

❧ The Gothic ❧

English 539/639

Fall 2016

Instructor: Dr. Anna Gibson

Wednesdays, 6-8:40PM

College Hall 640

Dr. Gibson's Office: College Hall 626

Office Hours: Mon. 10:30-11:30 & 1:30-2:30; Wed. 4:30-5:30

Email: gibsona@duq.edu



COURSE DESCRIPTION

How do we account for the popularity and persistence of Gothic tropes in the history of the novel? What exactly *is* the Gothic, and what are its cultural and literary functions? These questions will guide our journey into Gothic fiction in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Britain. We will begin with the earliest “Gothic story,” Horace Walpole’s *The Mystery of Otranto*, and investigate the emergence of Gothic fiction out of a medieval past and alongside the birth of the novel. Then we’ll consider how the Gothic gets domesticated at the beginning of the nineteenth century by writers like Ann Radcliffe and Jane Austen. Our nineteenth-century reading will lead us to investigate the role of the Gothic in an era of rationality, individualism, and realism. We’ll examine the relationship between Gothic and Realism in *Wuthering Heights*, consider the psychological effects of Gothic narratives in Poe and Freud, and explore how Gothic tropes and narratives get transformed in sensation stories, detective tales, and medical narratives. We’ll finish off the semester with that masterpiece of late-gothic novels, *Dracula*, and with a brief foray into the future of the Gothic with the 2015 movie *Crimson Peak*.

Although this course traces a specific literary genre in a specific literary period, it is designed to introduce graduate students interested in a variety of literary fields to questions about genre, the relationship between literature and science, and the capacity of fiction to question and shape the psychological and social characteristics of modern individuals. In asking why an exaggerated version of a pre-modern past congeals as a literary style during a historical period that ostensibly favored realism, rationalism, and reform, we will be engaging in discussions about historicism, literary form, psychology, interdisciplinary, and the relationship between individuals and their complex social, evolutionary, and cultural milieus. Students will give brief presentations, develop a final paper with opportunities for feedback, and present a shortened version of their work in a mini-conference at the end of the semester.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the semester you will be able to:

- Analyze and interpret novels, short stories, poems, and films within the Gothic tradition;
- Identify the formal features of the Gothic as a genre and mode in relation to others;

¹ Image: Henry Fuseli, “The Nightmare” (1781)

- Describe the relationship between Gothic texts and the cultural, aesthetic, political, scientific, religious, and intellectual contexts of the long nineteenth century;
- Craft a well-researched analytical essay that engages with primary and secondary materials;
- Practice 4 academic genres of writing: abstract, conference paper, teaching presentation, article.

TEXTS

Please try to purchase the following editions of the novels so that we can stay on the same page:

- 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
- Ann Radcliffe, *A Sicilian Romance* (Oxford). ISBN: 9780192836663
- Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto* (Oxford). ISBN: 9780198704447
- (Additional texts are available as PDFs on Blackboard)

ASSIGNMENTS

Presentation (10%)

You will each sign up to give a presentation in which you lead class discussion on a topic of your choice related to the reading assigned for that day. This presentation should consist of:

- a) A 15-25 minute presentation on a topic in which you “teach” the class and generate the beginnings of a discussion. You are welcome to read from notes if this makes you more comfortable. You are welcome to use a handout or slides, but this is not required.
- b) The production of at least 3 substantive discussion questions that arise from your topic and lead us into our conversation about the text for that day.
- c) A bibliography (turned in to me) of research sources you used in preparing your presentation.

You will sign up for presentation date (one student per day) indicating broadly what will be your topic no later than September 5 on Blackboard (look for the link on the left, which will not appear until August 31 so everyone has a week or so to think about it!). Don’t worry if your topic starts to shift as you do some reading and research. When it gets closer to your date, please email me your chosen focus, describing it in a sentence or two, no later than 10a.m. on the Tuesday before your Wednesday class. This will help me prepare and make sure I don’t step on your toes too much!

Option 1: Topic to Text

You might conduct your presentation by focusing on a topic and then transitioning from that to the day’s text to generate some questions. For instance, if you are particularly interested in the relationship between the Medieval Gothic in art and architecture, you might want to begin by introducing us to the topic, investigating some of the ways you find this material shedding light on Gothic fiction of the 18th and/or 19th centuries, and using that investigation to open up a discussion of the text we are reading. Please keep in mind that if you pick this option you will need to find a way to *focus* your presentation. You cannot cover all elements of a broad topic in one 15-25 minute presentation, so please try to narrow down as much as you can. There are *many* topics you might use as a springboard for this option (contextual, literary, theoretical), but here are some ideas: Medieval gothic art & architecture; evolutionary theory (Darwin); medicine; terror vs. horror; the

sublime; Catholicism; sexuality; abnormality and monstrosity; vampirism; American Gothic; sensation fiction; criminology. I am happy to help you narrow a topic. If you want to use another Gothic text (e.g. *Frankenstein*, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, *The Monk*, film versions of *Dracula*) as your springboard, consider how you will move beyond mere summary to provide an engaging presentation that helps us as a class in our larger discussion of the Gothic and our syllabus.

Option 2: Text to Topic

You might find yourself wanting to focus more on the text we are reading for the class on the day you present. Consider how you will focus your presentation around one, two, or three interpretive elements. You might do this by using something tangential to the text (e.g. approaching *Wuthering Heights* through the lens of *Jane Eyre*'s or Charlotte Brontë's preface to the second edition of her sister's novel; approaching "The Lifted Veil" through the lens of George Eliot's *Middlemarch*; considering *A Sicilian Romance* alongside contemporary depictions of Italy). Or you might focus on a significant topic within the text, structuring your presentation around your interpretation of that topic. Remember that your ultimate goal is to spark class discussion at the end of your talk.

Option 3: Criticism/Theory

Another way to structure a presentation is to identify a theoretical approach or a critical article related to the text in question and use that to structure your presentation. For instance, you might find a useful critical article on *Wuthering Heights* and use a summary of a few of the key points in that article and an evaluation of the article as a springboard to your own interpretation of the text. This would introduce the class to another critics' reading. Or you might find yourself particularly intrigued by Freud's psychoanalytic reading of "The Sandman" and decide to delve further into the relationship between psychoanalysis and the Gothic.

Final Project (70%)

The culmination of your work in this class will be a research project on a topic related to the material covered in this class, and it will allow you to practice some of the major genres of writing in the academic profession. You will conduct this research and present it in two formats: a final paper (15 pages approx. for MA students; 20 pages approx. for Ph.D. students) and a conference paper to be presented to the class after Thanksgiving.

Proposal/Abstract: You will submit a proposal or abstract of your paper no later than October 26 so I can give you feedback as you begin to work on your project. For Ph.D. students and MA students interested in continuing to the Ph.D., the abstract is a common genre of writing in the field, and I encourage you to write your proposal as if it were an abstract for a conference paper. We will talk about how to write abstracts in class and view some examples. I encourage you to consider submitting the abstract to a conference!

Final Essay (55%)

This scholarly paper should engage in critical discussion on your topic and contribute a new idea to that discussion in elegant and well-organized prose. MA students: aim for approximately 15 pages. Ph.D. students: aim for approximately 20 pages and think of this paper as if it were a scholarly article. The due date for this project is December 7.

Conference Presentation (15%)

At the end of the semester we will have two "conference" sessions (November 30 and December 7) during which each 569 student will read a 20-minute version of her final paper. Keep in mind that a

20-minute paper is approximately 9 pages long and should be designed to be heard rather than read. At the end of the panel, the presenters will answer questions and respond to comments from the rest of the class. Students not presenting should listen closely and be prepared to pose questions at the end of each panel.

Participation (20%)

A small seminar like this one only works if we all actively participate in the discussion, sharing our own critical insights and responses to the reading. You should each come to every class with at least three leading questions for discussion based on your reading so that you are prepared to kick-start a new line of discussion on the text(s) at hand and share your thoughts on the material.

In order to eliminate distractions, please set your cell phone to silent and put it away during class. Although you are welcome to take notes on a laptop/tablet and bring supplemental readings from Blackboard to class electronically if you prefer to do so, I do encourage you to consider putting away these devices so that they do not become distractions or barriers to conversation. I reserve the right to restrict the use of these devices should it appear that they are interfering with discussion. Attendance is mandatory in this class. While I do understand that emergencies can arise that give you no reasonable alternative to missing class, frequent absences will negatively affect your final grade.

COURSE POLICIES

639 Students

Although you are not required to write a final paper or participate in the final conference, I do expect you to participate in class discussions and the presentation assignment.

Office Hours

Please feel free to drop by my office to talk to me about any matter related to the class or to your graduate work, especially if you have any questions about an assignment, a draft, or an idea for a paper or presentation. (Please note that my office location has changed; I'm now in 626.) My office hours are Mondays from 10:30-11:30AM and 1:30-2:30PM and Wednesdays from 4:30-5:30PM, but I am also available by appointment. You can contact me via email at gibsona@duq.edu (please allow me 24 hours to respond on weekdays and a bit longer on the weekends).

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

Academic dishonesty in any form, including plagiarism, will result in a zero for the assignment and university sanctions.

Late Work

Please do not turn in work late without prior approval from me. If you need an extension for a good reason, talk to me well in advance and we will arrange this together. A paper turned in late without prior approval will receive an F for that assignment.

Disabilities and Accommodations

Students who feel they may have a disability that requires special accommodation that could impact their performance in this class should talk to me privately within the first two weeks of class.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

- August 24 **Gothic Poetics**
Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”
Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “Christabel”
Robert Browning, “Porphyria’s Lover”
Edgar Allan Poe, “The Oval Portrait”
Recommended: Jerrold Hogle, Introduction, *Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*.
- August 31 **The Origins of the Gothic?**
Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto* (consider reading ahead for next week!)
- September 7 **Enlightenment Self-Containment, Human Nature, and Sublimity**
Mary Shelley, excerpt from *Frankenstein*
John Locke, excerpts from *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and *Two Treatises of Government* (1689) (31pp + 23pp)
Edmund Burke, excerpt from *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757)
Immanuel Kant, *Answering the Question: What is Enlightenment?* (1784)
Thomas Malthus, excerpts from *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798)
John Stuart Mill, excerpts from *On Liberty* (1859)
- September 14 **Romance and the Supernatural Explained**
Ann Radcliffe, *A Sicilian Romance*
Ann Radcliffe, short excerpt from *Mysteries of Udolpho*
- September 21 **Inside the Chest: Parodying the Gothic**
Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*
- September 28 **The Uncanny: Genre and Psychology**
E.T.A. Hoffmann, “The Sandman”
John William Polidori, “The Vampyre”
Edgar Allan Poe, “The Fall of the House of Usher”
Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny”
- October 5 **Female, Queer, and Other Gothics**
Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* (Volume 1)
Female Gothic and Queer Gothic critical readings (Moers, Haggerty, etc.)
- October 12 **Terror and Tyranny**
Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* (to end)
J. Hillis Miller, “Wuthering Heights: Repetition and the ‘Uncanny’”
- October 19 **The Gothic and the Real: Gothicism, Genre, and Psychology**
George Eliot, “The Lifted Veil”
Excerpts from Victorian psychology
Critical Article: Armstrong, Nancy. “A Gothic History of the British Novel”

- October 26 **Sensation, Science, and the Medical Gothic**
Mary Elizabeth Braddon, “Good Lady Ducayne”
Arthur Conan Doyle, “The Case of Lady Sannox”
Arthur Machen, “The Inmost Light”
In class: Francis Galton’s composite photographs
Abstract Due
- November 2 **Compiling the Vampire**
Bram Stoker, *Dracula*
- November 9 **Compiling the Vampire**
Bram Stoker, *Dracula*
Critical articles: Stephen Arata, “Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization” and TBA
- November 16 **Picturing the Gothic**
Guillermo del Toro, “Crimson Peak” (note that I will arrange a screening of this movie on Monday, November 14 around 6.p.m.)
Paper workshop

Thanksgiving
- November 30 Conference Session #1
- December 7 Conference Session #2
Final Paper Due for 539 students