

English 199, Fall 2014  
From Villains to Vampires: Roots of the American Gothic  
Volcanology 101  
Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays 9-9:50

Instructor: Kristy Bryant-Berg PhD

Office Hours: Mondays & Fridays 10:00 a.m.-noon or by appointments

Office Location and Phone: PLC 343, 541-346-3975

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### Course Objectives

This course develops appreciation and understanding of the roots of the American gothic (overlapping into both the mystery and horror genres) that continue to fascinate American audiences today. We will explore the social and psychological underpinnings that motivate these mysterious and horrific stories to explore the submerged cultural anxieties and shifts symbolized within these tales. Each text will be examined, not only individually for accurate comprehension and original interpretation, but also in relation to each other to build an overall sense of how the American gothic tradition addresses and/or suppresses the national sins, fears and values spawning and haunting American culture. Brief lectures, especially regarding the context and conventions of each work and supplementary articles, will be used periodically to provide background about each author's larger work and identify central historical concerns and cultural controversies surrounding each novel, story or film; our class discussions will be geared to inspire development and strengthen support of your unique interpretations through careful attention to form as content and awareness of context.

### English Department Learning Outcomes

English 199 is geared to help students develop and improve the following skills:

- 1) read literary and cultural texts with discernment and comprehension and with an understanding of their conventions
- 2) draw on relevant cultural and/or historical information to situate texts within their cultural, political, and historical contexts
- 3) perform critical, formal analyses of literary, cinematic, and other cultural texts
- 4) write focused, analytical essays in clear, grammatical prose
- 5) employ logic, creativity, and interpretive skills to produce original, persuasive arguments
- 6) employ primary and/or secondary sources, with proper acknowledgment and citation, as they contribute to a critical essay's thesis

### Required Texts

*Dracula* by Bram Stoker

*The Turn of the Screw* by Henry James

*Interview with the Vampire* by Anne Rice

Note: Access to the internet and a University of Oregon web account are requirements of this course because readings, announcements and assignments will be distributed periodically through email and the blackboard class site.

### Course Requirements and Grading

1. Participation in Discussion and Class Activities: Since this class relies heavily on discussion, your participation and attentiveness in class are crucial to your learning, and will affect your grade. Thus, the use of cell phones, mp3 players, iPods, laptops, or any other distracting electronic devices during class will significantly lower your participation grade, and the user of any such device will receive an absence for the day and may be asked to leave. Likewise, carrying on private conversations, reading the newspaper, or working on assignments for other courses do not contribute to attentive participation and will affect your grade accordingly. **Remember to bring the hard copies of assigned readings and relevant materials to class.** The grading schema will be as follows: A – Always comes to class prepared and raises the level of the discourse community through insightful class comments and focused, active listening and outstanding class work; B – Always comes to class prepared and routinely contributes thoughtfully to the discourse community through productive class comments, active listening and class work; C – Comes to class prepared to work and often contributes to the discourse community through pertinent, respectful class comments, active listening and class work; D – Is frequently unprepared for class and does not contribute respectfully to the discourse community or effectively engage in class work; and F – Is almost always unprepared for class and disrupts the discourse community or class work. **On the dates of the panel discussions, each student must share at least one productive response to peer questions in order to be eligible for attendance credit.** If you feel you may have

a legitimate difficulty meeting these expectations, please come see me during the first week of the term. Active participation in discussions and class activities, **combined with occasional reading comprehension/note-taking quizzes**, will represent 10% of your course grade.

2. **Writing Journal:** Journal entries will be due before our class discussions of the assigned readings. These brief writing journal exercises will help you improve your comprehension and retention of the readings, while also organizing and recording your initial thoughts in response to the assigned readings and the interpretations they raise. Although these journal entries are less formal than the assigned essays, your responses will be graded based on five main criteria required for full credit: 1 – They must be written in full sentences; 2 – They must be clear and concise; 3 – They must answer the questions offered in the prompts; 4 – They must reference specifics, such as examples and quotations from the assigned readings; and 5 – They must offer interpretations and analysis of any specific examples and quotes referenced. There will be ten journal entries, each worth 1%, for a total of 10% of your final grade.
3. **Group Report:** This brief in-class report will require you to attend and analyze a relevant film currently available at a local theater (options to be assigned), a haunted corn maze or a haunted house (whichever safe but scary activity fascinates you the most). Analysis will include *brief description* of the reactions of yourself and other viewers/participants in response to this entertainment, *interpretation of its appeal* and *analysis of its meaning*. Which aspects scare viewers/participants and why; how is this small fright enjoyable; and what does this pastime reveal about our culture? In small groups you will share your analysis with the class, as well as submitting an individual two-page written analysis of the experience in relation to our ongoing class discussions. (More guidelines will be distributed at least a week prior to the due date.) This brief report and analytical write-up will be worth 10% of the term grade.
4. **Panel Discussions:** Once during the term, along with one or more of your fellow classmates, you will be required to select a relevant academic article for the class to read and discuss. Together, the student panelists will lead the class discussion of their chosen article to spark debate surrounding the episode/film assigned for the day. These panels must be completed on the specified due dates and a pdf or online version of the selected article will be due Monday 11/17 for advance posting to Blackboard. Each member of the panel will also submit a list of proposed discussion questions, due for instructor approval Wednesday 11/ 19. **In the event that this prep work is not submitted on time, a late penalty (20% of the assignment score)** will be deducted from the overall assignment grade. This panel discussion will be worth 10% of your course grade.
5. **Short Essay (3-4 pages):** This short essay will require a clear thesis supported by careful close reading of assigned passages from one of the first four assigned texts (*Dracula*, either of Poe's short stories, or *Turn of the Screw*) to illuminate the work's symbolic meanings within its cultural context. (15%)
6. **Final Exam:** The final will require both identifications and close reading of brief passages from the three novels and two short stories assigned throughout the term, as well as brief essay questions regarding the materials, primary and secondary, discussed in class over the term. (20%)
7. **Final Essay (5-6 pages):** The final essay will require a clear thesis supported by careful compare-and-contrast analysis of assigned passages from two of the five works (the three novels and two short stories) assigned throughout the term in order to demonstrate how both chosen texts reflect social anxieties and/or burgeoning changes of their time. (25%)

### Policies

1. **Attendance:** More than four unexcused absences will result in the lowering of your final course grade by one grade step (from a B to a B-, for instance) per absence **regardless of the cause**; therefore, it will be your responsibility to budget your absences in case of illness. In addition, please note that class will start promptly, and if you arrive after class begins, you will be considered late. Four late appearances equal one absence and will affect your grade accordingly. If you arrive more than ten minutes late or miss more than ten minutes of class, you will be marked as absent. If you forget the participation policies regarding class conduct and use a cell phone, mp3 player, iPod, laptop, or any other distracting electronic device during class, you will receive one warning via email, and then each instance after will result in an absence for the day, without additional notification. **When you miss a class or are late, it is your responsibility to check with your classmates or myself to find out what you have missed, such as mandatory class activities or announcements regarding schedule changes.**

2. Honesty: **Plagiarism is unacceptable in this class under any circumstances and the University policies regarding plagiarism will be strictly enforced.** All work submitted for this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly documented using MLA format. Please refer to the “Format and Documentation” handout and the summary of the Code of Student Conduct in the *Schedule of Classes*. In cases where plagiarism has been clearly established, the award of an F for the final course grade is the standard practice of the University of Oregon. Please see me if you have any questions about your use of sources. **In the interests of ensuring academic honesty, each of the two essays will need to be submitted to SafeAssign for an anti-plagiarism scan in addition to submitting hardcopies for grading.**
3. Late Work: If you are ill or unable to attend class, I will accept course work delivered by a peer or by email **only** if it is delivered **before** the end of class time on the due date. Because the course is cumulative, **I will not be able to accept late essays!** Therefore, it is better to turn in incomplete work on time rather than nothing at all, as you may at least be eligible for partial credit. Likewise, exams must be taken on the scheduled date and cannot be made up, except in the event that I am promptly notified of a documented medical emergency. In addition, please note that I will not be accepting any computer based excuses. It is your responsibility to start your work early enough so that even if computer problems arise you will still be able to get your work done on time.
4. Format: **All assignments for this course must be typed, double-spaced, and have standard font and size** (Arial or Times New Roman in 11 or 12 point) **and one-inch margins all around.** Please see the “Format and Documentation” handout for complete instructions. Failure to follow any of the formatting guidelines, as specified in the “Format and Documentation” handout, may lower your grade for the assignment at least one full grade (from an A to a B, for instance) or more.
5. Incompletes: No incompletes will be granted except in the case of documented emergency. In the event an undergraduate student is forced to take an Incomplete, she or he will have one calendar year to make up the incomplete mark assigned by a UO faculty member. Failure to make up the Incomplete at the end of one calendar year will result in the mark of “I” automatically changing to a grade of “F” or “N.”
6. Access: The University of Oregon strives to create inclusive learning environments. If you have a disability (physical or learning) which you think may affect your performance in this class, please see me during the first week of the term so we can make arrangements, if necessary, for your full access to all classroom activities. You may also wish to contact Disability Services in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or [disabsrv@uoregon.edu](mailto:disabsrv@uoregon.edu).
7. Registration: The only way to add this class is through DuckWeb.
8. Syllabus: Be sure to read the syllabus carefully, if you have any questions or concerns after reading it please contact me during the first week of class. Your continued enrollment in this class indicates that you understand and accept the expectations and requirements as detailed in this syllabus.
9. Trigger Alert: The required texts that will be examined and discussed in the classwork and assignments for this course involve instances of both violence, such as details of murders, and sexuality, such as scenes of seduction, that some readers/viewers may find disturbing or, otherwise, offensive. Although these instances of violence and sex are fictional, they may resonate painfully with recent victims of real-life trauma and those suffering from psychological conditions like severe depression or recent loss. Please keep in mind your threshold for such fictional content as you consider your enrollment in this course.

Schedule of Events & Due Dates (subject to change at Instructor’s discretion)

Note: All texts (novels, stories, articles, episodes and films) are to be read or screened before the class period for which they are assigned.

Week 1

Monday 9/29 – Review Syllabus and Schedule of Events; Briefly discuss the meaning and appeal of monsters and villains  
Wednesday 10/1 – Journal Entry #1 is due; Class Discussion: *Dracula* (Chapters I-IV); View & Discuss TED talk on the evolution of vampires

Friday 10/3 – Class Discussion: “Vampiric Affinities: Mina Harker and the Paradox of Femininity in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*” (BB = Blackboard)

## Week 2

Monday 10/6 – Journal Entry #2 is due; Class Discussion: *Dracula* (Chapters V-XII); Group Report Sign-Up

Wednesday 10/8 – Class Discussion: “Vampirism and the Degeneration of the Imperial Race” (BB)

Friday 10/10 – Journal Entry #3 is due; Class Discussion: *Dracula* (Chapters XIII –XX); Voter Registration Visit

## Week 3

Monday 10/13 – Journal Entry #4 is due; Class Discussion: *Dracula* (Chapters XXI-end); Group Report Handout

Wednesday 10/15 – Journal Entry #5 is due; Class Discussion: “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” (BB)

Friday 10/17 – Class Discussion: “Amalgamation Discourses and the Race Riots of 1838 in Poe’s Philadelphia” (BB)

## Week 4

Monday 10/20 – Journal Entry #6 is due; Class Discussion: *The Turn of the Screw*

Wednesday 10/22 – Journal Entry #7 is due; Class Discussion: *The Turn of the Screw*; Group Report #1 (Film)

Friday 10/24 – Class Discussion: Excerpts from “Turning the Screw of Interpretation” (BB)

## Week 5

Monday 10/27 – Class Discussion: “The Fall of the House of Usher” (BB); Group Report #2 (Maze)

Wednesday 10/29 – Class Discussion: “The Biology of Blood Lust: Medieval Medicine, Theology and the Vampire Jew” (BB); Analyze clips from Murnau’s *Nosferatu*

Friday 10/31 – Workshop: **Outline & Thesis for Short Essay are due in class for Peer Review**

## Week 6

Monday 11/3 – Journal Entry #8 is due; Class Discussion: *Interview with the Vampire*; Group Report #3 (Haunted House)

Wednesday 11/5 – Class Discussion: “The Dark Gift: Vampires in the AIDS Era” (BB)

Friday 11/7 – Class Discussion: *Interview with the Vampire*; **Short Essay is due**

## Week 7

Monday 11/10 – Journal Entry #9 is due; Class Discussion: *Interview with the Vampire*; Group Report #4 (Film)

Wednesday 11/12 – Library Tutorial to find articles for panels

Friday 11/14 – Class Discussion: “Vamping up Sex; Audience, Age, & Portrayals of Sexuality in Vampire Narratives” (BB)

## Week 8

Monday 11/17 – Workshop: Develop discussion questions about student-selected articles for panels

Wednesday 11/ 19 – Journal Entry #10 is due; Class Discussion: *Interview with the Vampire*; Analyze clips (1994 film)

Friday 11/ 21 – Workshop: **Outline & Thesis for Long Essay are due in class for Peer Review**

## Week 9

Monday 11/24 – Panel Discussion of student-selected article on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*\* (episode TBA)

Wednesday 11/26 – Panel Discussion of student-selected article on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (episode TBA)

Friday 11/28 – Panel Discussion of student-selected article on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (episode TBA)

## Week 10

Monday 12/1– Panel Discussion of student-selected article on *The Twilight Saga: New Moon*\*

Wednesday 12/3 – Panel Discussion of student-selected article on *The Twilight Saga: New Moon*

Friday 12/5 – Panel Discussion of student-selected article on *The Twilight Saga: New Moon*; **Long Essay is due**

**Thursday 12/11: Final Exam (10:15 a.m. – noon)**

\*Available at the Course Reserve Desk of Knight Library for use in viewing rooms.