

### TAKE-HOME EXAM QUESTIONS

Write both eloquently and grammatically on one of the following topics. In your essay, you must include the novels listed. Feel free, though, to include any other course material that seems to you relevant. You may e-mail your essay to me (remembering always that e-mail is sometimes a crapshoot) or put the paper in my mailbox in the American Studies Office (RAB024) by 3:00 p.m. on December 18. My e-mail address is in [duus@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:duus@rci.rutgers.edu). And when you've done all that, have a perfectly grand holiday!

1. You are a member of the RU Class of 2107, taking a course in "People Studies." Your final paper is to be a study of gender relations in the United States from 1920 to 2000. Your primary research source in hard-boiled detective fiction of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Write that paper. You must include among your sources Maltese Falcon (1930), Farewell, My Lovely (1940), I, the Jury (1947), Kiss for a Killer (1960), Underground Man (1971), Killing Orders (1985), and When Death Comes Stealing (1994). (If you'd like, you may comment on whether you think these products of popular culture yield an accurate picture, but you don't have to include that.)

2. In an essay titled "The Hard-Boiled Detective Story," Richard Slotkin comments that Americans "are in love with authority; we know on the one hand we need authority and hard lines of value and on the other hand that authority is often corrupt and misdirected and that those hard lines of value are often blurry. The detective allows us to enjoy both of those features simultaneously, to play imaginatively at being both policeman and outlaw." Does this seem to you to be an accurate account of what hard-boiled detective fiction does? How does it treat issues of law (authority) and justice in American society? Do all of the detectives share a single view of the relationship of law to justice? In your answer, you must include Red Harvest (1929), The Maltese Falcon (1930), Farewell, My Lovely (1940), I, the Jury (1947), Killing Orders (1985), Devil in a Blue Dress (1990), and When Death Comes Stealing (1994).

3. One commentator has made the following observation about hard-boiled detective fiction: "A good private-eye novel . . . is not really about violence; it's about the fallibility of people, about the grotesqueries of modern life, and not least it is about one man [or woman], the detective, who defines the moral order and satisfies our sense that justice is possible in an imperfect world." Would you agree with, disagree with, or wish to qualify this statement? How does the comment comport with the traditional belief that the United States is a nation governed by laws, not men? In your answer you must include Red Harvest (1929), Farewell, My Lovely (1940), I, the Jury (1947), Underground Man (1971), Killing Orders (1985), Devil in a Blue Dress (1990), and When Death Comes Stealing (1994).