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Fall 2023

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### ENG 5020Z-600 Graduate Workshop in Creative Writing Writing the Gothic

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*Eastern Illinois University*

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ENGLISH 5020

Graduate Workshop in Creative Writing: Writing the Gothic

Fall 2023: Online

Updates/Assignments posted Mondays; Discussion comments due by 5pm CT every Friday;  
Assignments due by following Monday

Instructor: Dr. Mike McClelland (He/Him)

Office: Coleman Hall 3365

Email: [mbmcclelland@ciu.edu](mailto:mbmcclelland@ciu.edu)

Office Hours:

MWF 12:00pm to 1:00pm in office and 1:00pm to 2pm online (or by appointment)

**Welcome to Writing the Gothic!**

“It was a dark and stormy night. The rain fell in cataracts; and drowsy citizens started, from dreams of the deluge, to gaze upon the boisterous sea, which foamed and bellowed for admittance into the proud towers and marble palaces.” -Edgar Allen Poe

“Books, moonlight, melodrama.” -Silvia Moreno-Garcia.

**Required Texts:**

- VanderMeer, Jeff. *Wonderbook: The Illustrated Guide to Creating Imaginative Fiction*
- Bakis, *Lives of the Monster Dogs*
- Stoker, *Dracula*
- Shelley, *Frankenstein*

**Supporting Texts**

- Saleses, Matthew. *Craft in the Real World*

*Additional supporting texts will be distributed on D2L*

**Required materials:**

- Access to the Internet; a computer with word-processing capabilities
- Your imagination!

**Course Description:**

“When you write, you lay out a line of words. The line of words is a miner’s pick, a wood-carver’s gouge, a surgeon’s probe. You wield it, and it digs a path you follow. Soon you find yourself deep in

new territory. Is it a dead end, or have you located the real subject? You will know tomorrow, or this time next year.”

-Annie Dillard

This an asynchronous online workshop where graduate students will create, workshop, and revise their writing, with specific attention paid to **gothic writing**. As we will be meeting in an online space from locations across the globe, we will also discuss the idea of inspiration and learn how to germinate and nurture inspiration in our own specific writing environments. We will place a particular emphasis on gothic texts dating from the early 1800s to today, though our focus will remain on writing and workshopping.

### **Writing:**

“Art is not about thinking something up. It is the opposite - getting something down.”

-Julia Cameron

Being a writer has only one real requirement: the act of writing. As such, the primary endeavor so this course is for each student to write as much as possible. We will pay particular attention to gothic writing and, though the texts we read for class will mostly be fiction, students may write fiction, nonfiction, poetry, drama, or graphic narrative for workshop.

Each student will workshop three pieces over the course of the semester. These could be short stories, memoir, essays, groups of poems, or whatever genre you choose. However, they should be linked by a **gothic** sensibility, which we will gain an understanding of through reading and discussion this semester.

### **Reading:**

“Reading is like breathing in, writing is like breathing out.”

-Pam Allyn

“If you don’t have time to read, you don’t have the time (or the tools) to write. Simple as that.”

-Stephen King

Our reading for each week of classes will be divided into two areas: gothic writing and craft writing. Most of the craft writing will come from your textbook, *Wonderbook*. For the gothic work, we’ll be reading sections of three novels (*Frankenstein*, *Dracula*, and *Lives of the Monster Dogs*) as well as a variety of gothic poetry, short stories, essays, and other excerpts.

As such, there will be a lot of reading *and* writing required for this course, but no more than your typical graduate level creative writing workshop.

### **The Workshop and Critique Process:**

For our fiction workshops, we will incorporate elements adapted from Jesse Ball’s pedagogical practice “The Asking” Matthew Salesses’ *Craft in the Real World* in order to give those being workshopped more control in the workshop.

I will be dividing you into four groups of four (Group A, Group B, Group C, Group D) and we will rotate weeks of submission. I'll update the calendar once I have a better sense of each of you and divide the groups so that we have a manageable amount of reading each week.

When you submit your work, you will also submit questions guiding the readers towards your primary areas of interest/concern. They may not focus there in their critique, but you will have had the chance to gather the feedback of most interest to you.

When you receive your classmates' work for class workshop, you will have a week to read their piece and author a one-page (double spaced) response to it.

Your critique should be laid out like this: begin with a brief summary of the piece, then explain what was working in the piece, and conclude with what about the piece needs improvement. Personal comments about the writer are inappropriate in critique as are insults of any kind. However, in the same vein, unfounded praise should be limited. Critique should be about the work and making the work better. I often find that asking questions in your critique can be helpful for those you are critiquing.

## **Grading**

- Reading Responses/Discussion: 20%
- Workshop Responses: 20%
- Writing: 50%
- Reflective Essay (Final): 10%

## **Final Reflection**

- For the final, you'll write a 1000 word personal essay on what you've learned about the gothic over the course of the semester and how that has or hasn't impacted your writing.

## **Participation**

- Participation means commenting on the readings and engaging with your classmates' comments. It also means responding, on-time, to your classmates' work and getting your own work in on-time.

## **Plagiarism and Copyright**

Just don't plagiarize! If you have any issue completing your assignments within the assigned timeframe, please contact me directly before you even consider plagiarizing an assignment. I will work with you on a timeframe for completion.

Eastern Illinois University considers plagiarism a serious offense under its student conduct code, and the penalty can be as serious as expulsion from school.

The English Department's policy on plagiarism: "Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—"The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's original work" (Random House Dictionary)—has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office."

## **A.I.**

The use of artificial intelligence to produce work for this course is not appropriate and will result in a grade of 0 on that assignment.

## **Late and Make-up Work**

- All work should be turned in complete and on time. As we are workshopping your work, it is key that we are getting our assignments in before the scheduled workshop. If you know you will be missing particular days, please let me know in advance so that we can make sure that everyone gets three workshops in.

## **Methods of Evaluation:**

The grades for this class will be determined by points earned (1000 total points possible) and will be reported based on the standard grading scale. However, per IAI standards, a grade of C or higher is required for advancement to higher level English courses.

- 100% to 90%: A
- 89% to 80%: B
- 79 to 70%: C
- 69% to 0%: NC

## **Conduct and Kindness Policy:**

Participants in this course **must** be course compliant with the University's Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy, which prohibits harassment of or discrimination against any person because of race, color, sex, religion, age, national origin, ancestry, marital status, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other basis of discrimination precluded by federal and state statutes is strictly prohibited.

In addition, as we will be discussing and investigating aspects of each other's cultures, it is important for members of this class to not only "tolerate" each other's unique and different qualities but to celebrate them. It is a requirement of this class that all we treat each other with kindness, respect, and compassion.

## **Electronics:**

Failure to silence and put away phones, laptops, and smartwatches, and other cellular devices (if they aren't being used for class purposes) will result in points being deducted from your participation grade for the class.

### **Academic Integrity**

Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU's Code of Conduct (<http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php>). Violations will be reported to the Office of Student Standards.

### **Students with Disabilities**

You are welcome here and are an equal member of this classroom. Please advocate for your rights and allow me to help point you in the right direction for exercising those rights! If you are a student with a documented disability in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services (OSDS). All accommodations must be approved through OSDS. Please stop by McAfee, Room 1210, or call 217-581-6583 to make an appointment.

### **The Student Success Center**

Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center ([www.eiu.edu/~success](http://www.eiu.edu/~success)) for assistance with time management, test taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581-6696, or go to McAfee Gym, Room 1301.

### **The Writing Center**

"The Writing Center of Eastern Illinois University is a place where students can develop as writers and thinkers. We recognize that student writers come to the center with individual needs and individual writing processes, and we are committed to working with students from all disciplines, majors, and academic backgrounds at any stage of the writing process." I highly recommend you visit the Writing Center in the first three weeks of class with low stakes assignment, so you are comfortable in the environment and familiar with their processes when you go in for a more challenging one. <https://www.eiu.edu/writing/index.php>.

### **English Education/Teacher Certification**

Students seeking Teacher Certification in English Language Arts should request each of their English Department professors to complete the "Application for English Department Approval to Student Teach" before the end of the semester. This online evaluation form is available here: <https://www.eiu.edu/english/machform/view.php?id=19831>.

### **Resources for Student Well-Being**

Life is hard, especially when you're in college. Please check out the university's extensive options for assisting your emotional/physical/spiritual wellbeing: [https://www.eiu.edu/fdic/Student%20 Well-Being\\_26-July-2022.pdf](https://www.eiu.edu/fdic/Student%20Well-Being_26-July-2022.pdf)

### **Commitment to Diversity:**

I have chosen the readings for this course in an effort to reflect writers whose races, genders, nationalities, sexual orientations, and religious backgrounds are typically underrepresented in university classrooms and in the established literary canon. This class will celebrate and investigate diverse work.

## **TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS**

*Assignments/readings are due ON the date they are listed below.*

*Any reading assignment not from the textbook will be provided as a handout or electronically.*

### **Week One – What is Gothic?**

Reading: We'll be reading our way through Salesses this week (and possibly into next)  
*8/25 is the last day to add a class!*

### **Week Two – Why Gothic?**

Gothic “scavenger hunt” assignment  
Reading: First 40 pages of *Wonderbook*. Intros to Frankenstein and Dracula (online)  
*9/1 is the last day to drop a course with no grade and/or withdraw from all classes with full tuition and fees refund*

### **Week Three – Creating Gothic Characters**

“Favorite gothic character” assignment  
Reading: Chapter 5 of *Wonderbook* (pages 177-210). Frankenstein.  
*No class on 9/4 due to Labor Day*

### **Week Four – Shaping Gothic Worlds**

**Group A Workshop 1**  
In-class writing.  
Reading: Worldbuilding section of *Wonderbook* (pages 211-244). Frankenstein.

### **Week Five – Building Gothic Suspense**

**Group B Workshop 1**  
Reading: Chapter 4 of *Wonderbook* (Narrative Design). Frankenstein.

### **Week Six – Gothic Poetry**

**Group C Workshop 1**  
In-class writing  
Reading: Gothic Poems (on D2L)

### **Week Seven – Time and the Gothic**

#### **Group D Workshop 1**

Reading: Silber on Time (handout). Dracula.

*No class on 10/7 (Fall Break)*

### **Week Eight – Gothic Plots, Gothic Structure, Gothic Forms**

#### **Group A Workshop 2**

Reading: Chapter 2 of *Wonderbook* (pages 41-72) on the “ecosystem of the story.” Dracula.

### **Week Nine – Gothic Beginnings**

#### **Group B Workshop 2**

Reading: Chapter 3 of *Wonderbook* (Beginnings and Endings). Dracula.

### **Week Ten – Gothic Endings (Happen in Revision!)**

#### **Group C Workshop 2**

Reading: Chapter 7 of *Wonderbook* (245-281) which is about revision. Online Reading.

### **Week Eleven – The Haunted Gothic Voice**

#### **Group D Workshop 2**

Reading: Monster Dogs.

*11/4 is the withdrawal deadline*

### **Week Twelve – Gothic Futures (Really!)**

#### **Group A Workshop 3**

Readings: Monster Dogs.

### **Week Thirteen – Alternate Gothic Realities**

#### **Group B Workshop 3**

Reading: Monster Dogs, Night of the Living Rez (on D2L)

### **Week Fourteen – Break**

*No class, Thanksgiving Break!*

Watch some Gothic film classics!

### **Week Fifteen – Fabulist and Speculative Fiction**

#### **Group C Workshop 3**

Reading: Frankenstein, How High We Go in the Dark (on D2L)

### **Week Sixteen – We Live in Gothic Times**

#### **Group D Workshop 3**

Reading: Gothic Essays (on D2L)

### **Week Seventeen**



12-13: Final Reflection Due by Noon