

Department of English & Writing Studies

Cultures of Blood
ENGL 2075G (001)
Winter 2016

Instructor: Andrew Wenaus

Location: University Community Centre 37

Date/Time: Wednesday 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm

Office: AHB 2G28K

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Office hours: TBA

Course Description:

This course examines the contemporary Gothic from the latter half of the 20th century to the present. We will consider novels by Shirley Jackson, J.G. Ballard, Kōji Suzuki, and Toni Morrison, a graphic novel by Charles Burns, stories by Thomas Ligotti, and films like *The Ring*, *Noroi*, *Rubber Johnny*, and *The Cabin in the Woods*. These texts will be the anchors of our discussion. We will consider how horror and the Gothic interrogate contemporary social, cultural, and personal anxieties; how rapid shifts in technology and architecture have metamorphosed Gothic castles and old monsters into cosmopolitan high-rise living complexes and extreme violence; how ghosts become metaphors for historical trauma; how the nature of reality is, if considered too closely, nihilistically unimaginable and cosmically horrific; how different media operate self-reflexively to ask its audience not only *what* terrifies us but *how* we experience that fear. Finally, we will examine why the fear we experience from Gothic and horror fiction is often amusing and commercially successful big entertainment.

Course Learning Objectives

Successful students who complete the course will be able to:

- Achieve an understanding of Gothic and Horror fiction
- Achieve a sense of the historical significance of the contemporary Gothic
- Develop skills for effective critical analysis, close reading, and textual interpretation
- Develop skills for writing logical, organized, and clear essays on literary topics
- Develop skills for presenting academic material orally and moderating discussion amongst colleagues and peers
- Expand skills for engaging in secondary sources as a means of informing, interrogating, and engaging in literary debate

Description of Class Method

Courses will be lecture style. However, please be prepared to engage in discussion at each class.

Course Materials

Books (Required)

Ballard, J.G. *High Rise*. (UK General Books: 1985).

Burns, Charles. *Black Hole*. (Pantheon: 2008).

Jackson, Shirley. *The Haunting of Hill House*. (Penguin Classics: 2006).

Ligotti, Thomas. *Songs of a Dead Dreamer and Grimscribe*. (Penguin: 2015).

Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. (Vintage: 2004).

Suzuki, Koji. *Ring*. (Vertical: 2004).

Films (To be screened in-class)

Cunningham, Chris. *Rubber Johnny*.

Goddard, Drew. *The Cabin in the Woods*.

Verbinski, Gore. *The Ring*.

Shiraishi, Kôji. *Noroi* (The Curse).

Method of Evaluation and Marks Distribution

| Assignment | Due Date | (%) |
|------------------------------|---------------------|-----|
| Short essay (4-5 pages) | Week ____ in class | 15 |
| Mid-Term Test | _____ in class | 15 |
| Research paper (10-12 pages) | Week _____ in class | 30 |
| Attendance and Participation | | 10 |
| Final exam | TBA | 30 |

Short Essay **Value: 15%** **Due: Week ____ in class** **Length: 4-5 pages**

In consultation with me, you will develop a topic that engages with the idea of horror and the gothic. The purpose of this exercise is to guide your thinking toward the experience and interrogation of a popular genre/mode of which so many of us are already familiar. Think of this assignment as a launching pad for thinking about horror and gothic in a scholarly way. While this short essay will not be a research paper, it must be a formal academic treatment of a specific concern. More details to follow.

Mid-Term Test **Value: 15%** **Length: In Class**

This will be held during lecture on _____, and will be 1 hour in length. It will consist of a series of identifications followed by a section of terms/definitions.

Research Paper **Value: 30%** **Due: Week _____ in class** **Length: 10-12 pages**

You will engage with secondary source material as a means of intervening and offering insight into an established literary debate. Be eccentric and daring! Just be sure that your writing is clear and lucid, your flow of ideas is logical, and you stress the significance of your argument through close reading and critical analysis. More details to follow.

Participation

Regular attendance and involvement in class and seminar discussion is essential. The intensity and thoughtfulness with which you pursue the research paper in consultation with me will also have a bearing on your participation grade.

Late Submissions

Essays are due on the specified date. They are to be handed in at the beginning of class. Late essays will be penalized **3% per day** including weekends. Essays submitted more than a week (7 days) late will receive a grade of 0/F. If you cannot submit your essay on time due to illness or on compassionate grounds, you will need a letter from a physician or academic counselor of your home faculty indicating that you were ill or unable to attend to your work during the time in question.

NOTE: Students must pass both the term work and the final examination in order to pass the course.

Schedule of Readings and Lectures

TBA

Academic Accommodation:

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth (either alone or in combination) 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation.

Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested.

The Student Medical Certificate (SMC) can be found at

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf

The full policy is set out here:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf

Plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or a passage of text from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offense (see Scholastic Offense Policy in the Academic Calendar).

Prerequisites:

Students are responsible for ensuring that their selection of courses is appropriate and accurately recorded and that all course prerequisites have been successfully completed, and that they are aware of any antirequisite course(s) that they have taken. If the student does not have the requisites for a course, the University reserves the right to remove the student from the course and to delete it from the student's record. This decision may not be appealed. A student will receive no adjustment to his or her fees in the event that he or she is dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Information for students:

Departmental and university policies related to course work, grades, plagiarism, appeals, etc. are available on the English Department website. Please see: <http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergrd/info.html>.