

THE HORROR FILM

FILM 2195B

Western University—Film Studies Winter 2018

Screening: Mondays 4:30-7:30pm (AHB-3B04)

Lecture/Discussion: Wednesdays 5:30-7:30pm (AHB-3B04)

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Although marked by a consistently disreputable status, horror has long been one of the most popular and enduring global genres in the history of film. With deep roots in mythology, fairy tales, Gothic literature, and Freudian psychoanalysis, horror cinema continues to shock and delight audiences through tales of vampires, ghosts, zombies, werewolves, serial killers, and other monstrous icons. And yet the basic function of the horror film—to elicit unsettling emotions of fear, shock, anxiety, and disgust—has also made the genre a frequent target of censorship and a convenient scapegoat for broader social crises and moral panics. Such controversies also speak to the crucial ways that horror cinema both explores and negotiates cultural tensions and anxieties about identity, technology, religion, difference/Otherness, and the environment. Providing an introduction to the history of horror cinema, this course will explore the key forms, styles, and thematic elements of both classic and contemporary horror films from around the world. It will also frame the analysis of major films such as *Nosferatu* (Murnau, 1922), *The Curse of Frankenstein* (Fisher, 1957), *Night of the Living Dead* (Romero, 1968), and *The Exorcist* (Friedkin, 1973) in relation to their specific industrial and cultural contexts, paying close attention to both the perception and reception of horror audiences as well as the genre's allegorical potential.

Key topics to be discussed include: fears and anxieties addressed by horror cinema; cultural traditions of horror; horror and repression/the unconscious; bodily horrors; supernatural vs. psychological horror; normality and monstrosity; gender and sexuality in horror cinema; horror and technology; fandom and the pleasures of horror.

Course Objectives: This course functions as an introduction to the study of horror cinema, emphasizing both close textual analysis and key critical approaches to the genre. In addition to examining the key figures and forms of the monstrous in horror cinema, the course provides an historical overview of the Hollywood horror film as well as horror cinema from a variety of international contexts.

Learning Outcomes: By the end of the course, you will have a thorough grasp of the history of the horror film, its formal and narrative strategies, and the various critical and theoretical approaches used to examine it. You will also expand your knowledge of the diverse global forms of horror cinema as well as the complex relationship of horror cinema to issues of identity, nation, ideology, and affect. Close analysis of major horror films in class and on exams will make you a more skilled reader and critic of both cinema and the horror genre.

COURSE TEXTS

Required:

1. Paul Wells, *The Horror Genre: From Beelzebub to Blair Witch* (London: Wallflower, 2000). Available at the University Bookstore.
2. Online Coursepack [OWL]. All other readings for the course will be available on the course OWL page under Resources (see schedule below).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- Class Attendance and Participation [10%]
- Discussion Leading [20%]
- Quizzes (10 min.) [Weeks 2, 6, 13] [10% total]
- In-Class Exams (1 hour) [15% each]
- Final Exam (3 hours) [30%]

General Tips for Success in the Course:

—All students will attend screenings and seminars prepared to participate in discussions based on the week's assigned readings and screenings.

—Notes should be taken during or immediately following all screenings.

—Come to class with questions or comments that have arisen from the readings and screening.

—Take detailed notes during the lectures and class discussions

—Review lecture slides frequently and ask questions if you are confused. You will need to express your own views on the course material in class and on the exams.

Course Content: To find the lecture outlines for the course, click on the "Resources" icon found on the Home Page in Owl and then the "Lectures" folder. The folders here are organized by week and include lecture outlines, clips, and other materials pertaining to the week's lecture. The course syllabus is also available on the Home Page in OWL.

Attendance and Participation: You are required to attend all class meetings and screenings for the full duration. Attendance will be taken regularly. Be sure to come to class fully prepared, having read all of the weekly reading assignments, and with your course books and readings in hand. Lateness, early departures, or other disruptive behavior will adversely affect your participation grade. More than **THREE unexcused** absences will result in a zero for your final participation grade. Only documented medical emergencies—verified through your home faculty (see below)—will be considered for exam rescheduling. ***If you are absent for TEN or more classes (excused or unexcused) you will automatically fail both the final exam and the overall course.***

Discussion Leading: Working with one of your fellow classmates, you will lead discussion on the screening/readings one week during the term. I will provide a list of guidelines and tips, but each discussion leader will be responsible for presenting specific questions about the film and/or the course readings as well as engaging your fellow students in a discussion about that element. You will need to coordinate with your group member in order to prepare and organize the discussion questions/material, and in most cases I will assess the group as a whole based on the overall quality of the discussion leading.

Quizzes and Exams:

Quizzes: There will be three short quizzes given at the beginning of the Wednesday lecture period (Weeks 2, 6, and 13). The quizzes will last 10 minutes and will consist of 5 multiple choice or short answer questions based on the readings and screenings. The quizzes *will include* the readings for the week in which they are given, and they are meant to be a warm-up for the longer exams. Make-up quizzes will typically only be granted in the case of documented medical emergencies.

Exams: There will be two in-class exams given at the beginning of the Monday screening session on Week 4 and Week 9 of the course. The first exam will cover the course material from Weeks 1-3. The second exam will cover course material from Weeks 4, 5, 6, & 8. In-class exams will feature multiple choice, short answer, and short essay questions.

Final Exam: The final exam is comprehensive, but it will be weighted towards the material from the second half of the course. In addition to multiple choice, short answer, and short essay questions, the final exam will also feature a longer essay response based on the course content. The short essay questions may also include a close analysis of a screening clip.

Exam Grades: Quizzes and exams will be returned within three weeks of the date they are written.

Grade Appeals: If you believe a quiz or test has been unfairly graded for whatever reason and you want to launch an appeal, you must follow the procedures prescribed by the department. To consult the Grade Appeals document, go to the [Student Forms & Information](#) page on the Film Studies website. In brief, though, you must first consult with your course instructor about the issue. If you are still not satisfied after your instructor has reexamined the test, you must make a request for academic relief in writing to the Chair of the English & Writing Studies department.

Final Grades: All assignments worth over 5% of your final grade, including the final exam, must be completed; failure to do so will lead to an automatic F for the course. Your final grades are released by the Registrar's Office, not your instructor.

Laptops, Tablets, Cell Phones: Laptops/tablets/cell phones are *not* to be used during screenings. You will need to take notes using paper and pens, so be sure to bring these materials to class. Exceptions *may* be granted in the case of students with special needs, but this will only come with official approval from the Dean's office. Laptops/tablets will

be permitted during lecture, but only on a probationary basis: if the instructor is distracted two times during the semester by non-note-taking/internet laptop use, the instructor will ban ALL use of laptops/tablets for the remainder of the year. In addition, be sure to turn off cell phones and refrain from text messaging during class. This counts as disruptive behavior and will lower your final participation grade.

Note on Screenings: You are required to attend weekly screenings on Monday evenings (attendance will be taken). Be sure to arrive to the screenings on time and to follow traditional screening etiquette (turn off cell phones, laptops, no talking, etc.). If you are ill or have a legitimate excuse, you should set up an appointment to view the films in the Film Studies Resource Library [AHB-1G19] before Wednesday's lecture. [http://www.uwo.ca/arts/tech/video_resources_library.html] The library is open Monday-Thursday from 10am-3pm and Friday from 10am-2pm. Remember to contact Joanna Smith (jsmit459@uwo.ca) in advance to make a viewing appointment in the Resource Library if necessary. Keep in mind, however, that screening the film independently on a small monitor will hardly substitute for experiencing the film with an audience and projected on a large screen.

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1—January 8-10—INTRODUCTION to the HORROR FILM

Screening: *The Exorcist* (William Friedkin, 1973, 122 min.)

Reading: Wells, *The Horror Genre*, Chapter 1 (pgs. 3-35)
& Berliner, "Conceptual Incongruity and *The Exorcist*" (excerpt) [OWL]

WEEK 2—Jan. 15-17—SCREENING the VAMPIRE

Screening: *Nosferatu* (F.W. Murnau, 1922, 94 min.)
& *Dracula* (Tod Browning, 1931, 84 min.)

Reading: Wells, *The Horror Genre*, Chapter 2 (pgs. 36-49)
& Wood, "Burying the Undead" [OWL]
& Elsaesser, "No End to *Nosferatu*" [OWL]

****QUIZ #1 at the beginning of class on Wednesday Jan. 17****

WEEK 3—Jan. 22-24—HAMMER HORROR and the FRANKENSTEIN MYTH

Screening: *Frankenstein* (James Whale, 1931, 71 min.) &
The Curse of Frankenstein (Terence Fisher, 1957, 83 min.)

Reading: Wells, *The Horror Genre*, Chapter 2 (pgs. 49-73)
& Mangravite, "The House of Hammer" [OWL]
& Friedman & Kavey, *Monstrous Progeny* (excerpts) [OWL]

WEEK 4—Jan. 29-31—GHOSTS and GOTHIC HORROR

Screening: *The Innocents* (Jack Clayton, 1961, 100 min.)

Reading: Tibbetts, “The Old Dark House” [OWL]
& Chase, “Romancing the Stones” [OWL]
& Berenstein, “Horror for Sale” [OWL]

****EXAM #1 at the beginning of class on Monday January 29****

WEEK 5—Feb. 5-7—RACE, CLASS, and the URBAN GOTHIC

Screening: *Wolfen* (Michael Wadleigh, 1981, 114 min.)

Reading: Rudin, “The Urban Gothic: From Transylvania to the South Bronx”
& Asma, “Torturers, Terrorists, and Zombies” [both on OWL]

WEEK 6—Feb. 12-14— THE POLITICS of ZOMBIE CINEMA

Screening: *I Walked with a Zombie* (Jacques Tourneur, 1943, 69 min.)
& *Night of the Living Dead* (George A. Romero, 1968, 96 min.)

Reading: Wells, *The Horror Genre*, Chapter 3 (pgs. 74-89)
& Telotte, “Narration and Incarnation: *I Walked with a Zombie*” [OWL]
& Wood, “An Introduction to the American Horror Film” [OWL]

****QUIZ #2 at the beginning of class on Wednesday Feb. 14 ****

WEEK 7—Feb. 19-21—READING WEEK

WEEK 8—Feb. 26-28— ITALIAN HORROR and GIALLO CINEMA

Screening: *The Bird with the Crystal Plumage* (Dario Argento, 1970, 96 min.)

Reading: Olney, “Blood and Black Lace: The *Giallo* Film” [OWL]
& Needham, “Playing with Genre” [OWL]

WEEK 9—March 5-7—THE SLASHER FILM and the FINAL GIRL

Screening: *Halloween* (John Carpenter, 1978, 91 min.)

Reading: Clover, “Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film” [OWL]
& Lowenstein, “A Reintroduction to the American Horror Film” [OWL]

****EXAM #2 at the beginning of class on Monday March 5****

WEEK 10—March 12-14—INVESTIGATING the SERIAL KILLER

Screening: *The Silence of the Lambs* (Jonathan Demme, 1991, 118 min.)

Reading: Wells, *The Horror Genre*, Chapter 3 (pgs. 89-101; 105-112)
& Taubin, “Killing Men” [OWL]
& Seltzer, “The Serial Killer as a Type of Person” (excerpt) [OWL]

WEEK 11— March 19-21—J-HORROR

Screening: *Ringu* (Hideo Nakata, 1998, 95 min.)

Reading: Stringer, “The Original and the Copy: Nakata Hideo’s Ring (1998)”
& Wee, “Visual Aesthetics and Ways of Seeing” [both on OWL]

WEEK 12—March 26-28—HORROR after 9/11: The Splat Pack & Torture Porn

Screening: *The Descent* (Neil Marshall, 2005, 100 min.)

Reading: Pinedo, “Torture Porn” [OWL]
& Bernard, *Selling the Splat Pack* (excerpt) [OWL]

WEEK 13—April 2-4—REFRAMING the VAMPIRE

Screening: *Let the Right One In* (Tomas Alfredson, 2008, 114 min.)

Reading: Scahill, “Revolting Children” [OWL]
& Tyree, “Warm-Blooded” [OWL]
& Howell, “The Mirror and The Window” [OWL]

****QUIZ #3 at the beginning of class on Wednesday April 4****

WEEK 14—April 9-11—RACE and the SUBURBAN GOTHIC

Screening: *Get Out* (Jordan Peele, 2017, 104 min.)

Reading: Dyer, “White Death” [OWL]

****FINAL EXAM: See Winter Term Exam Schedule****

POLICIES and REGULATIONS

This instructor respects and upholds University policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays; assistance available to the physically disabled, visually and/or hearing impaired student; plagiarism; sexual harassment; and racial or ethnic discrimination. All students are advised to become familiar with the respective University regulations and are encouraged to bring any questions or concerns to the attention of the instructor. For Film Studies regulations governing Term Work, Exams, Faculty Office Hours, Academic Relief (appeals, petitions, complaints), and other matters, please consult “Information for Students” on our website at www.uwo.ca/film

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a major academic offence. Students must write their essays 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 such as footnotes or citations. In this course, citation of all material other than students' own ideas must be completed according to the guidelines established in *The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 6th Edition*. For additional information on plagiarism see:

www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism Checking: 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](http://www.turnitin.com). You should register immediately as a new user by going to <http://www.turnitin.com>. I will provide you with the Class ID # and password as soon as possible. Assignments not handed in to turnitin.com will receive a 0.

Prerequisites: Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. The 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.

UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness: 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 their Academic Counseling Office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. *Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Official accommodation is also required for ALL missed assignments (including quizzes).* 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.

Please go to the following site for information on the university Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness: (<https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>)

For information on the examination services provided by the Student Development Centre, please visit www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd

Mental Health: Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.
<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/>

Disabilities: Please consult with me during the first three weeks of class regarding disabilities that might require special accommodations.

Complaints: If students have a complaint concerning a course in which they are enrolled, they must first discuss the matter with the instructor of the course. If students are still not satisfied, they should then take the complaint to the English Department chair. These regulations are in place because a failure to follow these procedures creates the potential for injustices of various kinds affecting either the instructor or the students themselves, or both parties. Concerns should not be allowed to fester but should be raised with the instructor in a timely manner, so that they can be addressed in time to make a difference to the course.

Office Hours: I will be available to answer questions, clarify concepts/assignments, and assist you with your coursework during my weekly office hours (posted above). If you have an occasional conflict, feel free to email me and we can set up an alternative time to meet. I will also be available via email M-F from 9-5 and will do my best to respond to your email within two days. ***Please note, however, that I may not respond to questions about the course that can be answered simply by reviewing the course syllabus.**