

Women's Studies 527
Studies in Women and Cinema
Autumn, 2003
Topic: Women and the Horror Film
Prof. L. Mizejewski, 286 University Hall, phone 292-1021
Office hours: Wed 1-3 and by appointment
email: WebCT only

Texts: Barry Grant, ed., Dread of Difference
Zip Publishing packet

Course description: Early feminist film theory criticized the horror film as a misogynist genre that punished female sexuality and identified women with monsters. But recent feminist film critics have produced more complicated explorations of this genre's renditions of difference, sexuality, race, disability, and reproduction. This course draws on this new criticism to focus on the slasher tradition (Frankenstein through Scream), female monstrosity (Cat People, Carrie), and issues of motherhood (Alien, Rosemary's Baby). Our topics will include female spectatorship, the impact of gender on genre, and psycho/sexual theories of horror.

Goals: The purpose of the course is to provide students with the strategies of feminist film theory and feminist theories of the horror film, as well as to provide them with training in the close reading of film texts. By the end of this course, students should be able to produce in the course paper a sophisticated analysis and interpretation of a film based on the theories studied in this class.

WebCT: The syllabus for this course and the Power Point presentations, as well as other material that might prove useful, will be available on the WebCT. This is also your email route for me, so that mail for this course doesn't get lost in my other email. To use WebCT: Open your web browser, and go to this address (URL):<http://class.osu.edu>. To log in, use the same username and password you use to check your OSU e-mail and to check your grades online. If your username contains a hyphen (-), include it (for example, doe-jones.999). When entering your username, be certain caps lock is off and that you type it all in lowercase. If you have an OSU Internet username in a format other than name.#, please contact the Help Desk (688-HELP or via e-mail to webct@osu.edu). Once you've successfully logged in, your 'myWebCT' screen appears. All the WebCT courses you have on the OIT 'class.osu.edu' server are listed. To enter a course, click on its name.

Grading and course requirements for undergraduates:

--**Attendance is required!** Final grade goes down one-half grade (B to B-) with every two unexcused absences.

--**Final exam**, 25% of final grade. YOU MUST AVERAGE A PASSING GRADE (D or 65%) ON THE FINAL EXAM TO PASS THIS COURSE; TO DO THIS, REGULAR ATTENDANCE IS HIGHLY RECOMMENDED. The final exam will cover films, readings, and

class material and will consist of multiple choice questions of the type used for the quizzes, as well as definitions of terms and theories discussed in class.

--**Five quizzes:** 25% of final grade. These multiple-choice quizzes will be given at the beginning of the class on the dates marked in the syllabus and will include the material due for that day's class. No make-up quizzes will be given. Instead, I will drop the lowest grade, giving everyone one chance to be absent or otherwise incapacitated.

--**Midterm essay:** 25% of final grade. This essay is a comparison-contrast of two essays you will read for class, Tony Williams' "Trying to Survive" and Carol Clover's "Her Body, Himself" This paper asks you to describe their debate about slasher films and comment on it. What are Clover's and Williams's main ideas? What do you think are the chief weaknesses and strengths of each essay? On what points do they agree? What are the main points of Williams's quarrel with Clover? Finally, where do you fall in this debate? In your concluding paragraphs, join the conversation with your own evaluation of this argument and how it affects your reading of Halloween. For short quotations for this assignment, use internal citation. I.e. Clover claims that "pornography . . . has to do with sex . . . and horror with gender" (69). **NOTE CORRECT PUNCTUATION.** Also, include a bibliography at the end that cites the two essays you used. See the bibliography in your ZIP packet for the correct format of bibliographical entries.

--**Course paper due last day of class or at final exam (4-5 pp):** 25% of final grade. This assignment asks you to write a paper on the model of Elizabeth's Young's essay, "Here Comes the Bride." That is, it should map out a psychoanalytic reading of the film as well as a cultural-studies (historical/social) reading. Your midterm essay is also a preparation for this paper, because it similarly examines two different theoretical modes of analysis. Your topic will be a horror film which you would like to study on your own and one which we have NOT discussed in class or in the anthology. You should NOT be doing additional research for this. Your only sources for the theories should be the essays used in class. Cite page numbers as described above for the short paper. For the cultural part of this essay, you need to point out what elements of the film would come under question and what kinds of social/historical questions you think this film raises. That is, you are not expected to be an expert in the era or social period of the film. If you hand in the paper on the last day of class, I will grade it with comments and return it on the day of the final. Papers collected on the day of the final exam will not be returned.

Highly recommended for film paper:

H20 (the final Halloween)

Alien Resurrection

Scream

Blair Witch Project

The Ring

Jeepers Creepers

If you have another preference for a course paper, you must clear it with me first.

Requirement and grading for graduate students: Graduate students will take the quizzes (25%) and write the midterm essay (25%) according to the guidelines above. The course paper (25%) will be more substantial and more researched, ideally 8-10 pages and suitable for a conference presentation. In addition, graduate students will read one additional book and write a

3-4 page scholarly book review, (25%) due Nov. 6. Examples of scholarly book reviews can be found on the internet, where Film Quarterly posts its reviews. Search for “Film Quarterly book reviews.” You will need to order your book choice on your own:

Rhona Berenstein, Attack of the Leading Ladies: Gender, Sexuality, and Spectatorship in Classic Horror Cinema (1996)

Carol Clover, Men, Women, and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film (1992)

Barbara Creed, The Monstrous Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis (1993)

Reynold Humphries, The American Horror Film: An Introduction (2002)

Plagiarism: As defined in University Rule 3335-31-02, plagiarism is “the representation of another’s works or ideas as one’s own; it includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person’s work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person’s ideas.” Plagiarism is one of the most serious offenses that can be committed in an academic community; as such, it is the obligation of this department and its instructors to report **all** cases of suspected plagiarism to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. After the report is filed, a hearing takes place and if the student is found guilty, the possible punishment ranges from failing the class to suspension or expulsion from the university. Although the existence of the Internet makes it relatively easy to plagiarize, it also makes it even easier for instructors to find evidence of plagiarism. It is obvious to most teachers when a student turns in work that is not his or her own and plagiarism search engines make documenting the offense very simple. Always cite your sources (your professor can help with this); always ask questions **before** you turn in an assignment if you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism; always see your professor if you are having difficulty with an assignment. To preserve the integrity of OSU as an institution of higher learning, to maintain your own integrity, and to avoid jeopardizing your future, **DO NOT PLAGIARIZE!**

Accommodation of students with disabilities. Students who need to have an accommodation for disability are responsible for contacting the professor and TA as soon as possible. The Office for Disability Services (150 Pomerene Hall; 292-3307; 292-0901 TDD) verifies the need for accommodations and assists in the development of accommodation strategies.

SCHEDULE:

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| Sept. 25 | Introduction; clip from <u>Scream 2</u>
Screening: Whale, <u>Frankenstein</u> (1931) |
| Sept. 30 | Grant, “Introduction”
Screening: Whale, <u>Bride of Frankenstein</u> (1935) |
| Oct. 2 | Young, "Here Comes the Bride" (QUIZ includes today’s reading) |

- Oct. 7 Freud, "The Uncanny" (in ZIP packet)
Screening: Hitchcock, Psycho (1960)
- Oct. 9 Hemmeter, "Horror Beyond the Camera" (in ZIP packet)
- Oct. 14 Williams, "When the Woman Looks"
Screening: DePalma, Dressed to Kill (1980)
- Oct. 16 Williams, "Film Bodies" (in ZIP packet) (**QUIZ includes today's reading**)
- Oct. 21 Tony Williams, "Trying to Survive"
Screening: Carpenter, Halloween (1978)
- Oct. 23 Clover, "Her Body, Himself" **MIDTERM ESSAY DUE**
- Oct. 28 Screening: Candyman (1992)
- Oct. 30 Briefel and Ngai, "Candyman: Urban Space, Fear, and Entitlement," ZIP packet
- Nov. 4 Screening: Alien (1978)
Doherty, "Genre, Gender and the Alien trilogy"
(**QUIZ on readings for today and Oct. 30**)
- Nov. 6 Creed, "Abject Horror" (**grad students' book reviews due**)
- Nov. 11 HOLIDAY—NO CLASS
- Nov. 13 Screening: Browning, Freaks (1932)
Cahill and Norden, "Violence, Women, and Disability" (Zip packet).
- Nov. 18 Screening: DePalma, Carrie (1976)
- Nov. 20 Lindsey, "Horror, Femininity" (**QUIZ includes today's reading**)
- Nov. 25 Screening: Roeg, Don't Look Now (1973)
- Nov. 27 THANKSGIVING, NO CLASS
- Dec. 2 Screening: Polanski, Rosemary's Baby (1968)
- Dec. 4 Fischer, "Birth Traumas"
Sobchak, "Bringing it All Back Home" (**QUIZ on today's reading**)
Final papers due for those wanting comments

Dec. 10

FINAL EXAM AND FINAL PAPERS DUE