



English 4040G

## The Gothic Child

Dr. Steven Bruhm

English and Writing Studies, Western University

Tues. 11:30-2:30  
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Office hours: Tues, 3:00-4:00, Wed. 2:00-4:00

### Description:

When UNESCO declared 1979 the International Year of the Child, it brought international visibility to a set of assumptions that the West had held for almost 200 years: that the child, although innocent, is a being full of potential for knowledge, productivity, and the social good, if only his/her needs for food, shelter, love, education, and medical care are adequately met. At the same time, though, the last century and a half has witnessed a flood of narratives that would suggest otherwise: the child is equally capable of familial destruction or global annihilation; the child's innocence is often a screen for sexual knowledge and selfish aggression; the child can exploit a well-meaning adult's desire to protect by turning that adult against his/her own best interests. This course looks at a wealth of narratives of the Gothic Child, and asks the questions: Why are we so fascinated with this evil child, whose existence we often so hurriedly deny? What needs are served by imagining this child and the fates we invent for it? Why are we drawn to narratives that seem to punish us for having the very children our culture validates us for wanting?

**Prerequisite:** at least one full credit of English at the university level.

"Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites."

**Required Texts** (available at the Western Book Store):

- Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw* (Oxford)
- John Wyndham, *The Midwich Cuckoos* (Penguin)
- Stephen King, *Carrie* (Mass Market)
- Anne Rice, *Interview with the Vampire* (Ballantine)
- Stephen King, *The Shining* (Mass Market)
- plus short stories posted on Owl



**Required Viewing** (available in Arts and Humanities Film Library):

- Jack Clayton, dir. *The Innocents*
- William Friedkin, dir. *The Exorcist*
- Gore Verbinski, dir. *The Ring*
- Jaume Collet-Serra, dir. *Orphan*

**Evaluation Scheme** (please see explanatory key on the next page):

- In-class teaching (date to be determined): **20%**
- Follow-up short paper (2000-2500 words, due one week after the in-class teaching stint): **20%**
- Term Paper (4000-5000 words, due Friday 8 April 2016): **50%**
- Class Participation: **10%**

## Evaluation Key:

### *Thinking* (as per class participation grade):

As this is a senior seminar meeting only once a week, your attendance is mandatory and your participation before and during the seminar is presupposed. You are expected in each class to have read or seen the assigned work beforehand, to contribute to the discussion, and to be able to draw on texts or films to further the conversation. In so participating, you must observe the following protocols of collegiality – that is, “good behavior,” regardless of what you may be feeling:

- Full attention to the conversation at hand. Surprising as it may seem (and embarrassing as it is to say), some students in recent years have devoted their class time to Facebook, emailing, games, or things extraneous to the course. I won't have it. Such behavior, if detected, will result in a forfeiting of the participation grade and, if repeated, removal from the course. Technology may of course be used to contribute to the intellectual pursuits of the class (note-taking, on-line research, etc.) but it will not replace it.
- Collegial treatment of one's colleagues. This does not mean agreeing with or praising everything someone says, but rather conversing respectfully and generously, even in one's disagreements. I will emphasize throughout the course that we attend to what the literature, theory, and discussions are saying, rather than what they are not; by this I mean I want us to focus *not* on the ways texts *do not speak* to certain issues (the ubiquitous “race, class, and gender” that is now a staple of Humanities education) but on what texts and colleagues *do* speak to. Bluntly put, please do not call your fellow students to account for not speaking directly to your political concerns.

### *Teaching* (as per in-class seminar):

As senior students in the Humanities, you are continually honing your skills (as is your instructor) on the effective presentation of ideas that are germane to a literary or filmic text, the overall thrust of the syllabus, and the diversity of learning styles in the people you are teaching. Teaching is, among other things, an exercise in understanding what your participants know already, what they need to be informed of, and how they can be best challenged. It is also, in an English course, an exercise in being responsible and fair to the significations of the text, even if (or especially when) one is reading against the grain of that text. Your in-class seminar, then, should take us directly to a problem as posed by the text (literary, filmic, or theoretical), one with which all class members can engage. To that end,

- please avoid building your seminar around texts that your fellow students have not read and cannot directly engage with. You can certainly refer to external research, but you should do so judiciously and in a “teacherly” way, remembering that the people you are teaching will probably not know the work to which you are referring. Don't dazzle us with what you've read that we haven't.
- please ensure that your teaching incorporates a close, focused reading of a short section of the text – about one paragraph's worth. The primary texts for this course have been chosen for the way they present a child as a gothic production: good teaching requires that you attend to that particularities and details of that production. Grand claims are often useful but only if they can be located in particular evidence.

### *Writing* (as per short and long essays):

As with teaching, scholarly writing means identifying the audience who will receive and engage with your work. In the immediate context that audience is me, but you should be writing for the scholarly community more generally (and this is where your external research plays a huge role). As part of the apprenticeship quality of any senior course, I am asking you to do two major pieces of writing – a seminar paper and a major term paper. In both assignments, you should write with economy and with an attention to the conventions of presentation; one must say something new about a text or an issue while acknowledging the previous work in the field; and one must structure one's writing to carry the argument across the assigned word count. Be sure to recount only enough of the plot of a story or film to situate your critical point and make it comprehensible; do not give much time to plot summary. Final essays must be free of errors typographical, grammatical, or citational; quote cleanly and felicitously. As outlined below, essays must be submitted electronically through Turnitin.com, as well as in hard copy to me.

### Late Papers:

Essays are due on the day assigned. Essays that are late without prior consultation with me will be docked 2% per day including weekends. A hard copy of the late paper should be placed in the English Department's Essay Drop Box and an electronic copy should be sent to me at the time of deposit. My receiving of the electronic copy will count as the date and time for the essay's submission.

### 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](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](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf)

### Absence for medical or other reasons:

For cases of absence involving illness, the student is directed to the Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness ([http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf)). If students miss an in-class assignment, or are absent for more than two or three classes, they must provide medical or other documentation and submit this to the Office of the Academic Dean. Such documentation must be submitted by the student directly to the appropriate Faculty Dean's Office and not to the instructor. It will be the Dean's Office that will determine if accommodation is warranted. In general, any absence for legitimate reasons will be dealt with by re-weighting the term work grade accordingly or by arranging make-up tests/examinations.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to [MentalHealth@Western](mailto:MentalHealth@Western):

<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

### Responsible Use of Technology in the Classroom:

Ontario law makes it difficult to ban laptops or other electronic devices from the classroom, so you are permitted to use them in class. However, laptops, tablets, cell phones and such used in class **must be used solely for the purpose of engagement with class material**: that is, taking notes, checking facts on line, drawing upon new information relevant to the lecture or the work being discussed. Any other use of electronics – watching irrelevant videos, playing games, Facebooking and other social media use, for example – that results in complaints from your colleagues will be dealt with briskly. You will receive one warning about use of technology, and should a second complaint arise, I will seek to have you removed from the course. The principle here is simple: what you have on your computer screen in front of you, and the attention you pay to it, must not distract or compromise anyone else in the room, including your instructor.

### Statement on Academic Offences:

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following website:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

### University policy on plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing, using footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following website:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (link to Turnitin.com website: <http://www.turnitin.com>.)

## Reading and Viewing Schedule

January	5	Introduction; Shirley Jackson, "All She Said Was Yes" (available on Owl)
	12	Henry James, <i>The Turn of the Screw</i>
	19	Jack Clayton, dir. <i>The Innocents</i> ; Joyce Carol Oates, "Accursed Inhabitants of the House of Bly" (available on Owl)
	26	John Wyndham, <i>The Midwich Cuckoos</i>
February	2	William Friedkin, dir. <i>The Exorcist</i>
	9	Stephen King, <i>Carrie</i>
	Reading Week	
	23	Anne Rice, <i>Interview with the Vampire</i>
March	1	<i>Interview with the Vampire</i>
	8	Gore Verbinski, dir. <i>The Ring</i>
	15	Stephen King, <i>The Shining</i>
	22	Stephen King, <i>The Shining</i>
	29	Daphne du Maurier, "Don't Look Now" (available on Owl)
April	5	Jaume Collet-Serra, dir. <i>Orphan</i> ; course review and catch-up



### Photo Credits:

Page 1, still from Jack Clayton, dir. *The Innocents*. <http://moviemezzanine.com/the-innocents-blu-ray-review/>

Page 1, still from William Friedkin, dir. *The Exorcist*. <http://www.joblo.com/horror-movies/news/the-exorcist-40th-anniversary-extended-edition-coming-to-blu-ray-this-october>

Page 4, still from Neil Jordan, dir. *Interview with the Vampire*, [http://www.hotflick.net/pictures/big/994ITV\\_Kirsten\\_Dunst\\_006.html](http://www.hotflick.net/pictures/big/994ITV_Kirsten_Dunst_006.html)

Page 4, still from Jaume Collet-Serra, dir. *Orphan*. <http://www.cinemagia.ro/filme/orphan-orfana-33554/imagini/261446/>