

HUM 624/524: Special Topics in Film and Culture
International Horror Films:
The Limits of Representation
Summer 2012, MTWThF, 1:00pm – 2:30pm, Belknap

Instructor: L. Andrew Cooper (andrew.cooper@louisville.edu)
Humanities 201A (office: 502-852-8820, dept: 502-852-6805)
Office Hours: W/Th 12-1 and by appointment

Course Description

Enrollment in HUM 624 requires Graduate standing; HUM 524 requires Junior standing.

Filmmakers outside the U.S. often compete with Hollywood, which has long dominated global film markets with its superior production and distribution resources, through films that stretch the boundaries of what mainstream American audiences will tolerate. Until recently, American critics have tended to celebrate boundary-stretching international “art” films, including films that blur traditional distinctions between highbrow and lowbrow genres. At least since the German Expressionist movement of the 1920s, the traditionally lowbrow horror genre has allowed non-U.S. filmmakers to expand what the medium can do. Critical acceptance has wavered, however, since the late 1970s, when horror films from Europe, East Asia (especially Japan), and other regions started to distinguish themselves by emphasizing forms of violence and sexuality that most American filmmakers wouldn’t dare bring to the screen. What sets these films apart isn’t just excessive gore and explicit sex: blood, guts, and skin were common in fringe U.S. markets before the 70s. Instead, the films stand apart because of the particular artistic sensibilities that shape their excessive subjects, finding beauty and significance in the abject. This course grapples with such sensibilities through study of what is sometimes called the “extreme” turn in international horror, films that raise questions about what film can and should represent. Situating these films in a philosophical tradition that dates to the late eighteenth century as well as in current critical debates, we will test the limits of what film can show—and perhaps what you’re willing to watch.

Course Materials

Required Texts

You do not need to purchase a textbook. Required readings are in Blackboard’s Course Documents. Please bring printouts or digital copies (i.e., a way to access files) of readings to class.

Films

The films we watch and discuss in this course are available to rent (Wild and Woolly has all of them), stream, or buy, and some are available at Ekstrom Library. Some might be harder to find, but you must still see them prior to class discussions. Unless class enrollment becomes too large, I will host *optional* film screenings at my home when possible. Although you are not required to purchase copies of the films, you will need 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 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. You must also regularly check your UofL email and review materials on this class's Blackboard site. Portable computing devices (e.g. laptops) are useful in class but not required.

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.

Table 1: Learning Emphases and Outcomes

| Emphases | Outcomes |
|---|--|
| 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. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss longstanding cultural and historical debates about the limits of artistic representation • Use disciplinary and theoretical concepts and terms that help elucidate films' aesthetic and cultural significance • Present arguments using multiple media as well as written, oral, visual, and digital communication |
| 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. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Situate films in specific national traditions while considering their relationships with film as a global medium • Examine the consequences of generic classification on film history and form • Synthesize centuries-spanning trends in philosophy with contemporary aesthetic practices and sensibilities |
| 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). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze sounds, images, and narratives as reflections on and challenges to cultural norms • Expand understanding of basic course concepts through independent research • Advance distinct, debatable claims stemming from knowledge of films and their cultural and historical receptions |

Assignments

The outcomes in Table 1 relate to the assignments in Table 2, which we will discuss during class. The table presents different requirements for undergraduate (HUM 524) and graduate (HUM 624) enrollment. Note that although assignments are less demanding for HUM 524, course materials and discussions will target graduate-level challenges and mastery. Also, students seeking graduate-level credit for HUM 524 must still complete a graduate-level project, the essay as described in the HUM 624 column.

Table 2: Assignments by Course Enrollment

| Category | HUM 524 Requirements | HUM 624 Requirements |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| Blog (100 points) | Briefly respond (one paragraph) to readings and films. Respond to others' blogs. | Briefly defend claims about readings and films. Respond to others' blogs. |
| Presentation (200 points) | Present a digital poster (a single slide/image) that analyzes a series of images that support an argument about an <i>unassigned</i> "landmark" film (see Schedule). | The poster should be appropriate for an academic conference. |
| Essay (500 points) | Link assigned reading to one or two assigned films in an argument that differs from or extends class discussion. 2000 - 2500 words. | Research a thesis about international horror related to your disciplinary focus. 5000+ words. |
| Participation (200 points) | Demonstrate knowledge of readings and films, and share insights. | Support or critique claims with professional rigor. Discuss research trajectory with professor. |

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. You are responsible for all information covered during every class meeting.

Decorum

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, nationality, and sexuality. All viewpoints are welcome, but as individuals express themselves, they should avoid abusive or insulting language.

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 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

The University of Louisville 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

The University of Louisville 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

The University of Louisville 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

Note that “Landmarks” are not assigned films, but they are options for the poster assignment (as well as important historical reference points in the national traditions of the assigned films under which they appear).

| Date | Reading and Viewing Assignments | Due Dates |
|--------------|--|--|
| Tue. July 3 | IN CLASS: selections from de Sade | |
| Wed. July 4 | NO CLASS | |
| Thu. July 5 | <i>Suspiria</i> (Italy, 1977) LANDMARKS: <i>Black Sunday</i> (1960), <i>Blood and Black Lace</i> (1964), <i>Spirits of the Dead</i> (1968), <i>Salo</i> (1975) | |
| Fri. July 6 | DeQuincey, “On Murder” and from <i>Suspiria de...</i> Schneider, “Murder as Art” | |
| Mon. July 9 | Selections from Burke and Kant on the sublime | |
| Tue. July 10 | <i>House by the Cemetery</i> (Italy, 1981) LANDMARKS: <i>Inferno</i> (1980), <i>The Beyond</i> (1981) | |
| Wed. July 11 | Selections from Freud | |
| Thu. July 12 | Selections from Bataille | |
| Fri. July 13 | <i>House</i> (Japan, 1977) LANDMARKS: <i>Ugetsu</i> (1953), <i>Kwaidan</i> (1964), <i>Onibaba</i> (1964), <i>Kuroneko</i> (1968) | |
| Mon. July 16 | Kristeva, from <i>Powers of Horror</i> | |
| Tue. July 17 | Creed, from <i>The Monstrous-Feminine</i> | 624: Meet with prof before now |
| Wed. July 18 | Selections from <i>Horror and Psychoanalysis</i> | |
| Thu. July 19 | <i>Audition</i> (Japan, 1999) and <i>Imprint</i> (Japan/U.S., 2006) LANDMARKS: <i>Guinea Pig</i> (1985), <i>Tetsuo</i> (1989), <i>Ringu</i> (1998) <i>Ju-on</i> (2002) | Blog Check-In (5 entries, respond at least once to each classmate) |
| Fri. July 20 | Foucault, from <i>Discipline and Punish</i> | |
| Mon. July 23 | McRoy, from <i>Japanese Horror Cinema</i> | |
| Tue. July 24 | <i>In a Glass Cage</i> (Spain, 1987) LANDMARKS: <i>The Awful Dr Orloff</i> (1962), <i>Tombs of the Blind Dead</i> (1972) | |
| Wed. July 25 | Hawkins, from <i>Cutting Edge</i> | |
| Thu. July 26 | DIGITAL POSTER GALLERY | Poster Due |
| Fri. July 27 | <i>Martyrs</i> (France, 2008) LANDMARKS: <i>Eyes without a Face</i> (1960), <i>High Tension</i> (2003), <i>Frontier(s)</i> (2007) | |
| Mon. July 30 | Selections from Deleuze | |
| Tue. July 31 | Selections from Powell, <i>Deleuze and the Horror...</i> | |
| Wed. Aug. 1 | <i>Bad Taste</i> (New Zealand, 1987) | |
| Thu. Aug. 2 | Crane, “Scraping Bottom” | |
| Fri. Aug. 3 | <i>Antichrist</i> (Denmark et al., 2008) | |
| Mon. Aug. 6 | <i>A Serbian Film [UNCUT]</i> (Serbia, 2010) | Blog Check-In (5 more entries, at least one more response for each classmate) |
| Tue. Aug. 7 | | Essay Due |

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

I affirm that I have read the entire syllabus and policy sheet for HUM 624/524 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 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