

“The Horror, The Horror”: Representations of War and Political Violence

GET 3580/ JST 3930/ LIT 4930

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Time: Wednesday, Periods 9-11 (4:05 PM – 7:05 PM) Location: Flint 0119

Office Hrs: Tuesday 5th Period, Thursday 6th period or by appointment

Course Description

This course sets out to probe the cultural, social and political functions of horror in relation to shifting moments of historical violence. In addition to exploring the horror genre in literary and cinematic works of the imagination, we will ultimately apply the aesthetic, epistemic and ethical questions arising in the genre to shifting representations of traumatic history. As we map out the history and themes behind this popular genre, our aim is to probe the intersections between horror and its socio-cultural and historical contexts. How is political violence represented, conceptualized and memorialized across shifting linguistic and visual texts? How do individuals and communities cope with the aftermath of catastrophic loss? What ethical questions arise in our engagement with representations of traumatic limit events and the experience of horror these events entail?

After reading and screening central works from the horror genre, we will examine some of the emblematic scenes of historical violence in the 20th and 21st centuries. Turning to such instances as the legacies of colonialism, the Holocaust, the Vietnam War and the events surrounding September 11, 2001, this Quest course investigates the intersection between narratives of horror in the realms of both fantasy and history. In our inquiry into representations of horror, we will examine how this genre in European and American culture is employed to express both individual and national anxieties in the face of political violence.

Theoretical readings will embrace a range of disciplines, from literary and film theory to philosophical and psychoanalytic investigations of the all-too-common attraction to the art of fear. Through the exploration of such concepts as the sublime, the uncanny and the abject, we will probe our fascination with these categories. What is horror and how do authors and artists represent it? What cultural function does horror serve? Similar to Aristotle's line of questioning in his *Poetics*, why are we drawn to horror? What does the audience desire when confronted with representations of history as a site of horror? Finally, what does our fascination with the horrors of historical violence reveal about ourselves?

GRADING

Grading will be based on in-class participation (25%), take-home midterm (25%), take-home final (25%) and an 8-10 page final paper (topic of your choice, 25%).

1) Students are allowed 3 absences. If you miss more than 3 classes in the semester, you will automatically fail the course. Participation will play a major part of the final grade and students are expected to partake and contribute daily to class discussions.

2) If you do not bring to class the text we are discussing for that day, you will be marked as absent. You are not permitted to read the text on your phone in class.

3) Do not text message in class.

4) There will be a take home midterm and take-home final exam comprised of identification and short answer essay questions.

5) There will be a final research paper on a topic of choice selected by the student in consultation with me. Late papers will not be accepted.

ZOOM POLICY

When attending a Zoom class or meeting:

Arrive/Zoom in on time or a few minutes early if possible. Attendance will be taken at the start of each class session, and tardiness will be marked.

Set up and mount the webcam video at the level of your eyes to show your full face. If you are using a laptop, you may need to place a book or two under it.

Test the audio of your webcam. For any technical difficulties, please contact the UF Computing Help Desk (352-392-4357). <https://elearning.ufl.edu/media/elearningufledu/zoom/How-to-Join-a-Meeting.pdf>

During class session, set yourself on mute unless you want to speak or you are called upon.

If you want to speak, you can raise your hand (click the “raise hand” button at the center bottom of your screen) and wait to be called upon. You are encouraged to keep your webcam on throughout the class hour and to unmute yourself to participate in class discussion, ask questions, etc.

The participation portion of your grade for this class will be calculated on the basis of your attendance and your participation in class activities. Normally you will satisfy this requirement through your participation through video and audio presence on Zoom. However, you may also satisfy this requirement through written comments in chat and discussion assignments in Canvas.

Our class sessions may be audio visually recorded for students in the class to refer back and for enrolled students who are unable to attend live. Students who participate with their camera engaged or utilize a profile image are agreeing to have their video or image recorded. If you are unwilling to consent to have your profile or video image recorded, be sure to keep your camera off and do not use a profile image. Likewise,

students who un-mute during class and participate orally are agreeing to have their voices recorded. If you are not willing to consent to have your voice recorded during class, you will need to keep your mute button activated and communicate exclusively using the "chat" feature, which allows students to type questions and comments live. The chat will not be recorded or shared. As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials is prohibited.

During unrecorded group work sessions we expect students to interact with each other using audio and their webcam whenever possible. If you have a reason to keep your webcam and audio off, please communicate that reason with me or through the Dean of Students Office.

Dress appropriately for class. Even though you may be alone at home your professor and classmates can see you. • Find a quiet indoor space with stable internet connection to attend class. The study space does not need to be a separate room; a chair and desk/table set for school work in a quiet corner should be sufficient. The space should be conducive to work, including pair/group work. Make sure you are uninterrupted by other household members, including pets.

Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students who enroll at the University commit to holding themselves and their peers to the high standard of honor required by the Honor Code. Any individual who becomes aware of a violation of the Honor Code is bound by honor to take corrective action. Violations of the honor code include, but are not limited to: plagiarism, cheating, bribery, misrepresentation, fabrication, and conspiracy. Such violations may result in the following: lowering of grades, mandatory 0 on assignments, redoing assignments, a final failing grade in the course, expulsion from the course, referral to the student-run Honor Court. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment. For more information, refer to: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/>

Students with Special Needs:

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

Anticipated Schedule

This schedule is tentative and subject to change.

Part 1: Conceptualizing Horror via Trauma

This introductory section sets up some of the methodological frames to help us analyze our engagement with representations of horror and the experience of fear that accompanies these encounters. We will probe the epistemic, aesthetic and ethical frames of looking at scenes of horror.

1/13 and 1/20

“Recapturing the Past” by Cathy Caruth (From *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, 1995) Link to essay: Explorations in Memory - University of Warwick

Sontag’s *Regarding the Pain of Others*: pp. 3—60 (**for 1/13**), 60-126 (**for 1/20**). Here is a link to Sontag’s book if you have yet to buy the copy: https://monoskop.org/images/a/a6/Sontag_Susan_2003_Regarding_the_Pain_of_Others.pdf

Listen to Sontag interview:

<https://www.wnyc.org/story/revisiting-susan-sontag-on-the-pain-of-others/>

Part 2: Defining the Genre: What is Horror?

What is meant by the “paradox of horror”? How are some bodies constituted as the normative ideals of humanity, while others are excluded as aberrations?

1/27 and 2/3

Noel Carroll, “The Nature of Horror” (1987): <http://www.dif.unige.it/epilog/Carroll-horror.pdf> (**For 1/27**)

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*: pp.347-352 (Mary Shelley’s introduction from 1831) and pp. 51-63 (Walton’s Letters I-IV) (**for 1/27**)

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*: pp. 64-110 (all of Vol. 1, 9/15), pp. 111-160 (all of Vol. 2, 9/17), pp. 161-221 (All of Vol. 3, 9/22). (**For 2/3**)

Suggested reading:

Noel Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror, or Paradoxes of the Heart*, pp. 158-161. <https://epdf.pub/the-philosophy-of-horror.html>

Andrew Tudor, “Why Horror? The Peculiar Pleasures of a Popular Genre,” pp. 443-463.

Part 3: The Monster: From *Frankenstein* to *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*

How has the figure of the monster evolved from the Gothic to contemporary horror, from Romanticism to Expressionism?

2/10 (film)

Screen at home Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IP0KB2XC29o>
Excerpts from Siegfried Kracauer's *From Caligari to Hitler*

Part 4: Colonial Horror: Annihilating the Other

How do writers explore the dialectic of enlightenment (the interplay between reason and barbarism) in relation to Europe and its "others"?

2/17

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (1899): pp. 3-132. **(For 2/17)**

Highly recommended supplementary readings:

Chinua Achebe, selections from "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness': pp. 251-261.

Part 5: Staring at the Medusa: Representations of The Holocaust

How do poets, filmmakers and philosophers probe the limit event that shatters traditional forms of perception and comprehension?

2/24 (Film)

Screen on your own George Stevens, *Nazi Concentration Camps* (1945):
<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x21dfgb>

Zygmunt Bauman, "The Uniqueness and Normality of the Holocaust." **(for 2/24)**

Lawrence Douglas, "Film as Witness: Screening *Nazi Concentration Camps* before the Nuremberg Tribunal." **(for 2/24)**

Take-Home Midterm due 2/26

3/3 and 3/10 (Literature)

Primo Levi—*Survival in Auschwitz*: pp. 9-70 **(for 3/3)**, pp. 71-115 **(for 3/10)**.

pp. 145-174 **(for 3/10)**

Suggested reading:

Giorgio Agamben, Selections from *Remnants of Auschwitz* (pp. 41-60)

3/17 (Holocaust Memorials, Memorializing Racism and Lynchings)

James Young, “*The Countermonument: Memory against itself in Germany*” Excursions to the Newberry Memorial to the Lynchings of 1916 and to the site of the Rosewood Massacre (1923) by Cedar Key.

Virtual tour of lynching memorial:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/video/editorial/take-a-virtual-tour-of-the-lynching-monument/2018/04/24/02bd35a0-4806-11e8-8082-105a446d19b8_video.html

Allyson Hobbs and Neil Freudenberger, “A Visit to Montgomery’s Legacy Museum”:
<https://www.newyorker.com/culture/personal-history/a-visit-to-montgomerys-legacy-museum>

3/24—Wellness Day/No Class

Part 6: From Monster to Clown: Arendt, Eichmann and the question of evil

We will continue analyzing the Holocaust through Arendt’s depiction of a new type of criminal in the aftermath of Auschwitz, who is not a monster but has come to signify “the banality of evil.”

3/31

Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: The Banality of Evil* (1963): pp. 3-111, pp. 113-150, pp. 220-298.

Part 7: Revisiting Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* in Michael Herr’s *Dispatches*

Our analysis of the Vietnam War will center on the relation between spectatorship, visual pleasure, mass media and popular culture.

4/7 and 4/14

Michael Herr, *Dispatches* (1977): pp. 1-69 (**for 4/7**), pp. 70-166 (**for 4/7**)

and pp. 167- 260 (**for 4/14**)

4/14 Screening outside of class of Albert and Robert Maysles’ *Gimme Shelter* (1970):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ax_q6vp5FqU&t=50s (**For 4/14**)

Amy Taubin, “Gimme Shelter: Rock-and-Roll Zapruder” (film review). Link to essay:

<https://www.criterion.com/current/posts/103-gimme-shelter-rock-and-roll-zapruder>

Part 8: September 11, 2001

Our course concludes with the traumatic shocks surrounding the terrorist attacks on 9/11. How are the catastrophic events from that day recollected through works of art?

4/21

Tom Junod, “The Falling Man” *Esquire*: <https://www.esquire.com/news-politics/a48031/the-falling-man-tom-junod/>

Suggested readings:

Don DeLillo, “Ruins of the Future” (2001): pp. 1-11.

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2001/dec/22/fiction.dondelillo>

Wisława Szymborska’s poem “Photograph from September 11” (“Fotografia z 11 Wrzesnia”): <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/48799/photograph-from-september-11>

Take-Home Final due 4/24

Final essay due 4/28