

“The Horror, The Horror”: Representations of War and Political Violence

GET 3580/ JST 3930/ LIT 4930

Instructor: Eric Kligerman

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Time: Tues, periods 4-5 (10:40am-12:35pm) Location: RNK106

and Thurs, Period 4 (10:40am-11:30am) Location: MAT105

Office Hrs: Wednesdays, 9-11am via Zoom

Course Description

This course sets out to probe the cultural, social and political functions of horror in relation to shifting moments of historical violence. In addition to exploring the horror genre in literary and cinematic works of the imagination, we will ultimately apply the aesthetic, epistemic and ethical questions arising in the genre to shifting representations of traumatic history. As we map out the history and themes behind this popular genre, our aim is to probe the intersections between horror and its socio-cultural and historical contexts. How is political violence represented, conceptualized and memorialized across shifting linguistic and visual texts? How do individuals and communities cope with the aftermath of catastrophic loss? What ethical questions arise in our engagement with representations of traumatic limit events and the experience of horror these events entail?

After reading and screening central works from the horror genre, we will examine some of the emblematic scenes of historical violence in the 20th and 21st centuries. Turning to such instances as the legacies of colonialism, the Holocaust, the Vietnam War and the events surrounding September 11, 2001, this Quest course investigates the intersection between narratives of horror in the realms of both fantasy and history. In our inquiry into representations of horror, we will examine how this genre in European and American culture is employed to express both individual and national anxieties in the face of political violence.

Theoretical readings will embrace a range of disciplines, from literary and film theory to philosophical and psychoanalytic investigations of the all-too-common attraction to the art of fear. Through the exploration of such concepts as the sublime, the uncanny and the abject, we will probe our fascination with these categories. What is horror and how do authors and artists represent it? What cultural function does horror serve? Similar to Aristotle's line of questioning in his *Poetics*, why are we drawn to horror? What does the audience desire when confronted with representations of history as a site of horror? Finally, what does our fascination with the horrors of historical violence reveal about ourselves?

GRADING

Grading will be based on in-class participation (25%), take-home midterm (25%), take-home final (25%) and an 8-10 page final paper (topic of your choice, 25%).

1) Students are allowed 4 unexcused absences. 1/2 a point will be deducted from your final grade for each unexcused absence thereafter. Missing a Tuesday class is equivalent to 1.5 days, while missing a Thursday class is equal to 1 class. **If you miss 8 classes in the semester, you will automatically fail the course. Participation will play a major part of the final grade and students are expected to partake and contribute daily to class discussions. If you do not bring to class the text we are discussing for that day, you will be marked as absent.**

2) **If you do not bring to class the text we are discussing for that day, you will be marked as absent. You are not permitted to read the text on your phone in class.**

3) There will be a take home midterm and take-home final exam comprised of identification and short answer essay questions.

4) There will be a final research paper on a topic of choice selected by the student in consultation with me. Late papers will not be accepted.

Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students who enroll at the University commit to holding themselves and their peers to the high standard of honor required by the Honor Code. Any individual who becomes aware of a violation of the Honor Code is bound by honor to take corrective action. Violations of the honor code include, but are not limited to: plagiarism, cheating, bribery, misrepresentation, fabrication, and conspiracy. Such violations may result in the following: lowering of grades, mandatory 0 on assignments, redoing assignments, a final failing grade in the course, expulsion from the course, referral to the student-run Honor Court. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment. For more information, refer to: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/>

Students with Special Needs:

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

Anticipated Schedule

This schedule is tentative and subject to change.

Part 1: Conceptualizing Horror via Trauma

This introductory section sets up some of the methodological frames to help us analyze our engagement with representations of horror and the experience of fear that accompanies these encounters. We will probe the epistemic, aesthetic and ethical frames of looking at scenes of horror.

8/24: Introduction to the Course

8/29 and 8/31

“Recapturing the Past” by Cathy Caruth (From *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, 1995) Link to essay: Explorations in Memory - University of Warwick

Sontag’s *Regarding the Pain of Others*: pp. 3—60 (**for 8/29**), 60-126 (**for 8/31**). Here is a link to Sontag’s book if you have yet to but the copy: https://monoskop.org/images/a/a6/Sontag_Susan_2003_Regarding_the_Pain_of_Others.pdf

Listen to Sontag interview:

<https://www.wnyc.org/story/revisiting-susan-sontag-on-the-pain-of-others/>

Part 2: Defining the Genre: What is Horror?

What is meant by the “paradox of horror”? How are some bodies constituted as the normative ideals of humanity, while others are excluded as aberrations?

9/5, 9/7 and 9/12

Noel Carroll, “The Nature of Horror” (1987): <http://www.dif.unige.it/epilog/Carroll-horror.pdf> (**For 9/5**)

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*: pp.347-352 (Mary Shelley’s introduction from 1831) and pp. 51-63 (Walton’s Letters I-IV) (**for 9/5**)

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*: pp. 64-110 (all of Vol. 1, **9/7**), pp. 111-160 (all of Vol. 2, **9/12**) and pp. 161-221 (All of Vol. 3, **9/22**). (**For 9/12**)

Part 3: The Monster: From *Frankenstein* to *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*
How has the figure of the monster evolved from the Gothic to contemporary horror, from Romanticism to Expressionism?

9/14 (film) and 9/19

Screen at home Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IP0KB2XC29o>

Read: Excerpts from Siegfried Kracauer's *From Caligari to Hitler*

Part 4: Colonial Horror: Annihilating the Other

How do writers explore the dialectic of enlightenment (the interplay between reason and barbarism) in relation to Europe and its "others"?

9/21 and 9/26

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (1899): (part 1) **for 9/21**

Complete Conrad's novella, parts II and III by 9/26

Supplementary readings:

Chinua Achebe, selections from "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness':"
pp. 251-261.

Part 5: Staring at the Medusa: Representations of The Holocaust

How do poets, filmmakers and philosophers probe the limit event that shatters traditional forms of perception and comprehension?

9/28 (Film)

Screen on your own George Stevens, *Nazi Concentration Camps* (1945):
<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x21dfgb>

Lawrence Douglas, "Film as Witness: Screening *Nazi Concentration Camps* before the Nuremberg Tribunal." **(for 9/28)**

Zygmunt Bauman, "The Uniqueness and Normality of the Holocaust." **(for 10/3)**

Take-Home Midterm due 10/9

10/5, 10/10 and 10/12 (Literature and the Holocaust)

Primo Levi—*Survival in Auschwitz*: pp. 9-70 ([for 10/5](#)), pp. 71-115 ([for 10/10](#)),

pp. 145-174 ([for 10/12](#))

Suggested reading:

Giorgio Agamben, Selections from *Remnants of Auschwitz* (pp. 41-60)

[10/17 and 10/19](#) (Holocaust Memorials, Memorializing Racism and Lynchings)

10/17:

Read James Young, "[The Countermonument: Memory against itself in Germany](#)" (21 pages, excluding pictures)

Read Kriston Capps, "[Hanged, Burned, Shot, Drowned, Beaten](#)"

Read Allyson Hobbs and Neil Freudenberger, "[A Visit to Montgomery's Legacy Museum](#)"

Watch [PBS video on lynching memorial at the Legacy Museum in Montgomery, AL](#) (8 minutes)

You'll also want to **explore the [Legacy Museum Links to an external site](#)**. discussed in the previous articles/video.

Before class on 10/19:

Read Russell Cobb, "[Shifting Collective Memory in Tulsa](#)" (6 pgs. excluding pictures)

Watch Documentary: "[Remembering the Tulsa Massacre One Hundred Years Later](#)

Read "[Remembering Rosewood: Descendants mark racial violence that razed Florida town 100 years ago](#)" in The Gainesville Sun (11 minute read)

Watch *60 Minutes* [Report from 1982 on the Rosewood Massacre](#)

Part 6: From Monster to Clown: Arendt, Eichmann and the question of evil

We will continue analyzing the Holocaust through Arendt's depiction of a new type of criminal in the aftermath of Auschwitz, who is not a monster but has come to signify "the banality of evil."

10/24, 10/26 and 10/31

Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: The Banality of Evil* (1963): pp. 3-111 (**10/24**), pp. 113-150 (**10/26**), pp. 220-298 (**10/31**).

Part 7: Revisiting Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* in Michael Herr's *Dispatches*
Our analysis of the Vietnam War will center on the relation between spectatorship, visual pleasure, mass media and popular culture.

11/2, 11/7 and 11/9

Michael Herr, *Dispatches* (1977): pp. 1-69 (**for 11/2**), pp. 70-166 (**for 11/7**)
and pp. 167- 260 (**for 11/9**)

Albert and Robert Maysles' *Gimme Shelter* (1970):

11/14, 11/16 and 11/21

11/14 Screening of Albert and Robert Maysles' *Gimme Shelter* (1970):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ax_q6vp5FqU&t=50s

Read Amy Taubin, "Gimme Shelter: Rock-and-Roll Zapruder" (film review). Link to essay:

<https://www.criterion.com/current/posts/103-gimme-shelter-rock-and-roll-zapruder>

11/23 (Thanksgiving)

Part 8: September 11, 2001

11/28, 11/30 and 12/5

Our course concludes with the traumatic shocks surrounding the terrorist attacks on 9/11. How are the catastrophic events from that day recollected through works of art?

11/28

Don DeLillo, "Ruins of the Future" (2001): pp. 1-11.
<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2001/dec/22/fiction.dondelillo>

Wisława Szymborska's poem "Photograph from September 11" ("Fotografia z 11 Wrzesnia"):
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/48799/photograph-from-september-11>

11/30 and 12/5

Tom Junod, "The Falling Man" *Esquire*: <https://www.esquire.com/news-politics/a48031/the-falling-man-tom-junod/>

Take-home Final Exam due date 12/9

Final Paper due date 12/12