

Pittsburg State University
English 558: Topics in Film Studies
Horror Movies
Grubbs Hall 303, Spring 2016

Instructor: Dr. Jamie McDaniel
Email: jmcदानie@gus.pittstate.edu
Office Hours: MTWRF 2 – 4 or by appointment

Office: Grubbs 402, 235-4744
Home: 620-308-5341
Writing Center: 235-4694

Course Description

Horror films often have been considered as being among the lowest and most exploitative of cinematic genres. Despite such criticisms, the horror genre is more complex than it initially may seem to be; lurking beneath the bloody surface are unique insights and commentaries on the various contexts in which such films were produced. Critics from a variety of fields have recognized that horror films provide a complicated but popular forum in which social tensions may be interrogated. This course will serve as an introduction to major films within the genre, from the 1890s to works released in recent years. Through weekly screenings and critical readings, we will consider how the horror genre has served as a barometer of sorts for cultural anxieties at particular historic moments. Additionally, we will focus on the numerous aesthetic choices and filmmaking techniques that are evident throughout our course films in order to reveal both continuity and growth within the genre.

Learning Objectives

1. To help you develop the critical viewing skills necessary to understand complex texts.
2. To model the many ways that scholars talk about film and to encourage you to use these tools of cinematic analysis.
3. To give you practice in creating written discourse about film.
4. To help you appreciate horror film as aesthetic object, rhetorical performance, and cultural artifact.
5. To familiarize you with horror film and its history as it is being reconceived through the influence of feminism, cultural studies, and other perspectives.

Required Text and Materials

Dixon, Wheeler Winston. *A History of Horror*. New Jersey: Rutgers UP, 2010. ISBN: 978-0813547961
Cooper, L. Andrew. *Dario Argento*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2012. ISBN: 978-0252078743
Outside materials available for download from Canvas.

Grading Scale

A = 93-100	B- = 80-82	D+ = 67-69
A- = 90-92	C+ = 77-79	D = 63-66
B+ = 87-89	C = 73-76	D- = 60-62
B = 83-86	C- = 70-72	F = below 60

Assignments and Evaluations

Participation: 10%
Midterm and Final Oral Exams: 15%
Essay One: 15%
Essay Two: 15%
Revision Essay: 25%
Multimedia Projects: 20%

You must fully complete all assignments for the course in order to receive a passing grade.

Writing to Learn

Philosophy of Writing

The philosophy behind using writing as a way to learn course material is that as students write about concepts, they become active learners, articulating ideas in their own words and thinking about ideas from their own perspectives. Writing about course content is a skill that needs to be practiced; that is why you will be writing often and why the kinds of writing assignments may vary.

Statement of Intent

This is a Writing to Learn class. In this course we will write frequently as a way to learn course material. The writing may range from quizzes and in-class writing assignments to formal journals and essay exams. But expect to write about course content regularly.

Writing to Learn Requirements

- This is a Writing to Learn course, which means that in addition to earning an overall passing grade on other course components, you must also earn an average passing grade on the formal writing assignments to pass this course. If you do not earn an average passing grade on the formal writing assignments, you cannot pass this course.
- You will receive feedback from me on all your writing assignments. Pay attention to that feedback and use it to help improve your writing.
- If/when you use sources in your essay assignments, give credit for the words or ideas of others by documenting your sources, using the MLA style of documentation.
- In this course, you will write a minimum of 15 pages of formal writing in the form of essays. See the assignment handouts, available on Canvas.
- The due dates for all assignments are indicated in the course schedule.
- All writing assignments will be evaluated according to the rubrics available on Canvas.

Electronics/Technology Policy

Cell phones should be turned off or on silent during class. If I see you using your phone for either phone calls or text messaging or if the ringer is not turned off, you will receive a “0” in participation for the day. If you must keep your phone on for emergencies or another reason, please let me know.

You may use a laptop, e-reader, or other electronic device to take notes or to bring in readings or assignments that are available via Canvas or the Internet. You may not use your electronic device to do anything other than reviewing class-related material or taking notes. If you use your electronic device for any purpose other than these, your privileges will be suspended. I maintain the right to revise this policy at any point during the semester if improper usage becomes a problem.

Presentation

This class depends upon actively engaged speakers, listeners, and writers. Your responsibility is to be an active participant. As a result, this class demands that all reading assignments are completed, **in full**, on the day they are due and that you **bring the assigned text to class**. In addition, all assignments are to be typewritten and done according to directions. I encourage you to think for yourself, challenge each other, and assume pride and ownership in every text you produce. While I will at times lecture on some material, my overall expectation is that we will work together as a group to come to more complex and varied understandings of the texts covered over the course of the semester.

According to federal guidelines, you should expect to spend two out-of-class hours devoted to coursework for each hour spent in the classroom or in direct faculty instruction. Therefore, for this three-credit class, you should expect

to devote at least six hours per week on average to prepare your work. Of course, some weeks may require more time, and some weeks will require less.

In this course, we will view a number of films that portray content and themes that may be disturbing to some students. We will be analyzing and discussing, in a scholarly manner, the meaning and significance behind these representations. Students with questions or concerns about course content are encouraged to see me immediately for a short meeting.

I also suggest that you consult the following links about interacting with faculty:

6 Things You Should Say to Your Professor

<http://college.usatoday.com/2013/02/19/6-things-you-should-say-to-your-professor/>

5 Things You Should Never Say to Your Professor

<http://college.usatoday.com/2013/01/10/5-things-you-should-never-say-to-your-professor/>

No, It's Not Your Opinion. You're Just Wrong

<http://www.houstonpress.com/arts/no-it-s-not-your-opinion-you-re-just-wrong-updated-7611752>

Late Work and Attendance Policy

I reserve the right to decrease the grade of late work by ONE FULL LETTER GRADE for every day it is late including the first. For example, if an essay is two days late and the original grade is a B+, the final penalized grade would be a D+. If you have a problem with an assignment, please see me or call me BEFORE the due date. Any student who accrues excessive absences (four or more) will most likely fail the course. If you do miss class for any reason, you are still accountable for the work given and due that day unless prior arrangements have been made. Finally, I also expect you to be on time to class. Any student who is tardy more than three times will be marked absent according to my discretion. If you have a problem getting to class on time (i.e., you have class on the other side of campus), please let me know as soon as possible.

Required Weekly Film Screening

There are scheduled film screenings for this course. **The showings will occur on Mondays at 5:00 p.m. in Yates Hall Room 102 with the exception of January 19 and April 5.** All students are required to attend the screening unless you have a legitimate schedule conflict. In such cases, you need to make alternative arrangements with me in the first week of school.

All films are on reserve in Axe Library, and many should be available through the public library, an online provider (Netflix, Amazon, Hulu, etc.), Redbox, or Family Video.

If absent for a screening, you will need to view the film on your own prior to the first day of scheduled discussion each week. Additionally, in exchange for not being able to attend the required screenings, you will post to Canvas a 100- to 200-word response to one specific scene in the film. You should post your response no later than 11:00 p.m. on the Thursday following the screening. Failure to post an adequate response will result in a recorded absence. Students who attend the viewing may complete a post for extra credit.

Your response should

- Refer to one specific scene in the film
- Discuss why you chose this scene
- Discuss the scene's important to the film as a whole

Note: Make sure to pay active attention to the films. You will likely want to take notes during the screening. Computers and other digital devices not used for taking notes should be stored out of sight.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism includes the presentation, without proper attribution, of another's words or ideas from printed or electronic sources. It is also plagiarism to submit, without the instructor's consent, an assignment in one class

previously submitted in another. I reward plagiarism with a zero. Further action by the university may also be taken. Please familiarize yourselves with the university policy on plagiarism. If you feel that you need extra help with your assignments, tutors are available in the Writing Center in Axe Library (235-4694). If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or how to cite sources properly, do not hesitate to ask me for help. Please also consult PSU's Academic Honesty and Integrity Policy available online at

<http://www.pittstate.edu/audiences/current-students/policies/rights-and-responsibilities/academic-misconduct.dot>

Also, make sure to consult the Syllabus Supplement, which can be thought of as a “one-stop” place for students to access up-to-date information about campus resources, notifications, and expectations. It is available at

<http://www.pittstate.edu/dotAsset/fcfe9e3e-181d-4e84-8fe8-1987787782e9.pdf>

Accessibility and a Word of Advice

All students are more than welcome to drop by during office hours or schedule an appointment to ask questions, continue discussion of issues from class, or to offer comments. This is especially true during the first week of class and especially true for students with disabilities who are registered with the Center for Student Accommodations (235-4309) and who may need individual arrangements. Your well being and success in this course are important to me. I recognize that there are *multiple* ways to learn and that this multiplicity should be acknowledged in the design and structure of university courses and the evaluation of their participants. Thus, I encourage students registered in the course to discuss their learning styles and comprehension requirements with me during my office hours or, if necessary, at another arranged time. Every student is entitled to a meaningful and stimulating learning experience.

The Center for Student Accommodations is located in Russ Hall 218, or visit their website at: <http://www.pittstate.edu/office/center-for-student-accommodations/> for more information.

Make use of your teachers!! We are here to help you learn, and we do not expect you to be perfect (who is?). We regard intelligent questions in and out of class and an eagerness to improve one's abilities as evidence of an A student more than written work alone. There is no such thing as a stupid question!

Tentative Schedule of Readings and Assignments (ALL DATES AND ASSIGNMENTS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE!)

HH: *A History of Horror*

DA: *Dario Argento*

C: Canvas

Week One: History of Horror – Origins

Jan. 11: Introduction to the Course; View *Nosferatu*, F. W. Murnau (1922)

Jan. 13: Discuss *Nosferatu*, F. W. Murnau (1922)

Jan. 16: HH: Read Chapter 1 “Origins: 1896 –1929” (pgs. 1 – 24)

Week Two: History of Horror – Classics

Jan. 18: MLK, Jr. Day – No Class

Jan. 19: **Notice the change of viewing day:** View *Bride of Frankenstein*, James Whale (1935)

Jan. 20: Discuss *Bride of Frankenstein*, James Whale (1935)

Jan. 22: HH: Read Chapter 2 “Classics: 1930 – 1948” (pgs. 25 – 64)

C: Read Berenstein, “Horror for Sale: The Marketing and Reception of Classic Horror Cinema”

Week Three: History of Horror – Rebirth

- Jan. 25: C: Read Young, “Here Comes the Bride: Wedding, Gender, and Race in *Bride of Frankenstein*”; View *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, Don Siegel (1956)
- Jan. 27: Discuss *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, Don Siegel (1956)
- Jan. 29: HH: Read Chapter 3 “Rebirth: 1949 – 1970” (pgs. 65 – 122)

Week Four: History of Horror – New Blood Part One

- Feb. 1: C: Read Worland, “Horror in ‘The Age of Anxiety’: *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*”; View *Dawn of the Dead*, George Romero (1978)
- Feb. 3: Discuss *Dawn of the Dead*, George Romero (1978)
- Feb. 5: HH: Read Chapter 4 “New Blood: 1970 – 1990” (pgs. 123 – 171)

Week Five: History of Horror – New Blood Part Two

- Feb. 8: C: Read Wood, “The American Nightmare: Horror in the 70s”; View *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre.*, Tobe Hooper (1974)
- Feb. 10: Discuss *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre.*, Tobe Hooper (1974)
- Feb. 12: C: Read Clover, “Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film”

Week Six: History of Horror – The Future

- Feb. 15: C: Read Worland, “Slaughtering Genre Tradition: *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*”; View *Audition*, Takashi Miike (1999)
- Feb. 17: Discuss *Audition*, Takashi Miike (1999)
- Feb. 19: HH: Read Chapter 5 “The Future: 1990 – The Present” (pgs. 172 – 210)

Week Seven: Horror Auteur Dario Argento – Spectators and Violence

- Feb. 22: C: Read Carroll, “Why Horror?”; View *Opera*, Dario Argento (1987)
- Feb. 24: Discuss *Opera*, Dario Argento (1987)
- Feb. 26: DA: Read pgs. 1 – 23
C: Read Hunt, “A (Sadistic) Night at the *Opera*: Notes on the Italian Horror Film”

Week Eight: Horror Auteur Dario Argento – The Italian Giallo

- Feb. 29: C: Read Williams, “When the Woman Looks”; View *The Bird with the Crystal Plumage*, Dario Argento (1970)
- Mar. 2: Discuss *The Bird with the Crystal Plumage*, Dario Argento (1970)
- Mar. 4: DA: Read pgs. 23 – 73

Week Nine: Horror Auteur Dario Argento – The Three Mothers Trilogy

- Mar. 7: C: Read McDonagh, “*The Bird with the Crystal Plumage*”; View *Inferno*, Dario Argento (1980)
Essay One Due by 11:59 p.m. on Canvas
- Mar. 9: Discuss *Inferno*, Dario Argento (1980)

Mar. 11: DA: Read pgs. 73 – 127

Week Ten

Mar. 14: Spring Break

Mar. 16: Spring Break

Mar. 18: Spring Break

Week Eleven: National and International Horror Part One

Mar. 21: DA: Read pgs. 127 – 146; View *Ringu*, Hideo Nakata (1998)

Mar. 23: Discuss *Ringu*, Hideo Nakata (1998)

Mar. 25: C: Read Balmain, “Introduction”
C: Read Excerpt from Suzuki, *Ring*

Week Twelve: National and International Horror Part Two

Mar. 28: C: Read Balmain, “Techno-Horror and Urban Alienation”; View *The Ring*, Gore Verbinski (2002)

Mar. 30: No Class; **Complete Online Discussion Forum #1**

Apr. 1: No Class; **Complete Online Discussion Forum #2**

Week Thirteen: Gender, Sex, and Horror Part One

Apr. 4: No Class; C: Read Tudor, “Why Horror? The Peculiar Pleasures of a Popular Genre”; **Complete Online Discussion Forum #2**

Apr. 5: **Notice the change of viewing day:** View *The Babadook*, Jennifer Kent (2014)

Apr. 6: Discuss *The Babadook*, Jennifer Kent (2014)

Apr. 8: C: Read Cherry, “Refusing to Refuse to Look: Female Viewers of the Horror Film”

Week Fourteen: Gender, Sex, and Horror Part Two

Apr. 11: C: Read Creed, “Horror and the Monstrous-Feminine: An Imaginary Abjection”; View *Fright Night*, Tom Holland (1985)
Essay Two Due by 11:59 p.m. on Canvas

Apr. 13: Discuss *Fright Night*, Tom Holland (1985)

Apr. 15: C: Read Benshoff, “The Monster and the Homosexual”

Week Fifteen: Contemporary Horror Part One

Apr. 18: C: Read Benshoff, “Satan Spawn and Out and Proud: Monster Queers in the Postmodern Era”; View *What We Do in the Shadows*, Jemaine Clement and Taika Waititi (2014)

Apr. 20: Discuss *What We Do in the Shadows*, Jemaine Clement and Taika Waititi (2014)

Apr. 22: Discuss *What We Do in the Shadows*, Jemaine Clement and Taika Waititi (2014)

Week Sixteen: Contemporary Horror Part Two

Apr. 25: Discuss *What We Do in the Shadows*, Jemaine Clement and Taika Waititi (2014); View *Oculus*, Mike Flanagan (2013)

Apr. 27: Discuss View *Oculus*, Mike Flanagan (2013)

Apr. 29: Discuss View *Oculus*, Mike Flanagan (2013)

Final Exam Week

Friday, May 6, 12:00 pm – 1:50 pm: **Presentation of Final Multimedia Project (Horror Short)**

Revision Essay Due on Canvas by Saturday, May 7, at 11:59 pm.