

Postmodern Mystery and Philosophy

A Philosophy Club Reading List

Postmodern literature intentionally breaks or exaggerates the conventions of genre in order to create new, deeper meaning. Postmodern mysteries in particular are often filled with fascinating philosophical conundrums such as intent vs. result and natural vs. positive law.

***Chronicle of a Death Foretold* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez**

Nobel Prize winner Gabriel Marquez becomes a character in his own introspective novel, attempting to solve a seemingly impossible mystery in a small town from 26 years prior. Although only 120 pages long, this metaphysical murder mystery is filled to the brim with tenderness and depth.

Philosophy: psychic abilities, "the disorder of love," intention, dreams, moral relativism

***The Third Policeman* by Flann O'Brien**

Set in Ireland and narrated by a scientist philosopher, *The Third Policeman* begins with an orphan, a broken wooden leg, and a murderous plan. O'Brien weaves together seeming unrelated aspects and characters to create a fast-paced, eccentric novel that will make you laugh loudly and think deeply.

Philosophy: linguistics, absurdity, the conception of knowledge, death and the afterlife.

***The Demolished Man* by Alfred Bester**

In the year 2301, weapons are outlawed and telepaths stop crime before it happens, so how did one man manage to commit a murder? Comparable to *Brave New World*, this fascinating and suspenseful mystery-sci-fi-hybrid was the first novel to win the coveted Hugo Award in 1953, and continues to be a staple of postmodern literature today.

Philosophy: motivation, perception, consciousness, Rule Consequentialism

***The Manual of Detection* by Jedediah Berry**

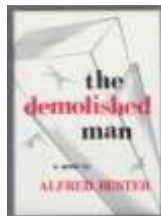
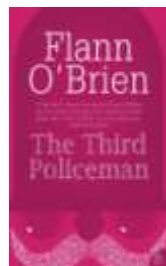
One reluctant detective, one umbrella, and hundreds of dreams: this absurd thought-experiment asks the question: what if the crimes we commit in our mind came true? Slightly steampunk, and wholly captivating, *The Manual of Detection* might cause you to re-evaluate your own thoughts.

Philosophy: imagination, moral relativism, metacognition, behaviourism

***The City & The City* by China Mieville**

In this fantastical existential thriller, Inspector Tyador Borlu must embark on a challenging journey to a strange neighbouring town in order to solve a gruesome murder. During this riveting reading experience, China Mieville reveals delicate world-building, gritty prose, and fundamental questions about reality.

Philosophy: perception, societal structure, nationalism vs. unificationism, metaphysical reality



***The Serialist* by David Gordon**

Harry Bloch is a struggling author who's just learned that his biggest fan is New York's most hated serial killer. As he begins to uncover the truth behind the murders, he is confronted by many unusual characters and moral dilemmas. Darkly-humorous, self-aware, and bold, *The Serialist* acts as a testament to all writers: from vampire novels to indie poetry. Philosophy: the definition of art, contemporary morality, the essence of truth

***Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* by Haruki Murakami**

We are presented with two alternate universes: one similar to our own in which a math genius is hired to work in an underground cave encoding data, and another fantastical realm that centres around the activities of golden-haired beasts. Playing upon both hard-boiled detective fiction and fantasy, Haruki Murakami creates another stunningly intricate story filled with philosophical speculation and surreal wonders.

Philosophy: semiotics, brain identity, the computational theory of the mind

***Special Topics in Calamity Physics* by Marisha Pessl**

After brainiac teenager Blue van Meer transfers to an elite school in the mountains, she is faced with a series of inexplicable and shocking events. This is edgy postmodern novel includes detailed illustrations, the occasional footnote, many references to high and low literature, light-hearted parenthetical text, and several layers of overlapping mysteries.

Philosophy: irony/implicature, postmodernism and truth, Structural Realism

***The Republic of Wine* by Mo Yan**

When rumours of gourmet cannibalism reach the capital, investigator Ding Gou'er must travel to Liquorland to uncover the truth. This unconventional and politically bold novel was written by Chinese novelist Mo Yan (the 2012 winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature), and achieves a mesmerizing plot, believably bizarre characters, and surreal speculations on reality.

Philosophy: imagination, belief, moral relativism, Constitutionalism

***Generation Loss* by Elizabeth Hand**

Although middle aged book store clerk Cassandra Neary did enjoy fleeting fame as an edgy photographer years ago, a series of bad decisions and mysterious circumstances have left her desperate and questioning. Her thrilling and thought-provoking story somehow manages to balance a disturbing tone with deep meditative moments.

Philosophy: permanence, death, imagery, nihilism, aesthetics

