Language of Material: English
Contributing Institution: Sacramento Public Library, Sacramento Room
Title: William E. Mahan History of the Mystery Novel Collection
Identifier/Call Number: MC.85
Physical Description: .42 Linear Feet1 archival box; 24 folders
Date (inclusive): 2010-2016
Abstract: A collection of materials used by Sacramento historian William E. Mahan in teaching a course on the history of mystery novels through the Renaissance Society, an organization dedicated to promoting lifelong learning opportunities for older adults through the offering of courses taught by members.
Biographical / Historical
William Edward Mahan was born in Illinois in 1931 and spent his childhood there and in Neenah, Wisconsin. He graduated with a bachelor's degree from California State University, San Jose and earned his master's degree in history from Stanford University. He was a politically active Democrat, serving as the president of the Sacramento County Young Democrats in 1960 and later as a member of the County Democratic Central Committee. In his professional career, Mahan focused on the history of the United States with an emphasis on civics and early 20th century Progressive movements. Mahan began his long career as a history educator teaching at Sacramento High School and Kennedy High School, where he served as a mentor to philosopher and social activist Dr. Cornel West and his brother Clifton while coaching them in cross-country running. He taught in Sacramento City College's history department for twenty years. Following his retirement, he resumed coaching cross-country at Kennedy High School. During this period, he remained actively engaged with local history, volunteering in the Sacramento Public Library's Sacramento Room, giving lectures, and leading walking tours, which included a popular trip through the Old City Cemetery. In addition, during his retirement he began teaching courses on the history of the mystery novel through Sacramento State University's Renaissance Society. Mahan died in August of 2016.
Scope and Contents
This collection consists primarily of Mahan's handwritten lecture notes, outlines, and discussion questions on the various novels and authors he featured in his course "The History of the Mystery Novel." Mahan organized these materials by author and book and included historical context for many. The collection includes a number of newspaper and journal clippings, most of which consists of book reviews or provide biographical information on the authors. In addition to physical items, the collection contains a number of digital items on a flash drive, consisting primarily of supplementary materials for the course intended to more fully engage his students with the mystery and crime genres in multiple formats. The collection includes materials which are restricted for reasons of privacy. Authors of note studied include: Kate Atkinson, Raymond Chandler, Agatha Christie, Wilkie Collins, Michael Connelly, Robert Crais, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Karin Fossum, Dashiell Hammett, John Harvey, P.D. James, Stieg Larsson, John Le Carré, Laura Lippman, Henning Mankell, Ed McBain, Val McDermid, Deon Meyer, Edgar Allan Poe, Maj Sjöwall, Per Wahlöö, and Scott Turow.
Preferred Citation
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