

## French crime fiction: from Vidocq to Vargas

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**Start date** 8 April 2016**End date** 10 April 2016**Venue** Madingley Hall  
Madingley  
Cambridge**Tutor** Ruth Morse**Course code** 1516NRX109**Director of Programmes**

Emma Jennings

**For further information on this course, please contact** Clare Kerr, Public Programmes Co-ordinator  
01223 746237, [clare.kerr@ice.cam.ac.uk](mailto:clare.kerr@ice.cam.ac.uk)**To book** See: [www.ice.cam.ac.uk](http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk) or telephone 01223 746262

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### Tutor biography

Ruth Morse is professeur des universités (emeritus) at the Université Paris-Diderot (Paris-Sorbonne-Cité), and previously, for many years, Director of Studies in English at Fitzwilliam College, as well as a former Research Fellow of Clare Hall. She is the editor of two recent volumes, *Continuum Great Shakespeareans* vol. XIV (Les Hugo, Pasternak Brecht, and Césaire) as well as *Medieval Shakespeare: Pasts and Presents* (with Peter Holland and Helen Cooper). Morse is a frequent contributor to the *Times Literary Supplement*, and a judge for the UK Crime Writers Association.

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## Course programme

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### Friday

Please plan to arrive between 16:30 and 18:30. You can meet other course members in the bar which opens at 18:15. Tea and coffee making facilities are available in the study bedrooms.

19:00	Dinner
20:30 – 22:00	<p>Session 1: The earliest 'crime' stories, serials, and international exchanges</p> <p>Vidocq, from <i>Les Mémoires</i> (1828), 'Jean Monette'</p> <p>Maurice LeBlanc, Arsène Lupin (extract from <i>The Blonde Lady</i>)</p> <p>Pierre Souvestre and Marcel Allain, <i>Fantomas</i> (see <a href="http://www.fantomas-lives.com/fanto3.htm">http://www.fantomas-lives.com/fanto3.htm</a>) The easiest way to read a short extract is here:</p> <p><a href="http://archive.org/stream/exploitsofjuvebe00souviaala#page/n5/mode/2up">http://archive.org/stream/exploitsofjuvebe00souviaala#page/n5/mode/2up</a></p> <p>Dickens, 'Hunted Down' (for comparison)</p>
22:00	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

### Saturday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	<p>Session 2: Georges Simenon</p> <p>My Friend Maigret (<i>Mon Ami Maigret</i>)</p>
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	<p>Le 'Néopolar' of the 1970s and French history:</p> <p>Didier Daeninckx, <i>Murder in Memoriam</i> (<i>Meurtres pour mémoire</i>)</p>
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 16:00	Free
16:00	Tea
16:30 – 18:00	<p>Session 4: Oeuf dur or politically-committed?</p> <p>Dominique Manotti, <i>Lorraine Connection</i> [same title in French]</p> <p>(trans. Ros Schwarz and Amanda Hopkinson, Eurocrime, 2009))</p>

18:00 – 18:30	Free
18:30	Dinner
20:00 – 21:30	Session 5: Historical Fiction Jean-François Parot, The Phantom of the rue Royale
21:30	Terrace bar open for informal discussion
<b>Sunday</b>	
07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	Session 6: Eco-thriller Pierre Lemaître, The Great Swindle
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Session 7: Like nothing else Fred Vargas, Dog will have his Day [ <i>Un Peu plus loin sur la droite</i> ]
12:45	Lunch

**The course will disperse after lunch**

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## Course syllabus

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### Aims:

Whether you are reading in French or in English translation, our aim will be:  
To enjoy the Gallic traditions of crime fiction;  
To learn something about French history, politics, and society;  
And to understand the incessant exchanges between Anglophone and francophone fiction.

### Content:

Students who come with a laptop or tablet will be introduced to the extensive resources of the UK Crime Writers Association website and their new 'Daggerreads' initiative.

While the first session looks at the early days of French crime fiction through some short stories and extracts (to be provided), the subsequent six presuppose the reading of six novels before the course begins. As with other literature courses, we'll be interested in character, style, ethics, and, above all, plot. Where possible, we'll compare the stars of francophone detection and thrillers to their rivals across the channel: from nationalist competition to global capitalism, similar subjects occupy French crime writers and their readers. Even Parot's setting in the Paris of Louis XVI find reverberations in today's concerns.

### Presentation of the course:

Reading better is always a challenge. This is a course for crime fiction enthusiasts who want to discuss what they like, dislike, admire, fail to understand, seek explanations for, and might read next. Additionally, some attention to the quality of the translations will be important. French is a more rhetorical, more old-fashioned language sensitive to social distinctions (such as tu and vous) which we have ceased to use in English. Its laws are different (there is no habeus corpus); its law enforcement is organised ways unlike ours.

### Outcomes:

We may wish to think about our assumptions in any number of places: stereotypes about 'the French'; about our own expectations of good fiction; about our attempts to articulate our criticism and appreciation of the writers and their subjects. If we leave the course feeling more courageous about reading in translation (or even trying to read in the original), watching films or television with subtitles, or branching out in other ways, we shall find ourselves better travellers in the imagination and, perhaps, abroad.

**As a result of the course, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:**

Find websites that allow them to make choices about what they read in future; including more books by the authors they have met for the first time during the course; even, perhaps, to organise a local book group, or return to Madingley Hall for a new sortie into the world's crime fiction.

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## Reading and resources list

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Listed below are a number of texts that might be of interest for future reference, but do not need to be bought (or consulted) for the course.

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Author	Title	Publisher and date
Don Reid	Two articles about authors we'll be reading will be available once the instructor has participants' e-addresses	
Barry Forshaw	<i>Rough Guide to Crime Fiction; Euro Noir; or numerous other guides to reading, listening to, and watching crime fiction.</i>	

## Website addresses

**Note** Students of the Institute of Continuing Education are entitled to 20% discount on books published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) which are purchased at the Press bookshop, 1 Trinity Street, Cambridge (Mon-Sat 9am – 5:30pm, Sun 11am – 5pm). A letter or email confirming acceptance on to a current Institute course should be taken as evidence of enrolment.

*Information correct as of:* 07 April 2016