

Writing Division
Fall 2005, Mondays 6-8
Course Number: 6215

David Ebershoff
Office Hours: Mondays, 8-9 pm (Office A) or by appointment

Suspense!

At its most basic level, suspense is the force in literature that makes the reader want to turn the page. Without it, a novel is leaden and, ultimately, unread. If it's mishandled or overused, a book becomes implausible and hollow. The class will read eleven novels that use suspense in a variety of ways. Some rely on the tropes of suspense (a murder, a detective, a missing treasure), while others build suspense through the raw power of imagination and storytelling. We'll focus on how the authors create and maintain suspense, deconstructing the best narrative techniques to hook and hold the reader's attention. Part of the conversation will be about genre and how a writer can both employ and abandon the rules of a genre in order to surpass it. The goal of the class is to examine the role of suspense in literature and how a writer can use it to create powerful, lasting art.

Course requirements: 1) Active participation in each week's discussion; 2) Two brief (2-4 pages) papers on the role of suspense in two of the books on the syllabus.

Reading List

Out by Natsuo Kirino
The Moonstone by Wilkie Collins
Waiting for the Barbarians by J.M. Coetzee
Kidnapped by Robert Louis Stevenson
The Maltese Falcon by Dashiell Hammet
Cloud Atlas by David Mitchell
Mystic River by Dennis Lehane
The War of the Worlds by H.G. Wells
Revolutionary Road by Richard Yates
The Secret Agent by Joseph Conrad
The Talented Mr. Ripley by Patricia Highsmith