

Writers of detective fiction in the United States such as Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler developed an innovative form, hard-boiled detective fiction, that reflected the concerns of Americans at a particular moment in history about the liminality of the border between law and lawlessness. Writers of hard-boiled detective fiction used the form as a vehicle for socio-political criticism. Over time, in the face of social change, the intensely masculine white male private eye came to seem an anachronism. However, many of the central issues of hard-boiled fiction remain. In this course, students will explore the origin and development of the form and how it has been modified over time in response to its inherent sexism and racism.