

**AMERICAN HORRORS:
Horror Films and Textual Literacy**
Arts & Sciences 1138., Freshman Seminar**
1 Semester-hour Credit
Day/Time Room

Instructor

Dr. Beth A. Kattelman

Office

119D Thompson Library

Phone

614-688-3305

e-mail

kattelman.1@osu.edu

Office Hours

Thursday 9 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. and by appointment

Course Description

This course examines the way in which horror films and associated documents such as advertisements and press books can be analyzed and mined for information through close readings. Students will watch influential American horror films and analyze them as cultural texts, noting how the cultural climate in America influenced their creation and reception. The course also provides a focus on information literacy surrounding visual and written texts and the importance of resource authority.

Films will be watched outside of class. Class periods will consist primarily of discussions of the films and the assigned readings.

****You need to be “o.k.” watching horror films in order to take this class. Some of the films you will be required to watch and the texts you will be required to read contain extreme violence, profanity and sexual situations ****

Course Objectives

1. To help students gain information literacy in analyzing video and written texts.
2. To give students practice in offering useful commentary and feedback through brief, in-class, written reactions to a question posed by the professor. Emphasis will be on presenting ideas clearly and cogently.
3. To offer students an opportunity to practice primary and secondary resource analysis and writing skills.
4. To expose students to seminal films of the horror genre which both reflect and have influenced American culture

Readings - (may be updated as the course progresses)

- Cohen-Almagor, Raphael. Part of Chapter 5, "Reader's Responsibility," in *Confronting the Internet's Dark Side*, Washington D.C.: Cambridge UP, 2015, 136 - 146
- Craig, Olga. "Chatmates watched internet suicide." *The Telegraph*, Feb. 9, 2003.
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/1421554/Chatmates-watched-internet-suicide.html>. Accessed 4/27/2016.
- Cull, Nick. "The Exorcist." *History Today*, 50.5: 46-51.
- Edelstein, David. "Now Playing at Your Local Multiplex: Torture Porn." *New York Magazine*, 28 Jan. 2006.
- Wee, Valerie. "Resurrecting and Updating the Teen Slasher: The Case of *Scream*." *Journal of Popular Film & Television* 34 (2006): 50-61.
- Woodward, Kenneth. "The Exorcism Frenzy." *Newsweek* 11 Feb. 1974: 60-66.
- Worland, Rick. "Introduction: Undying Monsters," in *The Horror Film: An Introduction*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007. 7-15.
- Worland, Rick. "Horror in the Age of Anxiety: *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*." in *The Horror Film: An Introduction*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007, 193-207.

All required readings will be available through the class's CARMEN site.

Films

- Nightmares in Red White and Blue* (Monument, 2009)
- Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Siegel, 1956)
- Psycho* (Hitchcock, 1960)
- Night of the Living Dead* (Romero, 1968)
- The Exorcist* (Friedkin, 1973)
- The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (Hooper, 1974)
- Dawn of the Dead* (Romero, 1978)
- Scream* (Craven, 1996)
- Saw* (Wan, 2004)
- Unfriended* (Gabriadze, 2014)

All films will be on closed reserve at the Thompson Library and are also available at the public library and on Netflix.

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is critical. If you are unable to attend class for any reason, you are expected to provide official documentation of the reason for your absence in order to be excused (doctor's note, etc.). You are responsible for the work missed during your absence. As the instructor, I reserve the right to decide whether an absence is excused or unexcused.

More than two unexcused absences will result in failure (“U”) for the course. This class primarily consists of discussion, so participation is of utmost importance—and you can’t participate if you’re not here!

Coming to class late or leaving class early is unacceptable. Persistent tardiness or early departure (three times) will result in an absence. If you have special circumstances that make it necessary for you to miss part of a class you must make arrangements with me **PRIOR TO THAT CLASS** in order for it to be excused. If you miss part of class and it is unexcused, I will not accept work that was to be turned in or completed in class that day. (For example – if you come and do the response paper but leave class early, your paper won’t be accepted.) Your grade will be affected.

It is your responsibility to abide by the attendance policy as laid out in this syllabus. If you have any questions, let me know right away.

Class participation

The quality of our seminar depends upon your participation. It is expected that you will have completed the required assignments for each class so that you can take an active part in discussions. In order to earn participation points for a class, you must make well-thought-out contributions to the discussion. Quality is more important than quantity – but it is expected that you will actively participate in every class.

In order to avoid interrupting class, please turn off all laptops and cell phones.

Assignments

Film watching and reading

Each week you will watch a film outside of class and/or will complete readings which will be discussed in the following class.

In-class Written Responses

Most class periods will begin with you writing a brief paragraph in response to a question that I will pose or issue that I will ask you to consider. These written responses will be used to spark discussion surrounding the issues raised by the film/text that you have engaged with for that week. They will be turned in and will eventually count for 40% of your grade. More specifics of expectations surrounding these written responses will be provided in class.

Final Paper – 4-page Analysis of film of student’s choice

Each student will choose an American horror film that we have not watched for class and will write a 4-page analysis of how that film reflects the cultural milieu of its time. More details on final paper will be provided in class.

Grading

Grading for this class will be S/U

Participation – 30%

In Class Written Responses – 40%

Group Presentation – 10%

Final Paper 20%

You must earn at least 80% of the total 100 points in order to receive a grade of S.

Academic Misconduct

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct (http://studentlife.osu.edu/pdfs/csc_12-31-07.pdf).

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>.

Biographical Statement

I am an Associate Professor in the University Libraries and the Theatre Department My research interests are in the area of the history of magic and conjuring and horror entertainments. My current research interests are in the history of magic and conjuring, theatre technologies and horror entertainments. I have received both the Annual Teaching Excellence Award and the Annual Research Excellence Award from the University Libraries. I have extensive experience teaching undergraduates from serving as the administrator for the Introduction to Theatre class, to teaching script analysis, directing, and horror film history classes. I have published reviews and essays in numerous journals including, *Horror Studies*, *Theatre Journal*, and *Theatre Survey*. I am the co-editor (with Magda Hodalska) of a book entitled *The Rhetoric and (Re)Presentation of Fear, Horror and Terror* (Interdisciplinary Press, 2014), and I am currently working on an essay about William Castle's film *Macabre* that will be included in a book to be published in 2017.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Week 1 – Topic: American Horrors

Introduce Syllabus

Discuss Visual Literacy and Film Analysis

Watch part of *The American Nightmare* in class

Week 2 – Topic: Horror, Terror and other Terms

For this class READ: “Introduction: Undying Monsters,” in Rick Worland, *The Horror Film: An Introduction*, Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007. [**only need to read pages 7-15.**]

Explore film terms in glossary through watching film clips (glossary to be handed out in class)

Discuss primary vs. secondary sources and source validity

Week 3 – Topic: Nuclear Fears

For this class WATCH: *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1954)

For this class READ: “Horror in the Age of Anxiety: *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*.” in Rick Worland, *The Horror Film: An Introduction*, Malden, MA: Blackwell, 193-207.

Discuss the Social Anxieties of the 50s

Week 4 – Topic: The Killer Next Door

For this class WATCH: *Psycho* (1960)

Discuss Psychological Terrors and the Nuclear Family

Discuss Final Paper

Week 5 – Topic: Zombies Have Something to Say

For this class WATCH: *Night of the Living Dead* (1968)

Discuss Youth Rebellion and Civil Rights

Week 6 – Topic: Death and Consumerism

For this class WATCH: *Dawn of the Dead* (1978)

Discuss Consumerism and Self-Interest

Week 7 – Topic: Behind the Door

For this class WATCH: *The Exorcist* (1973)

For this class READ: Woodward, Kenneth. “The Exorcism Frenzy.” *Newsweek* 11 Feb. 1974: 60-66. and Cull, Nick. “The Exorcist.” *History Today*, 50.5: 46-51.

Discuss horror marketing and advertising

Explore Exorcist press book in preparation for next week’s in class assignment

Week 8 – Topic: Press Explorations

Do group work on press books from the Theatre Research Institute Collection. More details will be provided in class

Week 9 – Topic: Group Presentations

Share group findings from press book project.

Week 10 – Topic: What Does Horror Sound Like?

For this class WATCH: *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974)

Discuss how music and sound effects reception through an examination of the score and soundscapes of various films such as *Psycho*, *Halloween*, *The Exorcist*, *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, and others.

Week 11 – Topic: The Final Girl

For this class WATCH: *Scream* (1996)

For this class READ: Wee, Valerie. “Resurrecting and Updating the Teen Slasher: The Case of *Scream*.” *Journal of Popular Film & Television* 34 (2006): 50-61.

Discuss Gender and Horror Films

Week 12 – Topic: Internet Horrors

For this class WATCH: *Unfriended* (2014)

For this class READ: Craig, Olga. “Chatmates watched internet suicide.” *The Telegraph*, Feb. 9, 2003. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/1421554/Chatmates-watched-internet-suicide.html>. Accessed 4/27/2016 AND Cohen-Almagor, Raphael. Part of Chapter 5, “Reader’s Responsibility,” in *Confronting the Internet’s Dark Side*, Washington D.C.: Cambridge UP, 2015, 136 - 146,

Discuss social media, cyberbullying and suicide

Week 13 – Topic: Moral Dilemmas

For this class WATCH: *Saw* (2004)

For this class READ: Edelstein, David. “Now Playing at Your Local Multiplex: Torture Porn.” *New York Magazine*, 28 Jan. 2006. Discuss the rise of “torture porn” films

Week 14 – Topic: Reflections of Now?

For this class WATCH: *Nightmares in Red, White and Blue*

Discuss the Current Landscape of Horror

Final Paper Due during exam week