**FILM NOIR CHARACTERISTICS**

**NARRATIVE**

* Story begins as protagonist (often a detective) is given case/mission by client
* Protagonist is often a pawn used in larger plot/conspiracy
* Investigation/mission reveals corruption, especially by the wealthy/respected
* Official law enforcement is often unable/unwilling to levy punishment, so protagonist seeks justice
* Confessional, often with 1st person voice-over

**THEME**

* Betrayal
* Ambiguity between true justice and institutionalized law enforcement
* Modern world has lost its moral center

**MALE PROTAGONIST**

* On the fringe of office law enforcement (P.I, ex-police officer)
* Comes into contact with law enforcement and might be friends with/have friends in the establishment
* Tough, isolated, committed to quest for justice, conquers conspiracy/corruption (kind of like a western hero)
* Man of character/integrity (resists corruption)
* Often a failure (marginalized, lower middle class, etc.)
* Roger Ebert: “…they’re weaker than they thought they were and they’re *capable* of evil that they didn’t think they could commit” (don’t necessarily act on it)

**FEMALE ANTAGONIST**

* Dangerous, beautiful, involved in the mission/investigation
* Protagonist is drawn to her (in love?)
* At the end, the protagonist separates from her in some way

**MISE EN SCENE/SETTING**

* Black and white
* Action occurs in enclosed spaces—claustrophobic
* Lines (columns, shadows) help to create that enclosure
* Urban areas (seedy cafes/taverns, rundown buildings)—gritty
* Smoke/fog/rain (creates obscurity—HIDES someone, something, TRUTH)
* Telephones: attempts, esp. on part of male protagonist, to *connect*
* Water/reflection: reinforces idea of obscured truth/finding truth