

film genre: the horror film

Course #: FMS 320
Instructor: adam wadenius
Email: wadenia@crc.losrios.edu
Websites: canvas.losrios.edu
apwadenius.com

Office Hours: 12:00p - 1:00p, #A500
Semester: Fall 2019
Day & time: Tuesdays, 1:30p - 4:35p
Building: Main Campus Library #111

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 post-9/11 horror; and the fourth will look to contemporary horror films as reflections of American anxieties.

student learning outcomes

- ~ Understand the horror genre's relationship to popular culture, and its role in fostering ideology, and images of gender and ethnicity.
- ~ Demonstrate an understanding of the major theories related to the analysis and criticism of horror films, through written analysis of specific texts screened in class.
- ~ Explain and examine the codes, conventions, myths, and transformations of the horror genre in general, and its subgenres in particular.
- ~ Compare and contrast the different types of horror films, and the eras in which they become popular.
- ~ Recall the historical evolution of the horror film.

course requirements

Class Lectures & Screenings: You are responsible for attending the class lecture each session. 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. 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 for download and review on Canvas, as well as the teaching page on apwadenius.com. 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 Support Office (DSPS).

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.

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.

assessments and grading

There are **460** total points available in the course, and your overall grade will be determined by your performance on the following assessments:

Screenings and Participation (80 pts.)	A = 460 - 413
Film Notes (80 pts.)	B = 412 - 367
Short-answer Assignment (100 pts.)	C = 366 - 321
Sequence Analysis (100 pts.)	D = 320 - 275
Film Analysis Essay (100 pts.)	F = 274 - 0

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, 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.

Short Answer, Sequence Analysis, and Final Essay Assignments: There are three writing assignments this semester, each due by the time class starts on the assigned date. Late assignments will be accepted for up to one week, and will incur a 10-point penalty. No late assignments will be accepted after one week. There will be no opportunity for re-writes after grading, as good writing skills are a must in this course. Please submit your work to me through Canvas (discussed in further detail in the *Assignments* section on each of the course websites). You are required to visit the course websites to view the assignment questions and clips, as there are additional writing and formatting guidelines for you to review.

**** 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 work until you have received a final grade for this class.

texts and materials

- 1) Additional readings and materials can be accessed through Canvas, or 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.

schedule

~ *External Monsters & the Other* ~

week #1 ~ (Aug. 27th) ~ introduction to the horror film

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

week #2 ~ (Sep. 3rd) ~ repression and the other

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

week #3 ~ (Sep. 10th) ~ modernism and early gothic horror

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

week #4 ~ (Sep. 17th) ~ postwar horror comedies

Reading: "Horror Films," by William K. Everson
Screening: *Abbott & Costello Meet Frankenstein*, dir. Charles Barton (1948)

~ *Internal Monsters & Slashers* ~

week #5 ~ (Sep. 24th) ~ the psychological monster

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

week #6 ~ (Oct. 1st) ~ the postmodern horror film

Reading: "Recreational Terror," by Isabel Cristina Pinedo
Screening: *Dawn of the Dead*, dir. George A. Romero (1978)

** *Short-answer assignment due* **

week #7 ~ (Oct. 8th) ~ the nuclear family in crisis

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

week #8 ~ (Oct. 15th) ~ slasher horror

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

week #9 ~ (Oct. 22nd) ~ body genre films

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

~ *Post-9/11 Horror & Torture* ~

week #10 ~ (Oct. 29th) ~ torture porn horror

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

week #11 ~ (Nov. 5th) ~ post-9/11 monstrosities

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

week #12 ~ (Nov. 12th) ~ the new French Extremity

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

*** Sequence analysis assignment due ***

~ Contemporary Horror & Culture ~

week #13 ~ (Nov. 19th) ~ representing race in horror films

Reading: "Foreword" and "Introduction: Studying Blacks in Horror," by Robin R. Means Coleman
Screening: *Get Out*, dir. Jordan Peele (2017)

week #14 ~ (Nov. 26th) ~ the monstrous feminine

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 ~ (Dec. 3rd) ~ the semiotic and the symbolic

Reading: *** Lecture materials TBD ***
Screening: *A Quiet Place*, dir. Brian Krasinski (2018)

week #16 ~ (Dec. 10th) ~ deconstructing the queer monster

Reading: "The Monster and the Homosexual," by Harry M. Benshoff
Screening: *Låt den rätte komma in*, dir. Tomas Alfredson (2008)

week #17 ~ (Dec. 17th) ~ final class session

*** Essay assignment due ***

*** Film notebooks due for review ***