

**English 424W**  
**Dr. Anna Gibson**  
Fall 2016  
12-12:50 MWF  
College Hall 640

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or by appointment

## ENGLISH 424w: THE GOTHIC

### COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

Strange events, gloomy villains, persecuted heroines, crumbling mansions, the occasional vampire – these are the tropes we tend to associate with gothic fiction. But what exactly *is* the gothic, and why was (and is) it so popular? In this class we will be investigating the rise of the gothic from the late eighteenth and into the nineteenth century in Britain, with a brief foray into our twenty-first century future. We'll explore what the gothic is and does, what it has to do with "Realism," and whether fiction can expose dark and hidden aspects of modern psychology and society that we might not otherwise confront. We'll begin our reading with the "first" gothic story, Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*; spend a little time with Romantic poets writing about dangerous and persecuted women; and then enter the nineteenth century with Jane Austen's parody of gothic fiction, *Northanger Abbey*. As we move into the Victorian era we will see how gothic tropes make an appearance on the Yorkshire moors in *Wuthering Heights*, investigate the psychological horror of Edgar Allan Poe, and look at what happens when the gothic meets science in sensation and detective stories. We'll end the semester with a masterpiece of late-gothic fiction, *Dracula*, before skipping forward to a modern movie adaptation of gothic romance, *Crimson Peak*.



Henry Fuseli, "The Nightmare" (1781)

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To demonstrate through writing, presentation, and class discussion the ability to critically read and interpret fiction, poetry, and prose from the gothic tradition and to analyze relationships between multiple texts within and across forms, genres, and time periods.
- To recognize and evaluate the relationship between literary works and their historical and cultural contexts.
- To identify the formal conventions of the gothic in the novel, short story, and poetry and analyze their relationship to other genres and forms.
- To construct an argument about a text/texts in the gothic tradition and write persuasive, well-organized, and well-research papers that contribute to a critical conversation on that topic.

## READINGS

Please make sure you have the specified editions of the Austen, Brontë, Stoker, and Walpole, and that you bring them to class on the days when we discuss them. You need physical (rather than electronic) copies of these texts because we will often refer to specific pages in class discussion and in our writing. These are all available at the Duquesne Bookstore.

- Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey* (Oxford). ISBN: 9780199535545
- Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* (Oxford). ISBN: 9780199541898
- George Eliot, “The Lifted Veil” (Oxford). ISBN: 9780199555055 (in this case you are free to get any copy you want of this short story, including an electronic copy if you prefer)
- Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (Penguin). ISBN: 9780141439846
- Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto* (Oxford). ISBN: 9780198704447

Additional readings uploaded as PDFs to Blackboard. Please make sure you print these and bring them to class with you. They are marked on the syllabus with “(BB).”

An important note on reading: There is a **LOT** of reading in this class, and you will need to carefully complete all of it. Please make sure you plan your time accordingly.

## ASSIGNMENTS

Your assignments in this class will consist of:

- 1 critical essay 30%
- 1 critical research essay 30%
- 1 presentation 15%
- active participation in class 15%
- in-class free writes or quizzes 10%

### Critical Essay (30%)

This 6 to 7-page essay will provide a specific, debatable, and well-supported argument about one of the texts on our syllabus with use of close reading of form and content to support that interpretive argument. You will receive more detailed information about writing a strong critical essay in September in good time to begin working on your first paper. You will turn in a complete and polished first paper by September 26, which I will return to you with a grade and feedback. Using that feedback you will come up with a revision plan and meet with me to discuss it during the week of October 3. This will give you the opportunity to ask any questions about my feedback and talk to me about your plans for revision. You will then revise this paper and turn in that revision, along with your first draft and my comments and a short paragraph summarizing your revision strategy. This will be due on October 17. The grade breakdown is as follows:

<i>Polished First Draft:</i>	<i>5% final grade</i>
<i>Revision Plan and Meeting:</i>	<i>complete/incomplete</i>
<i>Revision:</i>	<i>25% final grade</i>

### Critical Research Essay (30%)

Like your first paper, this 7-8-page research essay also asks you to support a specific, debatable, and well-evidenced argument about one of the texts on our syllabus with use of close reading of form and content. Unlike the first paper, this is a research essay that asks you to join an existing critical conversation. You will therefore incorporate secondary research of peer-reviewed critical articles and/or book chapters related to your chosen topic and use these to support your own argument. You will receive more guidance on conducting research after midterm. Although you will not have the same opportunity to revise a full draft of this paper, you will receive some feedback from me on an initial proposal, a first paragraph and outline of your paper, and an annotated bibliography, all of which will help you write your final essay. We will also have two days devoted to in-class workshops of your final papers in groups. The grading of this essay breaks down as follows:

<i>Proposal:</i>	<i>complete/incomplete</i>
<i>First paragraph and outline:</i>	<i>complete/incomplete – NOTE: due on BB</i>
<i>Annotated Bibliography:</i>	<i>10% final grade – NOTE: due on BB</i>
<i>Essay:</i>	<i>20% final grade</i>

### Presentation (15%)

This 12-minute (approx.) presentation is designed to introduce the rest of the class to some contextual information and to relate that contextual insight to our larger discussion of the Gothic in literature. See the attached assignment sheet for a list of dates, topics, and more information.

### Participation (15%)

This is a discussion-based class in which we all need to contribute our thoughts and questions. You need to actively read your assignments, which means annotating your reading as you go and coming to class prepared with your annotated reading and with questions and topics for discussion. I am not measuring your participation on the complexity or profundity of your comments, but I am looking for you to respond to the topic and text that we are discussing thoughtfully and to make substantive contributions to discussion. To aid in your participation, I ask that you come to each class prepared with 1-2 discussion questions based on your reading. Try to stay away from factual/plot-related questions with easy answers and instead ask interpretive questions that generate discussion. You can often generate these out of moments in a text that puzzle you or interest you.

#### Grading for In-Class Participation:

- A:** Comes to class on time with clear evidence of having read and thought about the material beforehand. Shows evidence of having prepared discussion questions in advance. Contributes actively and significantly to discussion in most classes.
- B:** Comes to class on time with clear evidence of having read the material. Shows evidence of having prepared discussion questions in advance. Contributes some to class discussion in most classes.
- C:** Comes to class on time with clear evidence of having read the material. Sometimes shows evidence of having prepared discussion questions in advance. Contributes occasionally to class discussion in most classes.
- D:** Comes to class but does not participate in most class discussions. Rarely shows evidence of having prepared discussion questions in advance.
- F:** Comes to class but does not show evidence of engaging with the material or participate in class discussion.
- 0:** Does not attend class, sleeps during class, uses electronic devices in class outside pre-approved usage, or causes substantial disruption to class.

### Free Writes/Discussion Questions (10%)

This class requires careful and attentive reading and preparation for class. These quizzes/free writes give you the opportunity to demonstrate that you have done your preparation. I do not give quizzes that test your memory of specific passages in a text. Instead, I will give a variety of short in-class quiz assignments that might include the following:

1. Free Writes: The most common quiz will be a free-write based on a prompt or question about the text. These free writes are designed to do two things. First, they give you the opportunity to show me that you have carefully completed the reading for class by mentioning specific details that stood out to you as significant as you were reading. For this reason, you need to put your books away for these free writes and offer as many details in your response as possible. Second, and more importantly, free writes give you the opportunity to generate your own written thoughts about one or more of the texts we will be discussing that day. This can be very helpful for students who find it difficult to talk in class, because it gives you a chance to formulate your thoughts before we begin discussion. For this reason, the prompts will be fairly open-ended and allow you to write about an element of the text that interests you.
2. Discussion Questions: As mentioned under “participation,” I expect you to come to each class session with 1-2 questions for discussion that day. Sometimes I will ask you to jot down one or two of these discussion questions as a quiz assignment at the beginning of class.

I will grade each quiz/free write on a 5-point scale. Quizzes and free writes will not be announced in advance. They will always take place at the beginning of class and last for approximately 5 minutes. If you come late to class you run the risk of missing a quiz or free write. There will be no make-ups offered, but I will drop the single lowest grade.

### ASSESSMENT

Some important points about grades:

- Grades are not negotiable.
- I do not discuss grades via email. This is for privacy reasons and because it is much more productive to discuss these matters in person. However, I am very happy to talk to you about any aspect of your learning experience in the class, including any concerns about assessment, in person. Just make an appointment with me or come to my office hours.
- All grades will be posted to Blackboard and are calculated using the grading scale below. Please check Blackboard regularly to see your grades. If you do not see your grade for an assignment posted on Blackboard within two weeks of completion/turn in, feel free to email me to ask about this.
- If you are concerned about your performance in the class or with any of the assignments, please do come talk to me as early as possible. There is not much I can do to help you if you come to me the week before the final paper to ask me how to get an A if you have a B-average. If you have particular concerns about writing or presentations, talk to me about these things early in the semester so that I can help you develop strategies and direct you to useful resources.

**Grading Scale:**

A	93-100 %	Consistently excellent; demonstrates mastery of material
A-	90-93 %	Very good to excellent
B+	87-90 %	Very good
B	83-87 %	Consistently good
B-	80-83 %	Fair to good
C+	77-80 %	Acceptable
C	73-77 %	Falls short of expectations, but acceptable
C-	70-73 %	Falls short of expectations
D	60-70 %	Poor
F	0-60 %	Failing

**COURSE POLICIES****Expectations Overview:**

I expect you to come to class prepared and having read and thought about the assigned material. You cannot learn and do well in this class unless you do all the reading. Please arrive on time, remain in the room during class (e.g. if possible, please try to use the bathroom before class), and remain attentive during the class. I also expect you to participate in class discussions so that we are all engaged in the learning process (this is part of your participation grade). However, please refrain from side-conversations with your neighbors. To make this class a positive environment, I ask that you all adhere to a social contract of mutual respect. We need to respect one another's opinions, abilities, differences, and backgrounds. This applies to me too: as your professor, I expect your respect, but I will also treat you with respect. This policy extends beyond the classroom to email correspondence.

**Attendance:**

You are expected to attend all class meetings. Attendance involves being on time and attentive in class. I do understand that certain emergencies and life events might mean you need to miss class (e.g. illness, personal emergencies, active military duty). Because of this, you have up to but no more than 4 absences without attendance negatively affecting your grade. For each absence after four, your final grade will be dropped by ONE grade level (e.g. from B to B-). Seven absences (the equivalent of three weeks) will result in automatic failure of this class.

Please note that this absence policy is meant to accommodate emergencies and illnesses. It's a good idea to save up your allowed absences in case of emergency towards the end of the semester. If you miss a class it is your responsibility to find out from another student what you missed in class. Please do not email me to see if you missed anything; assume that you have missed something and contact a classmate or make an appointment to talk with me. If work is due on a day you miss class, you must still turn in that work by the due date. Please arrange with a classmate to turn in your work for you, place it in my mailbox, or upload it to Blackboard when appropriate.

**Late Work:**

Work is due at the beginning of the class session. Please contact me as far in advance as possible if you need more time for an assignment because of a crisis, illness, or family emergency. I will only grant extensions if they are requested and approved at least 48 hours in advance of the due date (since you should have already started working on the assignment by then).

**Format for Written Assignments:**

Standard 1-inch margins, 12-point standard font (e.g. Times New Roman), single-spaced header (no longer than 2 lines), double-spaced text, pages numbered. Please use MLA in-text parenthetical citations and works cited. Please upload Blackboard assignments as WORD documents.

**Meetings/Contacting Me:**

I am very happy to discuss any aspect of this class with you during my office hours. I'm here to talk to you! My office is College Hall 626, and my office hours this semester 10:30-11:30AM and 1:30-2:30PM on Mondays and 4:30-5:30PM on Wednesdays. If these times do not work for you, just send me an email with your availability and we can set up an appointment at a different time. It is my policy not to discuss grades via email. If you have any question about your progress in the class you need to set up a meeting to discuss this with me in person.

Please note that you will be having a required one-on-one conference with me to discuss your critical paper revisions during the week of October 3.

**Email:**

Please check your Duquesne email account daily for any announcements or messages from me (and from your other professors). Impolite or unprofessional emails forfeit the right to a response. Please check the syllabus before emailing with a question. Please note that I do not accept assignments via email unless I have agreed to do so in advance.

**Blackboard:**

PDFs of readings not contained in your purchased books can be found under "Course Content" in a folder titled "Readings." Please print these documents to read, annotate, and bring to the class in question. I will also post announcements with any changes to the syllabus on our Blackboard announcements page. You will receive these as emails. Please check your Duquesne email regularly. You can also check your Blackboard grade book to view assignment grades. You will also be uploading two assignments to Blackboard as Word documents.

**Electronics:**

Although I understand that electronic devices can be useful, in a seminar like this one it is important that we do not hide behind screens and instead engage in open discussion. For this reason, unless I let you know in advance that you will be able to use a personal laptop/tablet for a specific reason, please put all of your electronics away during class. You can take notes on paper. Using a cell phone in class can distract everyone else in the room, so please put your phones away. If you misuse electronics in the classroom you will receive a "0" (F) for participation that day. If you have a special circumstance (e.g. a sick child; a family member in the hospital) and need your phone with you for a particular class please talk to me about this before class begins.

**Accommodations:**

Students who feel they may have a disability that requires special accommodation should contact the Office of Freshman Development and Special Student Services, 309 Student Union, 412-396-6658. Please also contact me privately/come to talk to me by the second week of class so that we can make necessary arrangements. Per university rules, I am only able to accommodate disabilities and learning difficulties if they are documented with Special Services.

**Athletics:**

If you are involved in a university athletic program and will miss class because of it, you must bring an official list of the classes you will be missing from the athletic department in the first week of class. Moreover, ALL work is to be submitted prior to the excused absence. You are responsible for any announcements and/or class notes that you miss.

**Academic Honesty:**

The Student Handbook defines plagiarism as follows: “Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, the use, whether by summary, paraphrase, or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work or specific ideas of a person without full and clear acknowledgment. It also includes the use of material prepared by another person or agency engaged in selling of term papers or other academic materials.” This means that plagiarism includes using language or ideas you find on the Internet or in another source and not clearly attributing them to their source. Make sure you cite and document your sources clearly.

If you do plagiarize, you will receive one of the following penalties as specified in university guidelines: “0” (F) on an assignment or portion of the course, failure of the course, suspension, or expulsion from the university. In order to avoid these penalties, ask questions, carefully cite and document your sources, and come to see me or visit the writing center if you are using outside sources and you are not sure whether your incorporation of the material is fair use. Start writing your essays well in advance, and consult with me if you are having trouble interpreting an assignment, generating ideas, or documenting sources. I am here to help you, so please come to talk to me if you have any concerns.

**The Writing Center**

I strongly encourage you to make use of this excellent resource on campus. The Writing Center is not just for struggling writers; it can be helpful for any writer at many stages of the writing process. For more information and to make an appointment see <http://www.duq.edu/academics/resources-and-technology/writing-center>