

Dr. Wieland Schwanebeck

## **Spy Fiction**

PS/Ü

Tue (2)

Throughout the last two centuries, the spy has emerged as one of the most popular characters in British genre fiction, taking naturally to literary environments as diverse as the turn-of-the-century adventure story, the Cold War thriller, or the postmodern meta-literary novel. Spies may don various disguises and go by such illustrious names as “George Smiley” or “Bond, James Bond” (or, indeed, remain nameless, like Len Deighton’s protagonist), but they usually manage to excite the audience with their global location-hopping, their resourcefulness, and their (neo-)imperial spirit of derring-do.

This seminar will address the spy’s immense literary legacy, taking in a variety of classic texts of espionage and allowing participants to reflect on the political contexts in which the literary spy is embedded. Topics we will address include the role of espionage in a changing geopolitical environment, the gender troubles brewing beneath the inconspicuous surface, the relation of the spy narrative to genres like the novel of education (*Bildungsroman*) or the classic adventure tale, and the cinematic aspects which are woven into the literary theme of espionage and which are linked to names like Alfred Hitchcock and to the 007 franchise.

We will study spy fiction by authors as diverse as Rudyard Kipling (*Kim*, 1901), Joseph Conrad (*The Secret Agent*, 1907), W. Somerset Maugham (*Ashenden*, 1928), Ian Fleming (*From Russia, with Love*, 1957), John le Carré (*Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, 1974), and Ian McEwan (*Sweet Tooth*, 2012). A reader with some key chapters and excerpts will be provided at the beginning of the term; these texts must be studied on a weekly basis in order to pass the course. In addition, we will read one novel together.

Please buy:

Buchan, John. *The Thirty-Nine Steps*. 1915. London: Penguin, 2008. [or any other edition]