

# Horror in Film and Literature

Spring 2021

SLA 369/RES 369/ENG 247

Zoom class: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:30 - 2:50

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Zoom office hours: Thursdays, 3-4 PM, and by appointment

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? Can we use horror to understand our world and the challenges facing us?

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. Participation (includes weekly classes and forum posts): 30%
2. One 10-minute in-class presentation: 15%
3. Four short response papers (~1 page): 15%
4. One short essay (4-5 pages): 20%
5. Final paper (8-10 pages): 25%

## **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:**

I aim to prioritize accessibility in this course and commit to working towards making this course as accessible as possible for all students. The first component of this is adherence to university policy on accessibility and disability:

Any student needing academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to present authorization from the Office of Disability Services (ODS) ([ods@princeton.edu](mailto: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 also recognize that students have accessibility needs that may not be covered by ODS requirements. 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 so long as the solutions we come up with do not jeopardize academic standards, fairness, or your overall experience of the course. If you notice an accessibility issue in my course design, please also feel free to reach out and let me know (even if the issue does not concern you personally) – accessible design is a work in progress, and input is valuable.

### **Content Notes/Warnings:**

We will be reading, viewing, and discussing works containing violent, gory, and disturbing elements throughout the semester. If it would be helpful for you, you can reference the list of content notes/warnings specific to individual works – this document is available in the course folder.

In this doc, the titles of the works are in visible font, while the content notes themselves are white and invisible; this is so that you can view as much or as little as you prefer. You can select the text following the titles of specific works, select all the text to read everything, or search through the document for specific elements that you would prefer to know about ahead of time.

If you have any specific elements you would like me to flag 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)

### **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. 2:

**Please look over "Horror 369 Information (START HERE)" doc in the Google Drive course folder (check your email for the link).**

"Thriller" music video (1983), Michael Jackson, dir. John Landis

Anna Starobinets, "To a Good Home"

Julio Cortázar, "The Axolotl"

Thurs, Feb. 4:

Noël Carroll, excerpts from *Paradoxes of the Heart*

Fedor Sologub, "The Dog"

#### **Week 2: Gothic I**

Tues., Feb. 9:

Edmund Burke, excerpts from *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*

Anonymous, "Terrorist Novel Writing"

Vladimir Odoevsky, *Russian Nights* (excerpt – Fourth Night)

Thurs., Feb. 11:

Laetitia and John Aikin, "On the Pleasure Derived from Objects of Terror and Sir Bertrand: A Fragment"

Alexander Pushkin, "The Queen of Spades"

Mikhail Zagoskin, "The Devils' Concert"

### **Week 3: Gothic II**

Tues., Feb. 16:

Nikolai Gogol, "The Terrible Vengeance"

*The Terrible Vengeance* (1988, short animated film)

Thurs., Feb. 18:

Edgar Allan Poe, "The Tell-Tale Heart," "The Cask of Amontillado"

Jane Hodson, excerpts from "Gothic and the Language of Terror"

### **Week 4: Into Lovecraft Country**

Tues, Feb. 23:

H. P. Lovecraft, "The Colour out of Space"

N. K. Jemisin, "The City Born Great"

Silvia Moreno-García, "Titan of terror: the dark imagination of H.P. Lovecraft" (video)

Thurs., Feb. 25:

H. P. Lovecraft, "At the Mountains of Madness"

### **Week 5: Visual Horror**

Tues., March 2:

*Master Designer* (1987), dir. Oleg Teptsov

Thurs., March 4:

Junji Ito, "Shiver", "Marionette Mansion", "The Long Dream" (in *Shiver* collection)

### **Week 6: All in the Mind**

Tues., March 9:

Anton Chekhov, "The Black Monk"

Gabriela Santiago, "None of This Ever Happened"

Tzvetan Todorov, excerpt, *The Fantastic*

Thurs., March 11:

Joyce Carol Oates, "The Premonition"

Jerome Bixby, "It's a Good Life"

**[Spring Break: March 13-16]**

**Week 7: Horror and Science Fiction I (LONG WEEK)**

Thurs., March 18:

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, through Chapter 10

Tues., March 23:

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

Thurs., March 25:

Excerpts: *Frankenstein* (1931), dir. James Whale, *Young Frankenstein* (1974), dir. Mel Brooks, *Van Helsing* (2004), dir. Stephen Sommers

**Week 8: Horror and Science Fiction II**

Tues., March 30:

*Stalker* (1979), dir. Andrei Tarkovsky

Thurs., April 1:

*Alien* (1979), dir. Ridley Scott

**Week 9: Horror and Fantasy**

Tues., April 6:

"Hoichi the Earless" from *Kwaidan* (1965, dir. Masaki Kobayashi)

Angela Carter, "Ashputtle and the Mother's Ghost: Three Versions of One Story"

Rosemary Jackson, excerpts from *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*

Thurs., April 8:

Caitlin R. Kiernan, "The Prayer of Ninety Cats"

Jorge Luis Borges, "The House of Asterion," "The Library of Babel"

**Week 10: Horror and Society**

Tues., April 13:

Ursula K. Le Guin, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas"

N. K. Jemisin, "The Ones Who Stay and Fight"

Thurs., April 15:

*Get Out* (2017), dir. Jordan Peele

**Week 11: Bodies of Horror**

Thurs., April 20:

Octavia Butler, "Bloodchild"

Clive Barker, "In the Hills, in the Cities"

Tatyana Tolstaya, "Aspic"

Thurs., April 22:

Susan Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamounix"

Anna Starobinets, "The Parasite"

**Week 12: Highbrow, Lowbrow, Cult**

Tues., April 27:

*Evil Dead 2* (1987), dir. Sam Raimi

Selection of cult film trailers

Murray Leeder, excerpts from *Horror Film: A Critical Introduction*.

**DEAN'S DATE: MAY 5: ALL WORK DUE**