

Horror in Film and Literature

Spring 2020
SLA 369/RES 369/ENG 247/Distribution Area LA
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:30 - 2:50
McCosh 2

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Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:00-1:00, and by appointment
East Pyne 038

Horror has clawed its way into critical recognition, but continues to challenge our understandings of genre, technique, and the purpose of art. Diverse and often entwined with the sibling genres of science fiction, fantasy, and magical realism, this paradoxical and often-reviled art form has persisted and evolved through the centuries and continues to flourish. Why do we want to be scared, and how does horror scare us? How does horror work – what are its internal rules and contradictions?

In this course, we will examine the horror genre through works of literature and film with a focus on Russian-language works in dialogue with key works of the English-language tradition. We will also discuss the role of readers, viewers, and critics in forming our understandings of horror and the dialogues around its reception. Students will be asked to examine how and why the works under discussion do or do not function as horror and will develop their own approaches to understanding horror and genre more broadly.

All texts will be provided in English; films will be given with English subtitles.

Course Requirements and Grade Calculation:

1. 4 short response papers (~1 page) (15% total)
2. One short essay (4-5 pages) (20%)
3. 10-minute class presentation (15%)
4. Final essay, 8-10 pages (30%)
5. Participation (20%)

Attendance and participation:

The success of this course depends on your participation and your contributions to discussion, so it is important that you read the required texts (including weekly 1-page syllabi) and participate during our sessions. One absence will be allowed without penalty; further absences without communication will affect your participation grade. **You may make up for one absence by attending one film screening** (you may also write a response to the film as one of your short

response papers). While attendance is important, I fully understand that extenuating circumstances, illness, etc., are a part of life, and will strive not to penalize you for being human. Please let me know as soon as possible about any circumstances which may affect your attendance, and I will do my best to work with you on ways you can make up your participation grade in other ways.

Attendance at office hours is not required but is highly encouraged; I am available to consult regarding response papers, essays, and presentations. Please stop by, with or without a reason!

Accessibility:

Any student needing academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to present authorization from the Office of Disability Services (ODS) (ods@princeton.edu). Requests for academic accommodation for this course must be made at the beginning of the semester (or as soon as possible for newly approved students) and at least two weeks in advance in order to arrange for it. Please make an appointment to meet with me in order to maintain confidentiality in addressing your needs.

I recognize that students have accessibility needs that may not be covered by ODS requirements and aim to make this course as accessible as possible for all students. If there is an accommodation that will improve your ability to engage with the course material or class discussion or improve your experience of this course, please do not hesitate to let me know and I will do my best to work with you on finding an accommodation that works for you. I am happy to consider various options based on your situation and needs.

Content Notes/Warnings:

Since this class concerns horror fiction, we will be reading, viewing, and discussing works containing violent, gory, and disturbing elements. A document is available on the course website with specific content notes for each work and you may reference it if you wish. If you have any specific elements you would like me to flag ahead of time for you, let me know and I will do so as best I can.

Required books:

Shiver collection, Junji Ito (Week 5)

Frankenstein, Mary Shelley (Simon and Schuster) (Week 7)

Roadside Picnic, Arkady and Boris Strugatsky (Week 8)

These texts are available at Labyrinth; all other readings will be posted to Blackboard. Please let me know about any issues you may have accessing the readings.

Academic Integrity:

You are encouraged to consult with your peers and with me regarding your ideas for essays, but your submitted written work must be your own. You must cite any sources (books, articles, websites, lectures, videos, etc.) that have contributed to your work. Please review Princeton's policy on Academic Honesty.

Course Schedule:

Week 1: What is Horror?

Tues, Feb. 4: Anna Starobinets, "To a Good Home"; Julio Cortázar, "The Axolotl"

Thurs, Feb. 6: Noël Carroll, excerpts from *Paradoxes of the Heart*; Fedor Sologub, "The Dog"

Week 2: Gothic I

Tues., Feb. 11: Nikolai Karamzin, "The Island of Bornholm"; Edmund Burke, excerpts from *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*; Anonymous, "Terrorist Novel Writing"; Fred Botting, excerpts from *Gothic*

Thurs., Feb. 13: Mikhail Zagoskin, "The Devils' Concert"; Vladimir Odoevsky, excerpts from *Russian Nights*

Week 3: Gothic II

Tues., Feb. 18: Alexander Pushkin, "The Queen of Spades," "The Undertaker"; E. Nesbit, "The Ebony Frame"

Thurs., Feb. 20: Nikolai Gogol, "The Terrible Vengeance," *Viy*; *The Terrible Vengeance* (1988, short animated film – ~20 min)

Optional film screening: *What We Do in the Shadows* (2014), dir. Taika Waititi

Week 4: Horror and Language

Tues, Feb. 25: Edgar Allan Poe, "The Tell-Tale Heart," "The Cask of Amontillado"; Jane Hodson, excerpts from "Gothic and the Language of Terror"

Thurs., Feb. 27: H.P. Lovecraft, "The Colour out of Space"; Jerome Bixby, "It's a Good Life"

Week 5: Visual Storytelling

Tues., March 3: *Master Designer* (1987), dir. Oleg Teptsov; Alexander Blok, "The Commander's Steps"

Thurs., March 5: Junji Ito, "Shiver", "Marionette Mansion", "The Long Dream" (in *Shiver* collection)

Week 6: All in the Mind

Tues., March 10: Anton Chekhov, "The Black Monk"; Gabriela Santiago, "None of This Ever Happened"; Tzvetan Todorov, excerpt, *The Fantastic*

Thurs., March 12: Joyce Carol Oates, "The Premonition"; John Aikin and Anna Laetitia Aikin, "On the Pleasure Derived From Objects of Terror"

[Spring Break: March 14-22]

Week 7: Horror and Science Fiction I

Tues., March 24: Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, through Chapter 10

Thurs., March 26: Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

Optional film screening: *Young Frankenstein* (1974), dir. Mel Brooks

Week 8: Horror and Science Fiction II

Tues., March 31: Arkady and Boris Strugatsky, *Roadside Picnic*

Thurs., April 2: *Stalker* (1979), dir. Andrei Tarkovsky

Week 9: Horror and Fantasy

Tues., April 7: Angela Carter, "The Bloody Chamber"; Rosemary Jackson, excerpts from *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*

Thurs., April 9: Caitlin R. Kiernan, "A Child's Guide to the Hollow Hills," "The Prayer of Ninety Cats"; Jorge Luis Borges, "The House of Asterion," "The Library of Babel"

Optional film screening: *Kwaidan* (1965), dir. Masaki Kobayashi

Week 10: Horror and Society

Tues., April 14: Ursula K. Le Guin, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas"; N. K. Jemisin, "The Ones Who Stay and Fight"; Liudmila Petrushevskaya, "The Arm"

Thurs., April 16: *Get Out* (2017), dir. Jordan Peele

Week 11: Bodies of Horror

Thurs., April 21: Octavia Butler, "Bloodchild"; Clive Barker, "Jacqueline Ess: Her Will and Testament"

Thurs., April 23: Susan Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamounix"; Anna Starobinets, "The Parasite"

Week 12: Highbrow, Lowbrow, Cult

Tues., April 28: *Re-Animator* (1985), dir. Stuart Gordon; selection of cult film trailers.

Thurs., April 30: *Plan 9 From Outer Space* (1959), dir. Ed Wood; Murray Leeder, excerpts from *Horror Film: A Critical Introduction*; conclusion.

DEAN'S DATE: MAY 12; FINAL ESSAYS DUE