FLR 199  (Winter 2012)
Talking to Monsters: Monsters, Folklore and Cultural Politics

Day/time
CRN 26043
125 Living Learning Center North
3 credits

Dr. Roger Adkins
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Office hrs by appt: (541) 346-3207
125 Living Learning Center North
3 credits
333 Oregon Hall (has reception)

Course Description:
This course will critically engage with folk and pop-cultural representations of the ‘monstrous Other,’ including such examples as the undead, the fantastic (for example, trolls), and the proper monster. We will examine films and works of literature as well as readings from diverse areas related to folklore, including history, anthropology, and cultural studies. We will approach the notion of the ‘monstrous’ from a critical perspective informed by an understanding of historical, cultural, and political forces that contribute to the ‘monsterization’ of the Other. We will also interrogate the concepts of the ‘monstrous’ and the ‘Other’ in relation to each other, examining from multiple perspectives the human need for monsters that lurk around the edges of our world.

Course Structure:
This course will use a mixed format, combining instructor presentations, small and large group discussions, in-class activities and exercises, in- and out-of-class writing assignments, film screenings, and guest speakers. Taken together, these diverse activities will help create an experiential course in which we can start to critique the many faces of “the monstrous” found in our folkloric, literary, and cultural heritage. We will also spend some time in writing workshops, which will give students a chance to assist each other in improving their written projects for the course.

Academic Integrity:
It is expected that any written work submitted for grading for this course will be entirely a student’s own work. If within the body of the paper you have advanced arguments or cited examples that you have found in your wider reading, while researching the Internet, or from any other place, then you are required to identify these sources both with in-text citations and in a formal bibliography (MLA style). Failure to acknowledge any source may leave you open to the charge of plagiarism and at the very least failure to secure a grade for this class.

Attendance:
Because this is a seminar in which part of your responsibility as a student is the in-class discussions and activities, every class (whether meeting on- or off-site) must be attended. Absence will only be accepted on grounds of sickness or personal emergency, and I must be notified in advance in person (by phone or email). Any absence not for sickness or emergency will affect your grade.

Disabilities:
Students who have documented disabilities requiring accommodation in this course should provide me with a specific request for which exact accommodations are requested, together with documentation that said accommodations are approved for you by the Accessible Education Center. Ideally, this information should come no later than the end of the first week.
Assessments (Course Requirements):

1. Participation and Engagement (20%)
Participation and Engagement will be a composite grade based on ongoing activities:
   - “Engagement” may be understood as a range of activities, including but not limited to: active listening and observation, thoughtful inquiry (including asking for clarification), sharing your own thoughts/ideas/experiences, engaged nonverbal communication (eye contact, nodding, and other appropriate gestures). It also includes a few short writing exercises conducted in class as well as the Exquisite Corpse Project. (5%)
   - An online course response journal in Blackboard, with critical and personal responses to the readings, films, discussions, etc., and your questions about the course. You should write an average of two short entries (<250 words each) per week. I will respond to your entries as frequently as possible, in order to foster a one-on-one student/instructor dialogue. Journal entries will not be graded for spelling, grammar, etc. (10%)
   - Very short pop reading response quizzes at the start of class (2 or more times, 5%)

2. Three Short Critical Essays (10% each = 30%)
Each student will write three short, critical essays of 750 to 1000 words, double-spaced. A range of prompts will be provided for each of these essays, and you will select one of these prompts as your essay topic in each case. In general, these essays will address readings in this course in a comparative manner and/or will require application of concepts from our discussion and the theories we explore, to an examination of one or more of the text(s). The essays may be revised (for re-grading) once after the initial grading, and turned in again no later than 5pm on Thursday, March 22. This draft system is intended to allow for learning and improvement. We will also have in-class writing workshops for the first two essays.

3. Creative Blog Project (30%)
Each student will also maintain a course blog with multiple entries related to the course content. Details will be posted in Blackboard during the first week of the course.

4. Take-home final exam (20%)
Finally, each student will complete a written final examination that will be administered on a take-home basis. This exam will consist of several different types of questions, including “multiple choice with defense of answer” and essay questions, and students will be able to choose, from several options, which questions they would like to answer. The exam will be due in Blackboard by 5:00 pm on the day of the scheduled examination time, Monday, March 19.

Grading Scale:

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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>98+</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>86-88.99</td>
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<td>C+</td>
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<td>69-71.99</td>
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<td>D-</td>
<td>59-61.99</td>
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Required Texts:

One book needed (available used online and at Smith Family Bookstore on 13th):
• John Gardner, Grendel

Available online (links available from the Blackboard site):
• Selected readings as shown below

We will also be using online resources owned or shared by the UO, such as:
• The Medieval Bestiary: Animals in the Middle Ages: http://www.bestiary.ca/
• The Book of Beasts: http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/HistSciTech/subcollections/BestiaryAbout.html
• Monsters in art and architecture in the Oregon Digital Collection (link in Blackboard)

Lastly, we will be utilizing an array of additional online resources, including:
• YouTube and other similar clips
• Internet-based articles
• Social media, such as Facebook

Course Schedule.

Week 1:
1 Introduction to the Course: What Is a Monster?
   Exercises
2 Framing the Discussion: Why Do We Need Monsters?
   R: Dendle, “Cryptozoology in the Medieval and Modern Worlds”
   R: Cohen, “Monster Culture (Seven Theses)”

Week 2:
1 **MLK Holiday – NO CLASS
   MLK Day of Service – get involved:
   http://serve.uoregon.edu/Students/ServicePrograms/mlkday.aspx
2 Will the Real Monster Please Stand Up, Part 1: Civil Disobedience vs. Oppression
   R: King, “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”
   R: Storing, “The Case Against Civil Disobedience”

Week 3:
1 Hybridities and the Boundaries of the Human: The Medieval Monster
   R: Paré, “The Causes of Monsters”
2 Writing Workshop #1
   Friday DUE: (by 8pm) Critical Essay #1

Week 4:
1 Talking to the Monster
   R: Jakobsson, “Talking to the Dragon”
2 The Monster Solidifies Its Place in the English Literary Canon: Beowulf
   R: Beowulf
Week 5:
1. Library & Mills Archives
2. (Instructor ill/free day)

Week 6:
1. **The Monster Talks Back: Grendel**
   R: Gardner, *Grendel*
2. **Will the Real Monster Please Stand Up, Part 2: Occupy vs. the Corporation**
   R: Mainwaring, “Occupy Wall Street: The Id of the Liberal Elite”
   V: Watch before class “The Corporation” (linked in Blackboard, 2 hrs., 24 min.)

Week 7:
1. **Writing Workshop #2**
   *In-class exercises*
2. **Gender in/as the Monstrous**
   R: Few, “‘That Monster of Nature’: Gender, Sexuality, and the Medicalization of a ‘Hermaphrodite’ in Late Colonial Guatemala”
   Friday **DUE:** (by 8pm) Critical Essay #2

Week 8:
1. **Monsters, Fantasy and Fascism**
   *Screen in class: Pan’s Labyrinth*
2. **Monsters, Fantasy and Fascism, cont’d/**
   R: Zipes, Review of Pan’s Labyrinth

Week 9:
1. **The Golem and the Superhero**
   R: Weiner, “Marvel Comics and the Golem Legend”
2. **Zombies on Celluloid**
   V: TBA
   Friday **DUE:** (by 8pm) Critical Essay #3

Week 10:
1. **Postmodern Monsters 1: The Posthuman Hybrid**
   R: Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto”
2. **Postmodern Monsters 2: The Posthuman World**
   V: TBA

*Exam Week (no in-person meetings; items due by online submission):*
Monday, March 19 **DUE:** Take-Home Final Exam (by 5 pm)
Thursday, March 22 **DUE:** Any final revisions of Critical Essays 1, 2, or 3 (by 5 pm)