

LCC 3252-SS1: Film and Television
Mapping Monstrosity in the American Imagination
Summer 2011, MTWR 2:45pm – 4:20pm, Skiles 368

Instructor: L. Andrew Cooper
Office Hours: MTWR 2:00 – 2:45pm and by appointment, Skiles 341
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Course Description

This course examines monsters of the (post)modern era, paying particular attention to remakes and reimaginings: *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) to *Frankenstein* (1994), *The Wolf Man* (1941) to *American Werewolf in London* (1981), *Dracula* (1931) to the *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* TV show (1997 – 2003), *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) to *Resident Evil* (2002). In addition to these texts that feature classic creatures, we will also look at the spawn of more recent nightmares, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) and *American Psycho* (2000). By considering not just the monsters but their historical contexts, particularly their transformations as they move from one context to another, we will be able to see ways that monsters reflect on both America's conceptions of "otherness" as well as its reflections on itself. The maps that emerge reveal perspectives on science, sexuality, race, religion, aging, politics, and more. To understand this range of perspectives, we will read a variety of theorists and critics. The class culminates with student films that feature monsters that spring from their own imaginations.

Course Materials

Required Textbook

A Short Guide to Writing about Film, 7e, by Timothy Corrigan, ISBN 10: 0-205-66894-1.

Recommended Book

WOVENText: The Georgia Tech Writing and Communication E-Book (<http://ebooks.bfwpub.com/gatech>)

Films

You are required to see the assigned films on your own. Most of the films are readily available to rent or buy, and they are all on reserve in Georgia Tech's Library. Though you are not required to purchase copies of the films, I recommend securing copies of the films you use for major assignments.

Computer, Software, and Other Materials

You need a computer with word processing software, such as Microsoft Word. You also need a media player that can capture still images from films, such as the VLC media player, which is available online to download for free. You must also regularly check your Georgia Tech email and review this class's materials on T-Square. If you own a laptop computer, please bring it to each class meeting. Finally, some assignments might involve additional expenses, such as costs for printing, digital videotape, and/or writable DVDs available at the Georgia Tech Library.

Learning Outcomes

The table below details this course's specific learning outcomes.

Category	Outcomes
<p>Critical Thinking Critical thinking involves understanding social and cultural texts and contexts in ways that support productive communication and interaction.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze film and television artifacts as a semiotic processes that produce meanings both for the texts and in the cultures that receive them Critique aesthetic elements that create the viewing experience
<p>Rhetoric Rhetoric focuses on available means of persuasion, considering the synergy of factors such as context, audience, purpose, role, argument, organization, design, visuals, and conventions of language. Filmmakers and film critics use specific vocabulary and rhetorical strategies to make meaning from sounds and images.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate mastery of media vocabulary through written and spoken communication Create artifacts that analyze and/or use specific techniques and critical strategies for interpretation Write multimedia reviews that state and defend evaluations Respond to classmates' reviews in well-reasoned and productive ways
<p>Culture, History, and Genre Films reflect the cultures that produce and receive them, and they relate to the history of film as a whole as well as the conventions of specific film genres.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create artifacts that explain how culture, history, and genre affect form, narrative, reception, and interpretation Discuss how personal knowledge of and experience with films relate to the cultures and histories introduced in class
<p>Modes and Media Activities and assignments should use a variety of modes and media—written, oral, visual, electronic, and nonverbal (WOVEN)—singly and in combination. The context and culture of multimodality and multimedia are critical.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convey analytical insights through papers, presentations, and films Enjoy films from formal, aesthetic, historical, generic, and cultural perspectives

Assignments

Major Assignments (900 points total)

- Review Essay** (100 points). Write a formal evaluation (~1,000 words) of *one* film (or the *Buffy* episodes) assigned for this course. Rate it on a scale between 0 and 5 (the unit is your choice). Defend your rating through detailed discussion of elements such as narrative, acting, mise-en-scene, cinematography, editing, and sound as well as of its genre, place in film history, and significance in American culture. Use rich description, still images, and quoted dialogue as evidence. Pay particular attention to the effectiveness of the film's monster(s). Post your review on T-Square's Forums before class on the day marked as the deadline for the film you choose. Your review should start a new thread for discussion.
- Review Responses** (100 points total). For *each* film assigned for this course, respond within a thread to one review posted on T-Square Forums. Your response should be a single paragraph that adds to the discussion started by the review. Agree and/or disagree with specific details of what comes before your post on the thread, and explain why. Help make sure each review gets responses. Each response is worth 10 points and is due before class on the day after the review is posted.

3. **Analytical Essay** (250 points). Write an essay (1,750 – 2,000 words) that defends a thesis about how two of the monsters discussed in class help to “map” a specific aspect of American culture. What sort of statement does each monster make, and how does considering the monsters together provide a more complete picture of that aspect of American culture? Refer to at least one of the essays or book excerpts assigned as you defend your thesis with analysis of details from the films.
4. **Short Film and Individual Report** (250 points). In a group of five or six students, create a 10-minute video that explores an original monster that your group invents. You may choose a nonfictional or fictional style for your video. For a nonfictional style, the video might be a documentary or news report about your monster—its creation, its history, its depredations, its impact, etc. For a fictional style, the video might be a short film that shows your monster in action. Other approaches are possible; make sure your group runs your idea by the professor before you start. Be creative: you don’t have a big special effects budget, but your monster might look completely human... or it might never appear on camera. In addition to the video, which will be screened in class, each individual in the group should submit a 2-page report that reflects on her/his individual contributions to the project, evaluation of the group’s effectiveness, and sense of the monster’s relationship to course content.
5. **Exam** (200 points). Identify and explain the significance of images taken from films assigned in class; write short essays about the significance of monsters in American culture.

Participation (100 points total)

The participation grade derives from active participation in class discussions and activities. Demonstrate your knowledge, and share your insights. You are not graded on what you say, but you are expected to speak up. Maintaining class decorum is part of participation: disruptions lower productivity and, therefore, your grade. Harassment of any kind, directed either at peers or at the instructor, is disruptive. All viewpoints are welcome, but avoid abusive language.

Course Policies

Grading

Each assignment has a point value. Assignments add up to a total of 1000 points. Convert point totals into percentages, and the letter grade equivalents are:

A = 90-100; **B** = 80-89; **C** = 70-79; **D** = 60-69; **F** = 0-59

Failure to complete an assignment on time will result in 0 points.

Attendance

Attendance is required. If you must miss class, email me ahead of time. You have two “freebie” days, classes you may miss without grade penalties (the day of our project screenings cannot be a freebie). For other absences, you must have official documentation of an illness, injury, or legal obligation that keeps you from class. I deduct 25 points from your grade for each non-freebie, undocumented absence. Three latenesses constitute an absence. If you arrive late, you must confirm that I have marked you as present or accept the consequences of an omission. *Even “excused,” documented absences affect your grade if they occur too often. Missing more than five of our class meetings for any reason could result in failure.*

Punctual Work

Unless I approve a deadline extension in advance, which is unlikely, I will not accept assignments after the deadline. You are responsible for all information covered during every class meeting.

Academic Conduct

You are responsible for knowing and abiding by GT's policy for academic integrity. Consult the Honor Code online at <http://www.honor.gatech.edu/plugins/content/index.php?id=9>. The following text appears in the Honor Code:

"Academic misconduct is any act that does or could improperly distort Student grades or other Student academic records. Such acts include but need not be limited to the following:

- Possessing, using or exchanging improperly acquired written or verbal information in the preparation of any essay, laboratory report, examination, or other assignment included in an academic course;
- Substitution for, or unauthorized collaboration with, a Student in the commission of academic requirements;
- Submission of material that is wholly or substantially identical to that created or published by another person or person, without adequate credit notations indicating authorship (plagiarism);
- False claims of performance or work that has been submitted by the claimant;
- Alteration or insertion of any academic grade or rating so as to obtain unearned academic credit;
- Deliberate falsification of a written or verbal statement of fact to a member of the Faculty so as to obtain unearned academic credit;
- Forgery, alteration or misuse of any Institute document relating to the academic status of the Student.

While these acts constitute assured instances of academic misconduct, other acts of academic misconduct may be defined by the professor."

Work that violates the Honor Code will receive zero credit and may result in failure of the entire course. I will also report misconduct to the Office of Student Integrity.

Laptop Computer Use

Please bring your laptop to class. You may only use your laptop for class activities and note-taking. Using the laptop during class for other activities—such as email, Facebook, web-surfing, or games—is rude and strictly prohibited. Inappropriate laptop use may result in grade penalties and/or expulsion from class.

Accommodations

If you need accommodations for a disability, please contact me at the beginning of the semester so that we can discuss them. You should also contact the Access Disabled Assistance Program for Tech Students (ADAPTS) within the first two weeks of the semester so that they can help us to develop reasonable accommodations. For an appointment with a counselor call (404) 894-2564 (voice) / (404) 894-1664 (voice/TDD) or visit 220 Student Services Building. For more information visit <http://www.adapts.gatech.edu>.

The Fine Print

I reserve the right to alter policies and assignments. I exercise this right rarely, but I often provide more detailed information during class. This syllabus is your guide. Keep it. Know it. Love it.

Schedule of Meetings and Assignments

NOTE: Each reading or film viewing should be completed prior to the class meeting in the row where it is listed. SG stands for *A Short Guide to Writing about Film*.

	Readings	Deadlines
Mon, May 16	IN CLASS: <i>Bride of Frankenstein</i> (1935)	
Tue., May 17	Cohen, "Monster Culture" SG: Chapters 1-2	
Wed. May 18	<i>Mary Shelley's Frankenstein</i> (1994)	Review Essay: <i>Bride of Frankenstein</i>
Thu., May 19	Hopkins, "Mary Shelley's Frankenstein" Stam, "Theory and Practice of Adaptation"	Review Essay: <i>Mary Shelley's Frankenstein</i>
Mon., May 23	<i>The Wolf Man</i> (1941)	Review Essay: <i>Wolf Man</i>
Tue., May 24	King, "Tales of the Tarot" SG: Chapters 3-4	
Wed., May 25	<i>American Werewolf in London</i> (1981)	Review Essay <i>American Werewolf in London</i>
Thu., May 26	Wood, "Introduction to the American Horror Film"	
Mon., May 30	MEMORIAL DAY HOLIDAY, no class	
Tue., May 31	<i>Dracula</i> (1931) Halberstam, "Parasites and Perverts" SG: Chapters 5 and 7	Review Essay: <i>Dracula</i>
Wed., June 1	<i>Buffy the Vampire Slayer</i> 1.1, 1.2, 5.1	Review Essay: <i>Buffy</i>
Thu., June 2	Feuer, "Narrative Form... Television"	Analytical Essay
Mon., June 6	<i>Night of the Living Dead</i> (1968)	Review Essay: <i>Night of the Living Dead</i>
Tue., June 7	Becker, "A Point of Little Hope"	
Wed., June 8	<i>Resident Evil</i> (2002)	Review Essay: <i>Resident Evil</i>
Thu., June 9	Jenkins, from <i>Convergence Culture</i>	
Mon., June 13	<i>The Texas Chainsaw Massacre</i> (1974)	Review Essay: <i>Texas Chainsaw Massacre</i>
Tue., June 14	<i>American Psycho</i> (2000)	Review Essay: <i>American Psycho</i>
Wed., June 15	Jones, "Being Strong" IN CLASS: Project Screenings	Short Film and Individual Report
Thu., June 16	FINAL EXAM	

PLEASE READ, SIGN, AND RETURN THESE STATEMENTS TO DR. COOPER.

I affirm that I have read the entire syllabus and policy sheet for LCC 3252-SS1 and understand the information and the responsibilities specified.

print name

signature

date

DIRECTIONS: Read carefully and check all that apply.

- I give my instructor, Dr. L. Andrew Cooper, permission to use copies of the work I do for this course, LCC 3252-SS1, as examples in this and other courses, as examples in presentations, and in print and electronic publications.
- I give my instructor, Dr. L. Andrew Cooper, permission ONLY to use copies of the *collaborative* work I do for this course, LCC 3252-SS1, as examples in this and other courses, as examples in presentations, and in print and electronic publications.
- I do NOT give my instructor, Dr. L. Andrew Cooper, permission to use copies of the work I do for this course, LCC 3252-SS1, as examples in this and other courses, as examples in presentations, and in print and electronic publications.

Please indicate whether you want to be acknowledged if your work is used:

- Please use my name in association with my work.
- Please use my work, but do NOT acknowledge me.

If your instructor decides to use your work, he//she may wish to contact you. Please provide your contact information below:

print name

signature

email address

phone number

print permanent address

Date