

HUM 326: Studies in Film and Culture
American Horror Film since 1960:
Slashers, Ghosts, and Things In Between
Fall 2012, MW, 2:30pm – 3:45pm, Belknap

Instructor: L. Andrew Cooper (andrew.cooper@louisville.edu)
Bingham 201A (502-852-8820), Humanities (502-852-6805)
Office Hours: M/W 12pm-2pm and by appointment

Course Description

Enrollment in HUM 326 requires sophomore standing.

U of L's course catalog specifies that HUM 326 is "a study of a specific group of films in relation to their specific cultural and historical contexts" that "may be repeated up to three times if different selections of films are studied." The selection of films for this course includes some of the biggest mainstream hits of American horror cinema since 1960. We begin with Alfred Hitchcock's American film *Psycho* and Michael Powell's British *Peeping Tom*. In 1960, both films took risks on artful approaches to stories about psychotic killers of a sort usually confined to cheap "B" movie productions. Contrasting Hitchcock's commercial success with Powell's initial failure provides a frame of reference as we consider the genre's evolving relationships with U.S. culture. Moving through recent history, we encounter an array of threats—supernatural, demonic, human, or all of the above—that target mostly white, middle-class Americans, threats motivated either by the sins of the past or crises in the present that point toward larger political, moral, religious, and cultural struggles. Facing these threats puts American identity on trial, and the verdict may be as horrific as the films themselves. **Warning: the films in this course include excessive violence and overt sexuality.** They're supposed to make you uncomfortable.

Course Materials

Readings

Assigned readings will be posted on Blackboard. There is no textbook to buy.

Films

The films we watch and discuss in this course are readily available to rent, stream, or buy, and some of them might be available at Ekstrom Library's media reserves desk. Although you are not required to purchase copies of the films, you will need copies you can use for screen shots to include in posters, papers, and other assignments. I also recommend seeing the films in groups. Solo viewing has recently become more common, but film is still an intrinsically social art form, so seeing the films with others might enhance your appreciation.

Computer and Software

You need a computer with word processing and presentation software, such as Microsoft Word and Microsoft PowerPoint. You also need a media player capable of capturing still images from films, such as the VLC media player, which is available online to download for free. Digital editing software such as

iMovie and Final Cut is useful but not required because you can access it at Ekstrom Library’s Digital Media Suite. You must also regularly check your U of L email and review materials on this class’s Blackboard site. Portable computing devices (e.g. laptops) are useful in class but not required.

Additional Materials

Some assignments call for additional materials that involve additional expense. For example, the poster assignment requires you to print a poster (commercial services can be expensive—try printing services at the [Miller IT Center](#), 502-852-6661, ulprint@louisville.edu: their price is \$30 for a 2’x3’ poster; other places with similar pricing probably offer lower quality printing). You must also mount the temporarily to a foam board or other hard backing that **you** provide. A big enough foam board costs \$5 - \$15 (depending on how well you shop and plan... heavy cardboard works, too, and that you might get for free).

Outcomes

The table below details the learning outcomes associated with this course. Emphases are not mutually exclusive. For example, virtually all outcomes relate directly or indirectly to critical thinking.

Emphasis	Outcomes
<p>Rhetoric Filmmakers and film critics use specific vocabulary and techniques to make meaning from sounds and images. Films also function as rhetorical interventions in cultural discourses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convey arguments through essays, poster presentations, and websites • Collaborate through semester-long planning for and work on websites • Discuss films from formal, aesthetic, historical, generic, and cultural perspectives
<p>Culture, History, and Genre Films reflect the diverse 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 • Examine how American identities and horror films reflect on and constitute one another
<p>Critical Thinking Understanding and interpreting films requires both attention to details (such as frames and shots) and attention to larger structures (such as sequences and diegesis).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpret films in relation to cultural and historical contexts • Analyze images and other details from films to support unified arguments • Synthesize critics’ and others’ perspectives with original interpretive claims

Assignments

Major Assignments (850 points total)

The outcomes in Table 1 refer to the following major assignments, which we will discuss in more detail during class:

1. **Poster: Framing Terror (individual effort, 200 points).** Create a poster that argues a thesis about and analyzes 3 – 6 images from an assigned film. The poster should use images to demonstrate the film’s critical relationship with American culture and history.
2. **Essays: Eyes on Horror (individual effort, 2 essays, 150 points each, 300 points total).** Each short essay (1000 – 1250 words) should defend a thesis with close analysis of images, dialogue, and other details from an assigned film as well as support from at least one assigned reading.
 - a. **Genre and spectatorship.** WITHOUT making assumptions about viewer/audience response, examine how an earlier assigned film addresses horror spectatorship.

- b. **Film and identity.** Examine how a later assigned film addresses controversies surrounding group and individual identities and identity categories.
- 3. **Wiki Project: American Nightmares (group and individual efforts, 250 points total).**
 - a. **Group Plan.** Submit a plan for combining individuals' efforts in other assignments into a coherent website (a wiki on Blackboard). [50 points]
 - b. **Group Wiki.** Use the Blackboard wiki space to weave your group's individual assignments into a coherent collection of ideas about the American horror film since 1960. The wiki should include *revisions* of other work and *new* work that introduces and relates individuals' contributions to one another. [200 points]
- 4. **Final Exam (individual effort, 100 points).** Demonstrate your knowledge of the films and readings we have studied.

Participation (150 points total)

Participation in class discussions and activities is mandatory. Demonstrate your knowledge of the readings and films, and share your insights. During class on several unannounced (but usually predictable) occasions, you might complete quizzes on Blackboard that assess your knowledge of assigned readings. Maintaining class decorum is part of participation: noisy cell phones, disrespectful behavior, and other intrusions lower productivity and, therefore, your grade. "Disrespectful behavior" includes harassment of any kind, directed either at peers or at the instructor. This course will foster discussions of sensitive issues such as gender, race, and sexuality. All viewpoints are welcome, but as individuals express themselves, they should avoid abusive or insulting language.

Course Policies

Grading

Each assignment has a point value. Assignments add up to a total of 1000 points. The following list shows the letter grades linked to percentages of available points earned, with a description of the work:

- A** (90-100), Exceeds expectations for argument, evidence, organization, and design
- B** (80-89), Meets expectations, with notable merit in some of the categories listed above
- C** (70-79), Meets expectations
- D** (60-69), Meets most expectations, with some problems or omissions
- F** (0-59), Meets few expectations, with significant problems or omissions

Failure to complete an assignment results in 0 points. To calculate +/- values, round total points to the 3, 5, or 8 in your percentile range. For example, 895 – 934 points round to 93 (A-), 935 – 974 points round to 95 (A), and 975 – 1000 points round to 98 (A+).

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. For other absences, you must have made a prior arrangement with me or have official documentation of an illness, injury, legal obligation, or university-sponsored activity that keeps you from class. I will deduct 25 points from your grade for each non-freebie, unapproved absence. Lateness to class counts as a half or whole absence, at my discretion.

Missing more than 25% of class meetings for any reason could result in grade penalties and/or failure.

Punctual Work

Unless I approve a deadline extension in advance, I will not accept major assignments after the deadline (before class on the date indicated by the schedule at the end of this syllabus). You are responsible for all information covered during every class meeting.

Academic Conduct

Academic dishonesty is prohibited at the University of Louisville. It is a serious offense because it diminishes the quality of scholarship, makes accurate evaluation of student progress impossible, and defrauds those in society who must ultimately depend upon the knowledge and integrity of the institution and its students and faculty. For more information, see the [Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) (Sections 5 and 6).

Using Laptop Computers and Other Digital Devices

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

Access

UofL is committed to providing access to programs and services for qualified students with disabilities. If you are a student with a disability and require accommodation to participate and complete requirements for this class, notify me immediately and contact the Disability Resource Center (Stevenson Hall, Room 119, 852-6938) for verification of eligibility and determination of specific accommodations.

Religious Holy Days and Observances

If your religious observances might require an adjustment in course work, please submit your request(s) to me in writing during the first two weeks of the semester.

Sexual Harassment

UofL strives to maintain the campus free of all forms of illegal discrimination as a place of work and study for faculty, staff, and students. Sexual harassment is unacceptable, and unlawful conduct and will not be tolerated in the workplace and the educational environment. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment, even when carried out through computers or other electronic communications systems.

See the [Affirmative Action policy](#), the [Student Code of Conduct](#), and the U of L [Computer Account Usage Agreement](#).

Diversity

UofL strives to foster and sustain an environment of inclusiveness that empowers us all to achieve our highest potential without fear of prejudice or bias. We commit ourselves to building an exemplary educational community that offers a nurturing and challenging intellectual climate, a respect for the spectrum of human diversity, and a genuine understanding of the many differences—including race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic status, disability, religion, national origin or military status—that enrich a vibrant metropolitan research university. We expect every member of our academic family to embrace the underlying values of this vision and to demonstrate a strong commitment to attracting, retaining and supporting students, faculty and staff who reflect the diversity of our larger society.

The Fine Print

I reserve the right to alter this syllabus when necessary to meet learning objectives, to compensate for missed classes, or for similar reasons. 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

Date	Reading and Viewing Assignments	Due Dates
Mon., Aug. 20	[Introduction]	
Wed., Aug. 22	<i>Psycho</i> (1960), Williams, "Learning to Scream"	
Mon., Aug. 27	<i>Peeping Tom</i> (British, 1960)	
Wed., Aug. 29	Clover, "The Eye of Horror"	
Mon., Sept. 3	LABOR DAY – NO CLASS	
Wed., Sept. 5	<i>The Haunting</i> (1963)	Group Plan Due
Mon., Sept. 10	Keeseey, "The Haunting"	
Wed., Sept. 12	<i>Last House on the Left</i> (1972)	
Mon., Sept. 17	Becker, "A Point of Little Hope"	
Wed., Sept. 19	<i>The Exorcist</i> (1973)	
Mon., Sept. 24	Creed, "Woman as Possessed Monster"	
Wed., Sept. 26	<i>Friday the 13th</i> (1980)	Essay 1 Due
Mon., Oct. 1	Wood, "Introduction to the American Horror Film"	
Wed., Oct. 3	<i>The Shining</i> (1980)	
Mon., Oct. 8	MID-TERM BREAK – NO CLASS	
Wed., Oct. 10	Jameson, "The Shining"	
Mon., Oct. 15	<i>The Fog</i> (1980)	Digital Poster Due
Wed., Oct. 17		
Mon., Oct. 22	<i>Poltergeist</i> (1982)	
Wed., Oct. 24		
Mon., Oct. 29	POSTER SESSION	Poster Printout Due
Wed., Oct. 31	<i>Nightmare on Elm Street</i> (1984)	
Mon., Nov. 5	Edmundson, from <i>Nightmare on Main Street</i>	
Wed., Nov. 7	<i>Candyman</i> (1992)	Essay 2 Due
Mon., Nov. 12	Donaldson, "The Suffering Black Male Body"	
Wed., Nov. 14	<i>Scream</i> (1997), Phillips, "Scream"	
Mon., Nov. 19	IN CLASS: "Long Pig"	
Wed., Nov. 21	THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY	
Mon., Nov. 26	<i>Saw</i> (2004); IN CLASS: Skype with Lombardo	
Wed., Nov. 28	Hills, "Cutting into Concepts"	
Mon., Dec. 3	<i>Cabin in the Woods</i> (2012)	Group Wiki Due
Wed., DEC. 12	EXAM: 2:30pm – 5:00pm	

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

I affirm that I have read the entire syllabus and policy sheet for HUM 326 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 as examples in this and other courses, as examples in presentations, and in print and electronic publications. I understand that permission is optional and will have no influence on my grade.
- I only give my instructor, Dr. L. Andrew Cooper, permission to use copies of the *collaborative* work I do in this course, such as documents and videos I create through cooperation with other students. I understand that permission is optional and will have no influence on my grade.
- I do NOT give my instructor, Dr. L. Andrew Cooper, permission to use copies of the work I do for this course as examples in this and other courses, as examples in presentations, and in print and electronic publications. I understand that permission is optional and will have no influence on my grade.

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 may wish to contact you. Please provide your contact information below:

print name

signature

email address

phone number

print permanent address

Date