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ENG 4300-4390-001-099: The Literary Gothic

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The Literary Gothic

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Office Hours:
Mon 9-11
Tues & Thurs 9:30-11:00
and by appointment

Course Description
In this course, we will spend the semester reading selected masterpieces of gothic literature—selections that cover a variety of forms, across literary historical periods and national boundaries. Gothic literature has long been a source of suspenseful and titillating stories—stories that make explicit the darker, disturbing, and repressed side of both physical and human nature. Popular and academic audiences alike recognize the literary gothic’s subversive potential and are captivated by its dramatization of the human condition—of fear, fantasy, criminality, and psychological intrigue. But to what end? Is the literary gothic a means to make safe (to expose and neutralize) the dangerous? Or is it best understood as a destabilizing movement, revolutionary and counter-culture?

Besides enjoying some engaging literary gothics, we will try to answer such questions as we study the historical and aesthetic origins of the genre and its continuing impact on literary and cultural studies.

Our reading will begin with some of the founding texts of the literary gothic in the 18th century, and, from there, we will trace the gothic influence through the present day—through ghost and vampire stories to psychological thrillers. One of our primary goals will be to try to fix the term “gothic” with some kind of historical and literary precision: what do we mean when we call a literary text “gothic”? How does that use of the term differ, for example, from how art or architectural historians use the term? Are there historical or aesthetic relationships? What kinds of political or psychological interpretations can we “read into” the literary gothic?

Although our discussion will be guided principally by the works listed below, we will also read a sampling of other gothic works (excerpts of poems, plays, short stories) to help further situate—and complicate—our analysis.

Texts
- The Castle of Otranto, Horace Walpole
- Frankenstein, Mary Shelley
- Dracula, Bram Stoker
- The Secret Agent, Joseph Conrad
- Turn of the Screw, Henry James
- V for Vendetta, Alan Moore & David Lloyd
- Course Packet (with additional literary and critical readings)
Requirements

- Short Paper (3-5 pages) 10%
- Presentation (brief) 5%
- Final Paper (12-15 pages) 25%
- Presentation (final paper) 10%
- Proposal (final paper) 10%
- Final Exam 15%
- Response Papers, Quizzes & Critiques 10%
- Participation 15%

**Note: you must complete all of the above requirements to pass the course.

Expectations

This is a senior seminar and, as such, the course is geared for advanced study of literary texts and contexts. You will be expected to be prepared to discuss the assigned works, contribute actively in class discussions, and complete a great deal of outside reading and research. As early as possible, you will need to select a topic for your semester project. In addition to turning in a proposal for this project, you will complete a final paper (approximately 12-15 pages) and give a formal presentation to the class. I will hand out written assignment sheets (at a later date) and we will spend a great deal of class time discussing your projects.

Attendance Policy

I usually allow two absences or personal days. After that (on the third unexcused absence), 5% will be deducted from your final grade for each unexcused absence. If you miss more than 4 classes, you will receive an F for the course.

Electronic Writing Portfolio

This course is a writing-intensive course and, as such, your papers satisfy the requirements for the Electronic Writing Portfolio. If you plan on using work from this course for your EWP, I ask that you complete this before the last two weeks of the semester.

Computer Etiquette

You're welcome to bring your notebook computer to class. However, I ask that you observe common rules of etiquette and decorum when you use it. In brief, you may use it to take notes or complete an in-class writing activity. You may not use it for anything not directly related to class work. Also, please turn off (or mute) cell phones or any other PDA. Out of respect for the class and the integrity of class activities, absolutely no text messaging during class is allowed.

Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

Reading & Presentation Schedule

Once we determine the presentation schedules, I will distribute a reading schedule for the semester with approximate due dates for all written work.