Film noir (or "dark cinema") conjures images of deceptive women, secretive men, criminal acts, and unbounded sexuality. A quintessentially American genre, many of the classic films of the genre were created by exiles from Nazi Germany. In film noir, these filmmakers were able to give expression to their feelings of displacement and homelessness registers the powerlessness of the individual in the face of fate by thematizing a dark confrontation with the past. The alienation characteristic of the American film noir is deeply indebted to the cinema of the Weimar Republic (1919-1933) and influenced the French Nouvelle Vague (New Wave) and Alfred Hitchcock’s Vertigo (1958).

Starting in the 1970s, film noir inspired a renaissance with films such as Sweet Sweetback’s Baad Assss Song (Van Peebles, 1971), Chinatown (Polansky, 1974), Taxi Driver (Scorsese, 1976), Blade Runner (Scott, 1982), Who Killed Roger Rabbit (Zemeckis, 1988), Pulp Fiction (Tarantino, 1994), Memento (Anderson, 2000), The Dark Knight (Nolan, 2008), John Wick (Stahelski, 2014), Widows (McQueen, 2018), and Uncut Gems (Safdie Bros, 2019).

We will explore the stylistic and historical aspects of film noir and argue the case for naming it the quintessentially exilic genre. Films will include those by Fritz Lang, Otto Preminger, Robert Siodmak, Edgar G. Ulmer, Billy Wilder and Fred Zinnemann.

May count toward the General Education Requirement in Humanities, the Minor in Film Studies, and the Major or Minor in German Studies.