge.

# Woodland Cemetery

One of the overlooked underbellies of multi-victim homicide events (whether through a mass casualty like Jonestown or John Wayne Gacy's bodies-in-the-crawl-space discovery) is that communities are often left to pick up the pieces of unfathomable tragedy. To ensure we are fully processing these events and reflecting on the fact that people lost (and continue to lose) their lives to both cults and serial killers, we will spend some time this semester volunteering at Woodland Cemetery. Whether or not we locate victims of foul play will be hard to determine, though not impossible.



Over the course of the semester, you will be expected to spend 5 hours volunteering at Woodland. These hours can be completed however you see fit, but they should be documented with photographs of the work you accomplish. The vast majority of the work you do will be manual labor (i.e. clearing gravestones, moving debris, probing the ground, etc.). If you are unable to perform this kind of work for whatever reason, please let me know so that we can cocreate an assignment that meets your needs.

As an appendix to your final reflection, you will be expected to produce a 2-3-page analysis of your time spent at the cemetery.

There will likely be an opportunity for an all-class workday at Woodland one day during the semester, weather permitting. It will either be a Friday afternoon or a Saturday morning, depending on availability. Details are forthcoming.

Note: If transportation to and from Woodland is a concern for you, please check out [these options](#) from the CCE. If you still have transportation concerns, let me know and we'll figure out a way to get you to Woodland safely.

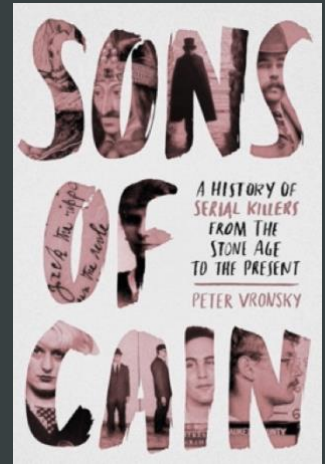
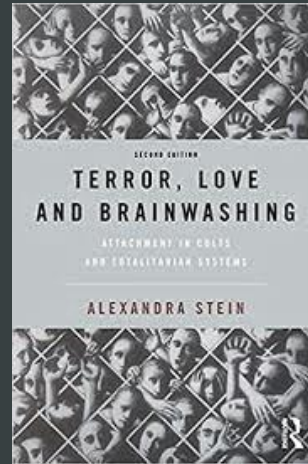
# Materials

## Books

Alexandra Stein, *Terror, Love, and Brainwashing: Attachment in Cults and Totalitarian Systems* (New York: Routledge, 2021)

Note: I prefer that you have the second edition but recognize it may be cost prohibitive for some

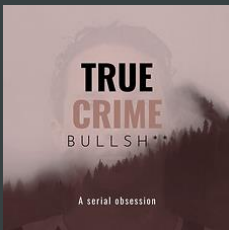
Peter Vronsky, *Sons of Cain: A History of Serial Killers from the Stone Age to the Present* (New York: Berkeley, 2018)



## Podcast

[True Crime Bullsh\\*\\*](#) (Season 1)

I don't care where you listen to this podcast, but make sure you have access to a reliable streaming platform throughout the semester. If this is a challenge for you, please reach out to me. Abbreviated as TCB below.



## Access to...

- Blackboard: Additional readings can be found here under the Weekly Schedule tab.
- Packback: This is our discussion platform for the semester.



## How to Read

Reading is not a passive activity and cannot be properly undertaken in simultaneity with other work. You should take notes while reading to process the materials: ask yourself questions, debate with the author(s), and make connections to other readings in real time. Whenever you approach new reading materials, you should try to discern the main argument. Then, you can assess how the author creates said argument, and whether or not it is one you find compelling. By actively reading and taking thorough notes throughout the semester, you will save time when completing your assignments. Strong notetaking will also lead to more productive class conversations as we talk through a variety of nuanced topics.



# Values

## Student Rights and Responsibilities

- You have a right to a learning environment that supports mental and physical wellness.
- You have a right to respect.
- You have a right to freedom of opinion and expression.
- You have a right to privacy and confidentiality.
- You have a right to meaningful and equal participation.
- You have a right to learn in an environment that is welcoming to all people. No student shall be isolated, excluded, or diminished in any way.

With these rights come responsibilities:

- You are responsible for taking care of yourself, managing your time, and communicating with me and with others if things start to feel out of control or overwhelming.
- Your experience with this course is directly related to the quality of the energy that you bring to it, and your energy shapes the quality of your peers' experiences.
- You are responsible for creating an inclusive environment and for speaking up when someone is excluded.
- You are responsible for holding yourself accountable to these standards, holding each other to these standards, and holding me accountable as well.

## Recording Policy

You may not record any portion of class, unless you have documentation requiring such for accommodation purposes. This includes but is not limited to all forms of audio and/or video recording technology. You may not take pictures of anyone in class without the express consent of the intended party.

## Personal Pronoun Preference

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, nationality, ability, etc. Class rosters are provided to me with your official university name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name and/or gender pronouns. If your pronouns change (or your name changes) during the semester, please contact me so that I may address you as you desire.

## Communication Policy

If you have questions that are not answered in the syllabus or on Blackboard, you are encouraged to reach out to me to seek clarification. If, however, the answer can be found in the syllabus or on Blackboard, my response will point you in the direction of the appropriate source. This approach encourages you to actually look for answers before reaching out and gives me time to answer more substantive questions. I will respond to student emails within 24 hours of receipt during the week but may not respond to emails sent during the weekend (after 5:00pm ET on Fridays through Sunday) until the following Monday.

Whenever you email me, do not address me as anything other than Professor Henley or Dr. Henley (i.e. no Ms./Miss/Mrs.). Your email does not need to be formal but should open with some sort of respectful greeting (i.e. Dear/Hello/Hi Professor Henley).



# Common Course Policies

Jepson School of Leadership Studies

## **Awarding of Credit**

To be successful in this course, a student should expect to devote 10-14 hours each week, including class time and time spent on course-related activities.

## **Disability Accommodations**

Students with a Disability Accommodation Notice should contact their instructors as early in the semester as possible to discuss arrangements for completing course assignments and exams.

## **Honor System**

The Jepson School supports the provisions of the Honor System. The shortened version of the honor pledge is: "I pledge that I have neither received nor given unauthorized assistance during the completion of this work."

## **Religious Observance**

Students should notify their instructors within the first two weeks of classes if they will need accommodations for religious observance.

## **Addressing Microaggressions on Campus**

Microaggressions are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.<sup>1</sup> Recent research has found that, when professors do not address microaggressions in class, microaggressions foster alienation of marginalized groups.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, both students and faculty that are exposed to microaggressions more often are more likely to have depressive symptoms and negative affect (a negative view of the world).<sup>3</sup> A comfortable and productive environment where meaningful learning happens can be collectively created through actions, words, or environmental cues that promote the inclusion and success of marginalized members, recognizing their embodied identity, validating their realities, resisting sexism, ableism, and racism.<sup>4</sup>

The University of Richmond is committed to building an inclusive community. To this end, the Student Center for Equity and Inclusion (SCEI) was created in 2021 and offers ongoing support and assistance for a diverse student body.<sup>5</sup> With this in mind, as a community member at the University of Richmond, I pledge to address microaggressions in the classroom by holding myself, other students, and faculty accountable for what is said and being receptive to criticism when perpetuating these slights, snubs, or insults.

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<sup>1</sup>Sue, S., Zane, N., Nagayama Hall, G. C., & Berger, L. K. (2009). The Case for Cultural Competency in Psychotherapeutic Interventions. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 60(1), 525–548.

<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.60.110707.163651>

<sup>2</sup>Bergom, I., Wright, M.C., Brown, M.K. and Brooks, M. (2011), Promoting college student development through collaborative learning: A case study of *hevruta*. *About Campus*, 15: 19-25. <https://doi.org/10.1002/abc.20044>

<sup>3</sup>Nadal, K. L., Griffin, K. E., Wong, Y., Hamit, S., & Rasmus, M. (2014). The Impact of Racial Microaggressions on Mental Health: Counseling Implications for Clients of Color. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 92(1), 57–66.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6676.2014.00130.x>

<sup>4</sup>Rolón-Dow, R. (2019). Stories of Microaggressions and Microaffirmation: A Framework for Understanding Campus Racial Climate. *NCID Currents*, 1(1). <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/currents.17387731.0001.106>

<sup>5</sup><https://commonground.richmond.edu/contact/bias-incidents/index.html>

# Campus Resources

If you experience difficulties in this course, do not hesitate to consult with me. There are also other resources that can support you in your efforts to meet course requirements.

**Academic Skills Center** ([asc.richmond.edu](http://asc.richmond.edu)): Academic coaches assist students in assessing and developing their academic and life-skills (e.g., critical reading and thinking, information conceptualization, concentration, test preparation, time management, stress management, etc.). Peer tutors offer assistance in specific subject areas (e.g., calculus, chemistry, accounting, etc.) and will be available for appointments in-person and virtually. Peer tutors are listed on the ASC website. **Email Roger Mancastroppa** ([rmancast@richmond.edu](mailto:rmancast@richmond.edu)) **and Hope Walton** ([hwalton@richmond.edu](mailto:hwalton@richmond.edu)) **for coaching appointments in academic and life skills.**

**Boatwright Library Research Librarians:** ([library.richmond.edu/help/ask/](http://library.richmond.edu/help/ask/) or 289-8876): Research librarians help students with all steps of their research, from identifying or narrowing a topic, to locating, accessing, evaluating, and citing information resources. Librarians support students in their classes across the curriculum and provide individual appointments, class library instruction, tutorials, and research guides. Students can contact an individual librarian or ASK a librarian for help via email ([library@richmond.edu](mailto:library@richmond.edu)), text (804-277-9ASK), or chat.

**Career Services:** ([careerservices.richmond.edu](http://careerservices.richmond.edu) or 289-8547): Can assist you in exploring your interests and abilities, choosing a major or course of study, connecting with internships and jobs, and investigating graduate and professional school options. We encourage you to schedule an appointment with a career advisor early in your time at UR.

**Counseling and Psychological Services** ([caps.richmond.edu](http://caps.richmond.edu) or 289-8119): Assists currently enrolled, full-time, degree-seeking students in improving their mental health and well-being, and in handling challenges that may impede their growth and development. Services include brief consultations, short-term counseling and psychotherapy, skills-building classes, crisis intervention, psychiatric consultation, and related services.

**Disability Services** ([disability.richmond.edu](http://disability.richmond.edu)) The Office of Disability Services works to ensure that qualified students with a disability (whether incoming or current) are provided with reasonable accommodations that enable students to participate fully in activities, programs, services, and benefits provided to all students. Please let your professors know as soon as possible if you have an accommodation that requires academic coordination and planning.

**Speech Center** ([speech.richmond.edu](http://speech.richmond.edu) or 287-6409): Assists with preparation and practice in the pursuit of excellence in public expression. Recording, playback, coaching, and critique sessions offered by teams of student consultants trained to assist in developing ideas, arranging key points for more effective organization, improving style and delivery, and handling multimedia aids for individual and group presentations. Remote practice sessions can be arranged; we look forward to meeting your public speaking needs.

**Writing Center** ([writing.richmond.edu](http://writing.richmond.edu) or 289-8263): Assists writers at all levels of experience, across all majors. Students can schedule appointments with trained writing consultants who offer friendly critiques of written work.

*I reserve the right to modify this syllabus according to the needs of the class.*

# Course Schedule

	Day	Theme	Materials
Cults: We All Seek Community			
	August 23	Overview	
	August 25	Introducing Cults	Stein, <i>Terror, Love, and Brainwashing: Attachment in Cults and Totalitarian Systems</i> (xiii-30) TCB, episode 1
Religion or Cult?	August 30	Early American Messiahs	Stein, <i>Terror, Love, and Brainwashing</i> (31-50) Jenkins, "Overrun with Messiahs" in <i>Mystics and Messiahs: Cults and New Religions in American History</i> (3-24) TCB, episode 2
	September 1	Ann Lee	Stein, <i>Terror, Love, and Brainwashing</i> (51-75) Brewer, "The Shakers of Mother Ann Lee" in <i>America's Communal Utopias</i> (37-56)
Destructive Cults	September 6	Branch Davidians	Stein, <i>Terror, Love, and Brainwashing</i> (76-105) Corrigan and Neal, "The Branch Davidians and Waco" in <i>Religious Intolerance in America: A Documentary History</i> (215-246) TCB, episode 3
	September 8	Peoples Temple Jen Thomas: Zines (Meeting at Books Arts Studio in Boatwright)	Stein, <i>Terror, Love, and Brainwashing</i> (106-130) Thrash, "Introduction" and "End Times in Jonestown, Guyana" in <i>The Onliest One Alive: Surviving Jonestown, Guyana</i> (xi-xiv, 83-123)

Doomsday Cults	September 13	Aum Shinrikyo	Stein, <i>Terror, Love, and Brainwashing</i> (131-153) Lifton, "Aum Shinrikyo" in <i>Losing Reality: On Cults, Cultism, and the Mindset of Political and Religious Zealotry</i> (107-133) TCB, episode 4
	September 15	Heaven's Gate	Stein, <i>Terror, Love, and Brainwashing</i> (154-193) Balch and Taylor, "Seekers and Saucers: The Role of the Cultic Milieu in Joining a UFO Cult" (839-860)
Self-Help Cults	September 20	Church of Scientology	Stein, <i>Terror, Love, and Brainwashing</i> (194-217) Wright, "Introduction" and "The Convert" in <i>Going Clear: Scientology, Hollywood, and the Prison of Belief</i> (ix-19) TCB, episode 5
	September 22	NXIVM	Stein, <i>Terror, Love, and Brainwashing</i> (218-236) Grigoriadis, "The Empowerment Cult" in <i>The New York Times Magazine</i> (1-8)
Culpability	September 27	Manson Family	Stein, <i>Terror, Love, and Brainwashing</i> (237-259) Dardenne, "The Case of Charles Manson" in <i>The Press on Trial: Crimes and Trials as Media Events</i> (159-171) TCB, episode 6
	September 29	Wrap Up + Check-in	TCB, episode 7 <b>Zines due 10/3 by 11:59pm</b>

Before: Serial Killers by Another Name			
Categorizing Crime	October 4	Introducing Serial Killers	Vronsky, <i>Sons of Cain: A History of Serial Killers from the Stone Age to the Present</i> (3-49) Douglas et. al, "Crime Classification: Past and Present" in <i>Crime Classification Manual</i> (3-20) TCB, episode 8
	October 6	Pre-history	Vronsky, <i>Sons of Cain</i> (50-85) Douglas et. al., "Mass and Serial Homicide" in <i>Crime Classification Manual</i> (471-490)
	October 11	No Class: Fall Break	Vronsky, <i>Sons of Cain</i> (86-179) TCB, episode 9
"Firsts"	October 13	Austin Servant Girl Annihilator & Jack the Ripper	Vronsky, <i>Sons of Cain</i> (223-276) Skip Hollandsworth, " <u>Capital Murder</u> " in <i>Texas Monthly</i> TCB, episode 10
Angels of Death	October 18	H. H. Holmes	Vronsky, <i>Sons of Cain</i> (180-220) Schechter, "Prologue" and "The Castle" in <i>Depraved: The Shocking True Story of America's First Serial Killer</i> (1-35) TCB, episode 11
	October 20	Jane Toppan	Kelleher and Kelleher, "Introduction" in <i>Murder Most Rare: The Female Serial Killer</i> (ix-xii) Ramsland, "Historic Angels of Death" in <i>Inside the Minds of Healthcare Serial Killers</i> (11-27)
Ax Murderers	October 25	Clementine Barnabet & Villisca	Vronsky, <i>Sons of Cain</i> (277-285) Taylor, "Introduction" and "Colorado Springs" in <i>Murdered in Their Beds: The History and Hauntings of the Villisca Ax Murders</i> (6-16) TCB, episode 12
	October 27	New Orleans Axman	Krist, "A Killer in the Night" and "'Almost As If He Had Wings'" in <i>Empire of Sin: A Story of Sex, Jazz, Murder, and the Battle for Modern New Orleans</i> (259-284)

After: Naming "Them"			
Gatekeeping Serial Killing	November 1	Ted Bundy	Vronsky, <i>Sons of Cain</i> (286-303) Vronsky, "Classifying Serial Killers: The Typologies of Monstrosity" in <i>Serial Killers: The Method and Madness of Monsters</i> (99-146) TCB, episode 13
	November 3	Harrison Graham & Carl Watts	Branson, "African American Serial Killers: Over-Represented Yet Underacknowledged" (1-18) Mitchell, "Chapter 1-Chapter 6," in <i>Evil Eyes</i> (21-57)
Critiquing True Crime	November 8	Dennis Rader	"Bind. Torture. Kill: BTK" in season 2 of <i>Catching Killers</i> (Netflix, 36 minutes) Ramsland, "Introduction" in <i>Confession of a Serial Killer: The Untold Story of Dennis Rader, the BTK Killer</i> (1-20) Jenkins, "Popular Culture: Images of the Serial Killer" in <i>Using Murder: The Social Construction of Serial Homicide</i> (81-100) TCB, episode 14
	November 10	Podcast Work Day	
	November 15	Murderbilia & Celebrity	Vronsky, <i>Sons of Cain</i> (304-338) Schmid, "Idols of Destruction: Celebrity, Consumerism, and the Serial Killer" in <i>Natural Born Celebrities: Serial Killers in American Culture</i> (1-27) TCB, episode 15
	November 17	TCB: Israel Keyes	Vronsky, <i>Sons of Cain</i> (339-366)
	November 22	No Class	TCB, episodes 16 and 17
	November 24	Thanksgiving	
	November 29	Podcast Listening Day	TCB, episodes 18 and 19
	December 1	Zine Gallery Walk + course evals	<b>Complete podcasts due 12/4 by 11:59pm</b> <b>Final reflections due 12/6 by 11:59pm</b>