Sherlock Holmes and Dick Tracey might first come to mind when thinking about detective novels - as well as TV series such as “Gotham” and “Colombo.” But modern and contemporary Italian writers have been crucial to the development of this genre about a solitary, smart, and altogether too human detective who develops his – or her – own, unique way of thinking about crime, sometimes even becoming its victim.

We’ll start with Italian detective novels of the ‘30’s based in Milan – so-called gialli in honor of their distinctive yellow covers – and then move to Leonardo Sciascia’s Mafia versions, set in Sicily in the 60’s. We’ll finish with the ‘feminist’ giallo by Dacia Maraini, Voci, Elena Ferrante’s mysterious Amor molesto, and the adventures of Inspector Montalbano by the Sicilian writer Andrea Camilleri. En route we’ll see the film version of Umberto Eco’s medieval giallo, Il nome della rosa, and read comic books about Topolino’s (Micky Mouse) enemy, called “Macchia nera.” We’ll consider issues of gender (why are most detectives men?), region (why are so many gialli set in the South?), and narrative (suspense, character, and the role of the first-person narrator).

All readings and conversations in Italian.