

ENGL 3010 Spy Stories

Spring 2020

StokesS 476

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StokesS 454, 2-3702

OH: Tues 2-3, Wed 10-12

The Bible, the Odyssey, and ancient Chinese and Indian manuals of war all describe spycraft and secret agents; the Spanish inquisition invented 'waterboarding'; when George Washington's first amateur spy, Nathan Hale, was caught and hanged after just a week, the General paid out of his own pocket to establish America's first intelligence ring. This "secret world" disturbs the ideal of political and historical "transparency." The moral ambiguity of this "second oldest profession," with its seductions and aliases, its "agents" and "handlers" and "moles," troubles the notions of patriotism, "agency," identity itself. And makes for compelling fiction. Rudyard Kipling remarked: "If history were taught in the form of stories, it would never be forgotten" (*Life's Handicap*.) The same probably goes for psychology.

We'll begin this course with what many call the first significant Spy Story, a mashup of the detective story and the exotic adventure story, Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1901). *Kim* follows an orphan boy with a mysterious identity from adolescence to early maturity. The stage is India; the political situation is the Afghan War – of 1881! One strand of the plot is "The Great Game" --espionage between the British Empire and an expanding Russia. Our second text is John Le Carré's *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1963), a "Cold War" story that gave another valuable phrase to the genre. Then, after two classes on spy stories in films, we'll read a final text, David Ignatius's 2017 *The Quantum Spy*, a contemporary take on The Great Game between another two empires, the American and the Chinese.

As a seminar this course will foreground discussion and participation, with some in-class writing geared to facilitate this, as well as two short reflection papers, and a take-home final exam. Grading: 40% participation, 60% on the papers and exam. A chief learning-outcome is an increased facility for experiencing both pleasure and education through this and other pop culture genres. For further delights in learning, if you wish, Christopher Andrew's *The Secret World: A History of Intelligence* is on reserve in O'Neill Library.

Schedule of readings, writing, discussion:

Wed. Jan. 15: Introduction: pop culture and the classroom/the class. Spies, "traitors," "Legends." Cultures, colonialism, race, gender. *Kim*, ch. 1. (Sign up for get-acquainted conference next week, discuss possible personal projects for March 11 class.)

Wed. Jan. 22: Discussing *Kim*, chs. 2 through 7. The Road, the River, the Game.

Wed. Jan. 29: *Kim*, chs. 8 through 13. The lama, the spies, the People. (Topic suggestions for 2-3 page paper due next class.)

Wed. Feb. 5: final chapters of *Kim*: papers due. Transition handout: wars we were/are in, their spies and their storytellers. John Le Carré (David Cornwell).

Wed. Feb. 12: *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, chs. 1-11. Setting up the "op."

Wed. Feb. 19: *in from the Cold*, chs. 12-23. Success. (Topics for paper due next class.)

Wed. Feb. 26: Finish *Spy*; 2-3 page papers due. "the whole ghastly trick."

Spring Break Week: March 2-6

Wed. Mar. 11: films discussions; bring notes. LeCarré's "The Russia House" and "The Constant Gardner"; James Bond films, other possibilities.

Wed. Mar. 18: films transitioning to today's world..."Spy Game," "Eye in the Sky."

Wed. Mar. 25: *The Quantum Spy*, chs. 1-15.

Wed. Apr. 1: *The Quantum Spy*, chs. 16-29

Wed. Apr. 8: no class, Easter/Passover (office hours Tues. and Wed. for discussion)

Wed. Apr. 15: *The Quantum Spy*, chs. 30-40. Final meeting: final exam handed out, to be returned to me in person during special office hours Fri. Apr. 17, 11-3 or Mon Apr. 20 (Patriot's day), 10-1.

Note: the university's policy on plagiarism, defined as "the act of taking the words, ideas, data, illustrations, or statements of another person or source and presenting them as your own," is easy enough to adhere to for this course. Just read the fiction with attention, think your own thoughts, write your own reflections, and use a formal or informal footnote if you're inclined to read any work ON the fiction.

<http://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/resources/policy/#integrity>

And do visit my office hours (I'm available for appointments outside listed times if desired) for any help you'd like in writing, or conversation about any of the readings you'd like to continue discussing.

"In speaking to new recruits at the start of the 21st century Efraim Halevy, head of Mossad, used to cite the behavior of ten of the spies sent by Moses to spy out the land of Canaan as a cautionary example of the importance of sticking to their assigned missions. The ten had incurred divine wrath by allowing their personal views to override their responsibility for intelligence reporting." Christopher Andrew, *The Secret World: A History of Intelligence*, p.18.

"The use of anthropology by military forces did not originate, I discovered, in Vietnam or in Project Camelot [Cold War study of ethnography in revolution-prone countries, mainly Latin American]. On the contrary, during the First World War, Franz Boas had already warned of spies posing as anthropologists. In 1941 the American Anthropological Association had unanimously passed a resolution calling on all members to place themselves and their specialized skills and knowledge 'at the disposal of the country for the successful prosecution of the war.'" Robert J. Gordon, "The Martialization of South African Anthropology," p. 443.

As an assistant to the Special Operations Executive of the Admiralty during WW II, Ian Fleming "put down on paper everything he thought [the Americans] should know about the financing, organizing, controlling, and training of a secret service... Later he boasted that he wrote his Bond novels for warm-blooded people in railway trains, aeroplanes and beds, aiming for total stimulation of the reader all the way through, even to his taste buds." David Stafford, *The Silent Game: The Real World of Imaginary Spies*, pp. 164, 168.

