

# the horror film

**Course #:** FILM 120  
**Instructor:** adam wadenius  
**Email:** adam@apwadenius.com  
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**Office Hours:** By email or appointment  
**Semester:** Fall 2018  
**Day & time:** Thursday, 6:00p – 8:50p  
**Building:** #100, Room #133

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## course description

The goal of this course is a close examination of the popular horror film. We will be primarily concerned with the ways in which horror is represented, its social and cultural significance, and the reasons why horror films are so appealing to a mass audience. Throughout the semester we will be examining seminal theories of horror, as well as charting the historical evolution of the genre. The course will be divided into four sections: the first will cover the early period of physical monsters; the second will examine psychological monsters, slashers and body films; the third will consider contemporary postmodern horror; and the fourth will look to the example of the abject as a principle function of the horror film.

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## student learning outcomes

- ~ Critically assess the popular horror film as a reflection of American culture.
- ~ Demonstrate an understanding of the major theories related to the horror film through written analysis of specific films screened in class.
- ~ Identify the major codes and conventions of the horror film in general, and its subgenres in particular.
- ~ Compare and contrast the different subgenres of the horror film, and the eras in which they become popular.
- ~ Recall the historical evolution of the horror film.

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## course requirements

**Class Lectures & Screenings:** You are responsible for attending each of the class lectures. Please email me if you know you cannot make it to section on a given day. There is no talking/discussion during the films, audio recordings or clips. I will dismiss you from the course if you become a disruption during the lectures. Your enrollment in this class is your responsibility. It is incumbent upon you to double-check your enrollment status periodically throughout the semester, as I do not maintain my rosters after the census has been processed. If at any time you decide that you do not wish to continue with the course, it is your responsibility to drop, as I do not take it upon myself to drop anyone from the course at any time.

I encourage you to use your personal computer, iPad, or other learning tool during class time if you are using it appropriately (viewing class slides, taking notes), however, be sure to turn off any noisemaking functions on those and any other electronic devices such as cell phones, iPods, etc. Please keep the brightness levels on all LED screens at low intensity. There is no food allowed in class at any time (drinks are okay). Copies of all the lectures are available on the course website for download and review. If you require any additional accommodations such as a note taker, testing services, captions, or special chairs/desks, please speak with me personally, or provide the proper authorization letter from the Disability Resources Department.

**Readings:** It is incumbent upon you to be prepared, and you should come to class each session having read the reading assignment posted on the schedule. We will be spending as much time discussing the readings as the films, and a firm understanding of them will benefit your overall understanding/interpretation of the film texts. All readings are located on the course website.

**Discussion:** You are encouraged to be actively involved in the class discussions, as your participation is key to your success in this course. My goal is to aid in the development of your analytical/critical skills, and I expect everyone to maintain an open mind, and take a creative approach to the material. Be respectful of your fellow classmates when addressing and critiquing conflicting viewpoints.

**Short-Answer Quiz:** There will be one short-answer quiz this semester, due by the time class starts on the assigned date. Each quiz is due by the time class starts on the assigned date, and no late quizzes will be accepted. Please submit your quiz to me through the Turnitin.com application (discussed in further detail in the *Quizzes* section on the course website). All emergency situations leading to late quizzes will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. There will be no opportunity for making-up a missed quiz. You are required to visit the course website to view the quiz questions and the clips, as there are additional writing and formatting guidelines for you to review.

**Group Writing Exercise:** You will complete one group writing exercise this semester. The format of the quiz will echo the individual short answer-quizzes, and will be discussed in further detail in class.

**Film Analysis Essay:** You will be required to write one 1000-1250 word essay this semester, due by the time class starts on the assigned date. No late papers will be accepted. I do not accept physical papers, so please submit your essay to me through the Turnitin.com application (discussed in further detail in the *Essay* section on the course website). All emergency situations leading to late papers will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. There will be no opportunity for re-writes after grading, as good writing skills are a must in this course. Each of the essay questions, as well as an example of an *A* paper are located on the course website. It is required that you visit the website to view the example paper, as it details additional guidelines for writing successfully in this course.

**\*\* NOTE \*\*** *Plagiarism and other issues concerning academic integrity will not be tolerated, and are grounds for an automatic failure in the course. Acknowledge all reading and research sources with appropriate footnotes and bibliography.* Keep all copies of your quizzes and notes until you have received a final grade for this class.

**Film Notes & Participation:** Your attendance is expected at each of the film screenings, and missing or leaving the film screenings early will result in a lowered participation grade. To compliment any notes you may be taking on the lectures and discussions, you will be required to keep a separate notebook with your notes on each of the films (one page per each film). This is a good habit to practice when watching and analyzing films, as it will help you to remember important narrative and stylistic elements to be used as supportive examples in your writing. This notebook will be checked on the final session of the semester (Dec. 13<sup>th</sup>), and must be submitted in one of two ways:

- 1) as an electronic document (word, pdf, text, pages, etc.)
- 2) as a packet of individual sheets of paper, assembled and stapled together

Do not turn in any three-ring binders or spiral/binded notebooks with your notes in them, as they will not be accepted.

**Warning:** The subject of this course means that we will often be viewing and studying graphically violent material. Please be prepared to experience and engage with such content, as it is vital to a thorough exploration of the concepts we will be discussing throughout the semester.

#### assessments

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Film Notes (150 pts.)	A = 525	B- = 447	D+ = 374
Screenings and Participation (160 pts.)	A- = 503	C+ = 430	D = 357
Short-answer quiz (100 pts.)	B+ = 486	C = 413	D- = 335
Group Quiz (50 pts.)	B = 469	C- = 391	F = 318
Film Analysis Essay (100 pts.)			

- 1) All course readings and materials are posted on the course website @ [www.apwadenius.com](http://www.apwadenius.com).
- 2) All films screened in class, as well as any excerpt screened during the lectures.

*Please remember that if you have any questions about the readings, assignments, or any of the course materials that I am readily available to help answer them. I can be reached through the email address above, the course website, or by placing a note for me in my box in the department office.*

~ *External Monsters & the Other* ~

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**week #1 ~ (Aug. 16<sup>th</sup>) ~ introduction to the horror film**

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Lecture: Intro to Course | Syllabi | Questions  
Screening: *American Nightmare*, dir. Adam Simon (2000)

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**week #2 ~ (Aug. 23<sup>rd</sup>) ~ repression and the other**

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Reading: "An Introduction to the American Horror Film," by Robin Wood  
Screening: *Frankenstein*, dir. James Whale (1931)

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**week #3 ~ (Aug. 30<sup>th</sup>) ~ early gothic horror**

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Reading: "What is American Gothic," by Allan Lloyd Smith  
Screening: *Nosferatu*, dir. F.W. Murnau (1922)

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**week #4 ~ (Sep. 6<sup>th</sup>) ~ horror as comedy**

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Reading: "Horror Films," by William K. Everson  
Screening: *Abbott and Costello Meet the Mummy*, dir. Charles Lamont (1955)

~ *Internal Monsters, Slashers & Body Horror* ~

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**week #5 ~ (Sep. 13<sup>th</sup>) ~ the internal monster**

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Reading: "*Psycho*," by Robin Wood  
Screening: *Psycho*, dir. Alfred Hitchcock (1960)

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**week #6 ~ (Sep. 20<sup>th</sup>) ~ the nuclear family in crisis**

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Reading: "Bringing It All Back Home," by Vivian Sobchack  
Screening: *The Shining*, dir. Stanley Kubrick (1980)

**\*\* Short-answer quiz due \*\***

**week #7 ~ (Sep. 27<sup>th</sup>) ~ slasher horror**

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Reading: "Her Body, Himself," by Carol Clover  
Screening: *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, dir. Tobe Hooper (1974)

**week #8 ~ (Oct. 4<sup>th</sup>) ~ body films**

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Reading: "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess," by Linda Williams  
Screening: *Dead Alive*, dir. Peter Jackson (1992)

**\*\* Short-answer feedback due \*\***

~ *Contemporary Postmodern Horror* ~

**week #9 ~ (Oct. 11<sup>th</sup>) ~ the postmodern horror film**

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Reading: "Recreational Terror," by Isabel Cristina Pinedo  
Screening: *Scream*, dir. Wes Craven (1996)

**week #10 ~ (Oct. 18<sup>th</sup>) ~ torture porn horror**

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Reading: "Torture Porn: When Good Times Go Bad," by Scott Collura  
Screening: *Hostel*, dir. Eli Roth (2005)

**week #11 ~ (Oct. 25<sup>th</sup>) ~ midterm check-ins**

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**\*\* Group writing exercise assessed in class \*\***

**week #12 ~ (Nov. 1<sup>st</sup>) ~ the new French Extremity**

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Reading: "Style and Sensation in the Contemporary French Cinema of the Body," by Tim Palmer  
Screening: *Martyrs*, dir. Pascal Laugier (2008)

**week #13 ~ (Nov. 8<sup>th</sup>) ~ post 9/11 monstrosities**

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Reading: "A Violation of Balance: Foreignness in Post-9/11 Horror Films," by Adam Wadenius  
Screening: *Cloverfield*, dir. Matt Reeves (2008)

~ *The Abject As Horror* ~

**week #14 ~ (Nov. 15<sup>th</sup>) ~ the monstrous feminine**

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Reading: "Imaginary/Symbolic," by Susan Hayward  
"Introduction," and "Kristeva, Femininity, Abjection," by Barbara Creed  
Screening: *The Human Centipede (First Sequence)*, dir. Tom Six (2009)

**week #15 ~ (Nov. 22<sup>nd</sup>) ~ no class**

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**\*\* Thanksgiving recess \*\***

**week #16 ~ (Nov. 29<sup>th</sup>) ~ the archaic mother and monstrous wombs**

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Reading: "Horror and the Archaic Mother: *Alien*," by Barbara Creed  
"Woman as Monstrous Womb: *The Brood*," by Barbara Creed  
Screening: *The Fly*, dir. David Cronenberg (1986)

**week #17 ~ (Dec. 6<sup>th</sup>) ~ vampires, witches, and blood monsters**

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Reading: "Woman as Witch: *Carrie*," by Barbara Creed  
"Woman as Vampire: *The Hunger*" by Barbara Creed  
Screening: *Carrie*, dir. Brian DePalma (1976)

**week #18 ~ (Dec. 13<sup>th</sup>) ~ final class session**

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**\*\* *Essay assignment due* \*\***

**\*\* *Film notebooks due for review* \*\***