

ENGLISH 2020.002: Themes in Literature and Culture

GOthic AND HORROR

MTWR, 9:45 am-12:00 pm
Peck Hall 317
Summer 2024

Instructor: Dr. Bridget Donnelly (she/her/hers)

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Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 12:30-2:30 pm, or *by appointment*

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Victor Sage: "Horror is not a literary genre, in the narrow sense, at all. It is a cultural response, which implies a broad series of relationships with the whole of the culture in which it is produced."



Henry Fuseli, The Nightmare (1781)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Why are we so obsessed with things that keep us up at night? In this course, read works of classic Gothic and horror literature alongside more contemporary media, to consider the ways in which such works reflect central cultural concerns—such as race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, national identity, etc.—through the lens of anxiety, fear, and terror. Through close analysis of literature, film, music, and other cultural media forms, we will explore the genres of gothic and horror and their relationship to history and culture.

Please note: The subject matter of this course can get heavy. Gothic and

horror literature and film has traditionally dealt with difficult topics like sexual and domestic violence, sexuality, racism, xenophobia, war, death, suicide, religion, incest, disability, murder, the nature of evil, and everything in between—and not always in ways that a contemporary audience would find appropriate or sensitive to these very real issues. I expect that all members of this class will discuss such topics in a mature, respectful manner. I will attempt to make content warnings available for certain topics, but do know that nearly every text we consider this semester might

contain potentially triggering or upsetting content to particular individuals. If you have any concerns about any of the material we will be covering this semester, please get in contact with me. I'm happy to make arrangements with you on an individual basis, including offering you an alternate reading or film and the opportunity to sit out from those class sessions that might be difficult for you. I will never ask you to disclose personal details of why you might wish to avoid certain content. However, if you are not a fan of horror in general, this may not be the class for you.

Required Texts:

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (preferred edition: Broadview Press; if you use a different version, please make sure you are reading the **1818** edition of the text)

All other texts and films will be provided via link on D2L.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

In this course, you will:

- **Explore** how literature reflects, informs, and shapes both personal and collective experience
- **Articulate** cogent responses to literature that demonstrate cultural awareness and understanding
- **Reflect** on how reading, writing, and interpreting literature initiates and contributes to cultural and social conversations
- **Examine** how the production and interpretation of literature is shaped by historical, social, and cultural contexts
- **Analyze** how literature from different cultures, movements, and time periods employ narrative and stylistic strategies to convey complex ideas and meanings
- **Compose** projects (written, digital, or audio) that utilize critical thinking, analysis, and research to situate literature within diverse cultural and conceptual frameworks
- **Identify** connections between literature and values, experiences, and practices of multiple cultures
- **Develop** an approach to reading, writing, and interpretation that demonstrates an understanding of human experience from multiple cultural vantage points
- **Bond** with your fellow classmates. Through in-class working groups, activities, discussions, and even games, it is my hope that you come out of our semester having made some new friends!

COURSE EXPECTATIONS



During a busy semester, I often feel like the dog in the “This Is Fine” meme—desperately hanging onto a sense of normalcy while the world burns around me. I do not expect that things this semester will always go smoothly. Therefore, I ask a few primary things of you:

- That you communicate with me whenever you're feeling behind or have anything going on that might hinder your progress in the class. I never ask for you to provide details about your life situation, but I can't help you unless you let me know that you're struggling.
- That you try to use our course readings as a momentary escape from reality. Don't put too much pressure on yourself to do something academically life-changing, but instead savor the small pockets of your day in which you can just take in the literature. Do the best you can, and focus on the enjoyment of learning over trying to do the "right" thing.
- That you approach the course with patience if things go wrong/aren't working correctly. I can't promise that every activity or piece of technology will work perfectly, but I will try my best!
- That you treat your classmates with respect. Our world poses many challenges these days, and we will not always see eye to eye on every issue or topic covered in this class. I simply ask that we always approach our daily class sessions with mutual respect for the people around us.

In turn, you can expect the following from me this semester:

- An understanding that you are all individuals who have lives, responsibilities, and concerns outside of the classroom. I will try my best to be empathetic to any external circumstances that might affect your academic performance this semester.
- Less emphasis on grading in the traditional sense, and a shift toward assessment that favors providing feedback and encouraging development in reading, writing, and critical thinking.
- Frequent communication of any changes to the syllabus, assignments, or deadlines via D2L. I also try to be fast about email communication, but I'm a human who gets stressed out, and occasionally I need a break from email. If you don't hear from me within 24 hours, it's totally okay to send a nudging email to remind me!

ASSIGNMENTS:

There will be 4 major assignments in this class: (1) Nightmare Journal; (2) One-Pager + In-Class Presentation; (3) Character Analysis Essay (TBC "Signature Assignment"); (4) Final Creative "Remix" Project. More information on these assignments will be provided closer to the deadline in class and via D2L. In lieu of a final exam, I will ask you all to do an informal Final Reflection on our last day of class.

COURSE POLICIES AND GRADING:

Grades are a tricky balancing act—on the one hand, our entire education system is based on grades, and GPA is an important metric for scholarships, advancement in certain paths of study, and even some jobs. On the other hand, grades make it difficult for genuine learning to occur, as they tend to obscure the very things that constitute knowledge development: discovery, risk-taking, mistake-making, investigation, analysis, and, especially important for writing, process. Furthermore, research on traditional grading practices has shown that they disproportionately penalize students from less-privileged backgrounds.

Therefore, I will be using a non-traditional approach to grading. Rather than focusing on the “quality” of your writing and participation, I will grade you on the quality of your “labor” and overall engagement with the class. In other words, your grade will be determined by the work you put into the class: the projects you complete, your ability to fulfill expectations for assignments, your overall participation in class activities, and the effort you put toward achieving course goals. This grading method means that you don’t have to worry about how “good” your work is to succeed in this class. Instead, you can feel free to take risks and try things out without worrying about your grade (and I can feel free to try more experimental assignments). If you simply do your work and communicate with me if and when you’re having any trouble, you will succeed.

I will still provide feedback on the quality of your writing, but in a way that emphasizes the process of writing and thinking (drafting, revising, providing and responding to feedback) rather than the product (the final project you turn in). Some assignments will receive more feedback than others, and feedback may come in different forms, including written feedback, recorded audio files, and one-on-one conferences via Zoom or text chat.

Grading Details

If you do all the work that is asked of you throughout the semester (in other words, if you do all the labor asked of you, including all written assignments and keeping up as best you can with the reading), you are guaranteed a “B” in the course. This means that you will be given detailed feedback *rather than* a letter grade on individual writing assignments. How “good” your work is will matter less than your efforts to do the readings, actively collaborate with your peers, respond to feedback, and work on developing your writing and analytical skills. If you do not participate fully, routinely turn in assignments late*, or do less labor than is asked of you, your course grade will be lower than a B. The grade will be reduced by a *half letter grade* (e.g. B-, C+, C, etc.) for each incomplete component (including all four major assignments and course engagement).

B Grades: You are guaranteed a course grade of “B” if you meet all of the following conditions:

- **Work Completion:** You agree to satisfactorily complete all work and assignments in the spirit they are assigned (in other words, you follow the instructions you are given for each assignment) and submit assignments on time* (see note below about extension policy)
 - (1) Minimum of 8 entries in the “Nightmare Journal”
 - (2) One-Pager
 - (3) Character Analysis Essay
 - (4) Final “Remix” Project
 - (5) Final Reflection (done in class on Thurs, June 27)
- **Course Engagement:** *You might be familiar with the idea of class “participation.” I prefer to think in terms of course “engagement,” a term that I think better encompasses the different forms that active contributions to the course might take, outside of just class discussions. The following categories are all included in this broader umbrella of “engagement”:*
 - In Class Discussions: You participate in full class or group discussions, through speaking in class, working in small groups, asking questions, posting questions to Padlet or Google Docs, etc. This does not necessarily always include verbal participation, but also written forms of discussion and engagement with class activities and material.

- Activity Completion: You actively participate in and complete activities done in class (e.g. bringing drafts to class, small group work, D2L posts completed in class, etc.)
- Other Forms of Engagement: You routinely utilize other forms of communication and community building, such as attending office hours with me, doing the assigned readings, regular class attendance, etc.

Please note: You can only get a minimum grade of “B” if you complete all of the above work requirements and routinely engage with the class. If you, for instance, submit only three of the major projects or never attend class without official accommodations, your grade will be lowered accordingly.

A Grades: If you wish to guarantee an A grade in the class, you must meet the requirements listed to earn a “B” above AND complete the following activities:

- (1) Presentation of One-Pager
- (2) 13 Nightmare Journal Entries (*including* the final reflection) → this means, you must be in class *on time* as much as possible; if you have extenuating circumstances preventing you from attending class and/or being on time, you must communicate with me to figure this out
- (3) Outstanding course engagement (see above): This includes attending class regularly. You cannot get an A unless you make a good faith effort to routinely attend and engage with the class (unless you have extenuating circumstances that you have discussed directly with me)

*Please note, you must complete all four major writing assignments in addition to the above to get an A in the class. If you are missing an assignment but submit the above, you **will not** get an A grade.*

Half letter grades will designate intermediate progress. For instance, if you complete some of the requirements for an A but not all, you may receive a grade of B+ in the class. If you do not complete all the requirements for a B, your grade will be adjusted depending on how much work is incomplete. Each missing major project will correspond with a drop in one letter grade. Course engagement will also be taken into consideration when calculating the final grade (see above).

Extension Policy:

*There is a link on our D2L page to a Google form, entitled “I Need an Extension.” If you wish to take an extension on an assignment, you must fill out this form **before the assignment is due**. The most important information you need to submit is a new, reasonable deadline for your project (generally within 1-3 days of the original deadline, unless there are extenuating circumstances, which should be explained when you submit). After you submit the request, I will follow up if I have any questions.

Attendance:

As this is not a lecture course but, rather, one in which collaboration, discussion, and other forms of in-person engagement are necessary to fully succeed, regular attendance in this class is mandatory. Routinely missing class without getting in touch may affect your overall course engagement grade (as outlined in the grading policy above).

That said, please DO NOT attend class if you are feeling ill or have tested positive for Covid. You will NOT be penalized for not attending class due to illness, so please make responsible decisions

about your class attendance. Alternative activities (e.g. posting discussion responses on D2L) may be offered in the case that you get sick. I am very open to extensions on work (see extension policy above), provided you ask in advance and are keeping me up to date.

Regarding all other attendance issues, I completely understand that sometimes things happen, and you have to miss class for more than a day. In such situations, see my communication policy below.

Communication Policy:

It is important that you stay in communication with me throughout the semester, especially if you get sick or otherwise have to miss class for a significant amount of time. If I have not heard from you (by email) or seen you in class for more than two weeks of class, I will stop providing feedback on your work. You will need to get in contact and schedule a meeting with me (either virtually or in person) to create a plan to catch up. I promise I'm not scary, so if there's anything hindering your ability to come to class regularly, please get in touch, and we will work something out! 😊

AI Policy:

I recognize that there are a variety of AI programs available to assist writers. As writing is a core component of this course, the use of most AI-generated content is prohibited for material submitted for credit in this class. However, within limited circumstances, and with proper attribution, AI programs may be used as a tool. AI may be used to help you brainstorm ideas for projects but not to do the work of writing for you. I will let you know when AI is permitted for other types of in-class activities (such as image generation, etc.). Any use of AI content must be explicitly disclosed in all academic work. All work must comply with MTSU's policy on academic honesty. Please ensure the originality of your own work. If you have any questions about whether or not the use of AI tools is permitted, just ask!



True Blue Core Knowledge Domain: Creativity and Cultural Expression (CCE) (9 hours)

- For all catalogs 2024-2025 and beyond, this course may be used to satisfy the True Blue Core Literature requirement (CCE) (3 hours). If you have already fulfilled the literature requirement for CCE, this course may be used in either Discovery or Explorations in the CCE category. To learn more about TBC requirements: <https://w1.mtsu.edu/truebluecore/core.php>.
- For all catalogs prior to 2024-2025, this course may be used to satisfy the literature requirement in the Humanities/Fine Arts category. To learn more about general education requirements for catalogs prior to 2024-2025: https://w1.mtsu.edu/gen_ed/requirements.php.
- **The TBC outcome for Literature (CCE):** Students demonstrate intercultural understanding by building knowledge, self-awareness, and conceptions of global and intercultural perspectives, values, systems, and attitudes.

CAMPUS RESOURCES AND POLICIES:

Honors College Information

I highly encourage you to check out the Honors College and all the opportunities you can access through their program. To graduate from the University Honors College, students must complete 18 hours of lower-division of Honors coursework, and 11 hours of upper-division Honors coursework, including a capstone thesis research or creative project. Students must maintain a 3.25 to participate in the Honors Program. For all of the special benefits of the Honors program, specific course graduation requirements, and/or questions about the thesis or creative project, please contact one of our Honors College advisors: Ms. Laura Clippard (FOR SPECIAL SCHOLARSHIP STUDENTS) in HONR 227; Laura.Clippard@mtsu.edu; or 615-898-5464; OR Ms. April Goers (FOR FRESHMEN) in HONR 228; April.Goers@mtsu.edu; or 615-494-7767; OR Ms. Judy Albakry (FOR SOPHOMORES THROUGH SENIORS) in HONR 229; Judy.Albakry@mtsu.edu; or 615-494-8819.

Title IX

MTSU faculty are concerned about the well-being and development of our students and are legally obligated to share reports of sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence and stalking with the University's Title IX coordinator to help ensure student's safety and welfare. Please refer to MTSU's Title IX site for contact information and details at: <http://www.mtsu.edu/titleix/>.

I am a mandatory reporter; this means that if you share with me that you've been hurt or are in danger, I must share this information with the Title IX Coordinator, Marion Wilson.

The Writing Center

The Writing Center is located in the James E. Walker Library, room 362, and online at www.mtsu.edu/uwc. Online and face-to-face conferences are available by appointment (904-8237). The WC is a great FREE resource for student writers— and they do virtual appointments! My advice is to schedule sessions early and often. You can set up a virtual appointment right now at <https://mtsu.mywconline.com/>

MTSU Counseling & Testing Services

We are living in challenging times, which can take a toll on our mental health (something that can be a big struggle throughout college even in non-pandemic times). MTSU Counseling Services is there to make sure you have the resources to support your mental health. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out at (615) 898-2670. Counseling Services is open from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. M-F and you can find their website at <https://www.mtsu.edu/countest/>.

Off-Campus / After-hour Mental Health Resources

If you need immediate mental health support, here are some resources available to you:

CRISIS: 988 is now the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Mobile Crisis Line of Middle Tennessee: 1-800-704-2651 (Available 24 hours every day)
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255 (Available 24 hours every day) This number routes to local hotlines everywhere.

Text Line: Text CONNECT to 741741

Warm Line: 615-320-0591 This is another resource if someone is not to the point of thinking they might harm themselves but would like to talk with a trained mental health responder.

Online Chat Option: <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/>

MTSU Student Veterans

If you are a veteran, I would like to make sure that you know about the Veteran & Military Family Center on campus. The center has a myriad of opportunities and beneficial services for those who have served or are actively serving. You can find out more information about the center by visiting their website at <http://www.mtsu.edu/military/>.

Students with Disabilities Statement

I want everyone in my classes to be comfortable, respected, and successful. If you would like to discuss with me how I can assist you with your learning needs, please feel free to do so. You should also know that Middle Tennessee State University is committed to campus access in accordance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Any student interested in reasonable accommodations can consult the Disability & Access Center (DAC) website www.mtsu.edu/dac and/or contact the DAC for assistance at 615-898-2783 or dacemail@mtsu.edu.

Lottery Scholarship Requirements

Do you have a lottery scholarship? To retain the Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship eligibility, you must earn a cumulative TELS GPA of 2.75 after 24 and 48 attempted hours and a cumulative TELS GPA of 3.0 thereafter. A grade of C, D, F, FA, or I in this class may negatively impact TELS eligibility.

If you drop this class, withdraw, or if you stop attending this class you may lose eligibility for your lottery scholarship, and you may not be able to regain eligibility at a later time. For additional Lottery rules, please refer to your Lottery Statement of Understanding form (<http://www.mtsu.edu/financial-aid/forms/LOTFOD.pdf>) or contact your MT One Stop Enrollment Counselor (<http://www.mtsu.edu/one-stop/counselor.php>).

COURSE SCHEDULE:

(Please Note: These deadlines may change based on our progress throughout the semester. I will announce any changes in class and update D2L accordingly.)

| Day | Date | Homework Reading (please read for the day listed) | In-Class Work | Work Due |
|-------------------|------|--|---|--|
| WEEK ONE | | | | |
| Tues | 5/28 | | | |
| Wed | 5/29 | (1) Stephen King, "Why We Crave Horror Movies" (on D2L) (2) <i>Frankenstein</i> , Vol. 1, Preface to Ch. 3 (p. 49-83) | (1) Gothic Romantic poems: Coleridge, Keats, Smith (2) Introduce One Pagers | |
| Thurs | 5/30 | <i>Frankenstein</i> , Vol. 1, Ch. 4-7 (p. 83-110) | (1) Begin playing <i>The Wanderer: Frankenstein's Creature</i> (2) Work on One Pagers | |
| WEEK TWO | | | | |
| Mon | 6/3 | <i>Frankenstein</i> , Vol. 2, Ch. 1-4 (p. 111-132) | (1) Continue playing <i>The Wanderer</i> (2) Work on One Pagers | |
| Tues | 6/4 | <i>Frankenstein</i> , Vol. 2, Ch. 5-9 (p. 132-160) | (1) Watch 1 st half of <i>Train to Busan</i> (2) Work on One Pagers | |
| Wed | 6/5 | <i>Frankenstein</i> , Vol. 3, Ch. 1-4 (p. 161-189) | (1) Watch 2 nd half of <i>Train to Busan</i> (2) Introduce Character Analysis Project | One Pagers due (Presentations in Class) |
| Thurs | 6/6 | <i>Frankenstein</i> , Vol. 3, Ch. 5-end (p. 189-221) | (1) Watch 1910 short film (2) Finish <i>The Wanderer</i> | One Pager Presentations |
| WEEK THREE | | | | |
| Mon | 6/10 | Edith Wharton, "All Souls" | (1) Watch <i>Buffy the Vampire Slayer</i> , "Hush" (Season 4, Episode 10) (2) Work on Character Analysis Project | |
| Tues | 6/11 | (1) Edgar Allan Poe, "The Tell-Tale Heart" (2) Yoko Ogawa, "Sewing for the Heart" | (1) Junji Ito, "The Enigma of Amigara Fault" (2) E.M. Carroll, "His Face All Red" | |
| Wed | 6/12 | (1) Flannery O'Connor, "Good Country People" (2) "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" | (1) Watch 1 st half of <i>Talk to Me</i> (2) Work on Character Analysis Project | |
| Thurs | 6/13 | Guy de Maupassant, "The Hand" | (1) Watch 2 nd half of <i>Talk to Me</i> (2) Work on Character Analysis Project | |
| WEEK FOUR | | | | |
| Mon | 6/17 | (1) Shirley Jackson, "The Daemon Lover" (2) Elizabeth Bowen, "The Demon Lover" | (1) Watch 1 st half of <i>The Witch</i> (2) Introduce Final "Remix" Project | Character Analysis Project Due by 11:59 pm |

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|------------------|------|--|---|--|
| Tues | 6/18 | (1) Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown" (2) Shirley Jackson, "The Lottery" | (1) Watch 2 nd half of <i>The VVitch</i> (2) Work on Final Project | |
| Wed | 6/19 | Juneteenth- No Class | | |
| Thurs | 6/20 | (1) Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper" (2) Carmen Maria Machado, "The Husband Stitch" | Work on Final Project | |
| WEEK FIVE | | | | |
| Mon | 6/24 | (1) H.P. Lovecraft, "The Outsider" (2) Vladimir Nabokov, "The Terror" | (1) Watch <i>The Outsider</i> (2) Work on Final Project | |
| Tues | 6/25 | (1) Stephen King, "Popsy" (2) Tananarive Due, "Patient Zero" | (1) Watch 1 st half of <i>Pan's Labyrinth</i> (2) Work on Final Project | |
| Wed | 6/26 | Mariana Enriquez, "Things We Lost in the Fire" | (1) Watch 2 nd half of <i>Pan's Labyrinth</i> (2) Work on Final Project | |
| Thurs | 6/27 | | Final Reflection | Final Projects due by 11:59 pm – share projects in class |