

Essay #4: Metaphysical Detective Fiction & Epistemological Exhaustion

Metaphysical detective fiction, the final iteration of the detective fiction genre we'll study this semester, is characterized by the questioning of the certainties that characterize classic detective fiction from the ability of the detective to solve the case to the clear distinction between detective and criminal (or reader and author) to a stable vision of the self. Please choose **one** of the below prompts for your essay.

1. In *The New York Trilogy*, Auster continually references Poe ("William Wilson," "Man of the Crowd") and Hawthorne ("Wakefield") stories we read to start the semester. In a **750-1000-word essay**, **discuss the similarities and differences between one of these stories and a novella from the *Trilogy***. Your essay should have a **clear thesis**, supported by **relevant and specific details** and **quotations** from the above texts.
2. The novellas from *The New York Trilogy* and the film *Memento* both trouble the distinction between detective and criminal. In a **750-1000-word essay**, **discuss how the film and one of the novellas troubles this distinction**. Your essay should have a **clear thesis**, supported by **relevant and specific details** and **quotations** from the above texts.
3. In the film *Memento*, the narrative is broken apart in a way initially confusing to the viewer. In a **750-1000-word essay**, **discuss how the film uses the disruption of narrative conventions to deal with the problem of knowledge**. Your essay should have a **clear thesis**, supported by **relevant and specific details** and **quotations** from the above texts.
4. In *The New York Trilogy* and *Memento*, writing is central to the ability (or inability) of the detectives to solve the case. In a **750-1000-word essay**, **discuss how the film and one of the novellas uses writing as a trope to discuss the difficulty or impossibility of stable knowledge**. Your essay should have a **clear thesis**, supported by **relevant and specific details** and **quotations** from the above texts.