

MENG 6710
Gothic Literature and Media

Class meetings: Mondays, 5:30 – 8:10 pm

Office: EH 463

Office hours: TBD

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COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES

This course examines a literary genre that has persisted since the eighteenth century: the Gothic. Both popular and canonical, Gothic narratives walk an uneasy line between indulging the reader's desire for the thrill of a good ghost story and suggesting that the paranormal elements might all be the figment of an overactive imagination. The Gothic, in other words, is a genre that challenges the distinction between reality and imagination, truth and fiction.

This course considers how issues of mediation—the ways different media like manuscripts, books, and film shape their content—dovetail with Gothic narrative's blurring of the line between reality and fiction. How might the conceit that the story we are reading was a true account discovered in a forgotten manuscript complicate our understanding of the narrative's own confusion of reality? How do the conventions of the Gothic adapt to visual and audio media? Why do so many fictional Gothic stories manage to fool their readers into believing that these tales are nonfiction, and how do media factor into this confusion? How have ideas about the ways media represent, record, and distort reality influenced the construction of Gothic narrative? How might media themselves be Gothic?

To address these questions, we will study Gothic narratives across a range of media, from print books to film to podcasts. We will consider how the Gothic has evolved, from the late eighteenth century to the present day, in conjunction with changing media cultures. Our discussion will be shaped by a deep engagement with both media theory and literary criticism.

COURSE OUTCOMES

Students will:

1. Understand the historical development and major formal elements of Gothic narrative.

2. Understand key issues in media theory, especially ideas about representation, mediation, and to what degree media operate objectively as they record or transmit information.
3. Analyze how media and narrative compare in their ability to document and frame reality.
4. Analyze Gothic narratives across a range of media platforms and conduct media-specific analysis of the ways these different platforms shape narrative.
5. Conduct scholarly inquiry, develop critical arguments, and produce a research paper.

MENG LEARNING OUTCOMES

The MENG Program is dedicated to helping students master the following learning outcomes. This class focuses specifically on LOs 2, 3, 4, and 5.

- Learning Outcome 1: Gather, analyze, and communicate information effectively as well as think creatively and critically.
- Learning Outcome 2: Cultivate skills in close reading, critical thinking, logical argument from evidence presented, creative expression, and persuasive writing.
- Learning Outcome 3: Apply various theoretical perspectives and literary terminology to interpretations of literary texts to showcase an understanding of theoretical perspectives.
- Learning Outcome 4: Acknowledge and articulate the significance of key primary text(s) in one specific literary genre, period, culture or style.
- Learning Outcome 5: Demonstrate knowledge of an interaction with current scholarly criticism.
- Learning Outcome 6: Ability to employ academic conventions and protocols for written or multimodal presentations, including the application of appropriate conventions, citation formats and style manuals.

PRIMARY TEXTS

Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto* (1764)

Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (1897)

Eduardo Sanchez and Daniel Myrick, *The Blair Witch Project* (1999)

Mark Z. Danielewski, *House of Leaves* (2000)

Paul Bae and Terry Miles, *The Black Tapes Podcast* (2015-Present)

SECONDARY TEXTS

In addition to the primary texts above, we will be reading scholarly essays, along with selections from the following critical works:

- Fred Botting, *Gothic* (2014)
Charles L. Crow, *A Companion to American Gothic* (2013)
Lennard J. Davis, *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel* (1983)
Justin D. Edwards, *Technologies of the Gothic in Literature and Culture* (2015)
Jill Nicole Galvan, *The Sympathetic Medium: Feminine Channeling, the Occult, and Communication Technologies, 1859-1919* (2012)
Annette Hill, *Paranormal Media: Audiences, Spirits and Magic in Popular Culture* (2010)
Jerrold E. Hogle, *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction* (2002)
David Jones, *Gothic Machine: Textualities, Pre-Cinematic Media and Film in Popular Visual Culture 1670-1910* (2011)
Friedrich Kittler, *Discourse Networks 1800/1900* (1990)
Murray Leeder, *Cinematic Ghosts: Haunting and Spectrality from Silent Cinema to the Digital Era* (2015)
Julia Round, *Gothic in Comics and Graphic Novels: A Critical Approach* (2014)
Jeffrey Sconce, *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television* (2000)
Catherine Spooner and Emma McEvoy, *The Routledge Companion To Gothic* (2007)

Selections from these texts—as well as journal articles and other readings—will be made available via our Canvas website. See Reading Schedule for details.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Grade Breakdown:

%	Assignment	MENG Learning Objectives
10%	Statement: Defining the Gothic	L02, L03, L04, L05
10%	Weekly Discussion Questions	L01, L02, L05
10%	Active Participation	L01, L02, L03, L04
15%	Gothic Narrative Presentation	L01, L02, L03, L05
15%	Research Paper Proposal + Annotated Bibliography	L03, L04, L05, L06
40%	Research Paper	L01, L02, L03, L05, L06

Course Grading Scale:

A = 94 - 100	B = 84 - 86	C = 74 - 76	D = 64 - 66
A- = 90 - 93	B- = 80 - 83	C- = 70 - 73	D- = 61 - 63
B+ = 87 - 89	C+ = 77 - 79	D+ = 67 - 69	E = 0 - 60

Grading Criteria Used for MENG 6610 Essays and Written Assignments:

A: An essay or paper in this category:

- is well developed and well organized
- clearly illustrates and develops key ideas
- displays a high degree of inventiveness & originality
- displays a sophisticated and superior use of language
- demonstrates syntactic variety
- is virtually free from errors in mechanics, usage, sentence structure, and diction

B: An essay or paper in this category:

- is well organized and developed, though it may have small flaws in organization or paragraphing
- illustrates and develops some key ideas
- displays good control of language and a consistent tone
- demonstrates some syntactic variety
- is generally free from errors in mechanics, usage, sentence structure, and diction

C: An essay or paper in this category: (**NOTE: ONLY Grades of B- or Higher Count Toward Degree Requirements**)

- is adequately well developed and organized
- illustrates and develops one or two key ideas
- displays capable and accurate use of language
- may display occasional errors in mechanics, usage, sentence structure, and diction, but not a consistent pattern of such errors

Active Participation: Discussion is a core component of this class. Students are responsible for: carefully reading (or viewing, or listening to) all of the day's assigned texts before class; arriving prepared to discuss the texts; bringing the relevant texts with them to class; and contributing to our discussions regularly. Students are expected to be attentive and focused in class.

Statement: Defining the Gothic: Write a 800+ word statement that addresses the following questions: What is the Gothic? What are its major formal and thematic features? What is the function of the Gothic—what cultural work does it accomplish? Pick a contemporary example of the Gothic (literature, film, video game, TV show, etc.), and explain why you consider this to be a Gothic work. Your statement should reference the course readings from our first class meeting in support of your own original analysis.

Gothic Narrative Presentation: Each student will choose a Gothic narrative not covered by this course (the instructor will provide a list of options) and give a 15-minute presentation analyzing this work. The presentation will provide an overview of the unique features and history of the text, as well as an analysis of how the work's engagement with issues such as authenticity, reliability, narrative framing, and mediation relates back to the larger critical discussions of the course. The presentation, in other words, should put forward interpretive claims about the narrative. Each presenter will prepare a typed handout to

distribute to the class, summarizing the major features of the chosen work as well as the presenter's analysis.

Weekly Discussion Questions: For most (but not all—see Reading Schedule) weeks, you are responsible for posting two discussion questions to Canvas about the readings for the next class meeting. Rather than two single questions, think of them as two clusters of ideas you want to explore in class. Each “question” (which may consist of multiple questions to develop the central idea you are investigating) should be at least 75 words. Aim to probe the major ideas from the reading, clarify critical arguments, delve into specific issues from the week's novel, consider connections between readings, etc. Don't forget to proofread: as with all of your assignments, this work should be polished as well as thoughtful.

So that I and your classmates have time to consider them, these must be posted no later than 5 pm on the Sunday before we meet. Late questions will receive a 0. You do not need to have finished all of the readings to pose questions about them, and your questions can address just one, some, or all of the day's readings.

Research Paper: You will write a 12+ page research essay that engages with a theme or critical issue from this course. You may choose any text or topic from this course that interests you. All students are required to meet with me to discuss their paper ideas.

Research Paper Proposal + Annotated Bibliography: To help you hone your ideas and begin your research for your final paper, you will prepare a proposal containing the following elements:

A 500+ word description of the argument you are proposing. What is the idea you want to investigate? Why? Why is this research important? What is your tentative argument? What questions or issues will guide you as you continue developing your paper? The thesis you propose should be narrow, well-defined, and original. You should provide a provisional outline of the major points you plan to cover in the paper.

- An annotated bibliography, listing at least 10 scholarly sources that are relevant to your project. For each source, give the MLA-style citation and provide a brief (75-100 words) annotation that summarizes the source's main argument and explains why this source is relevant to the field in general and to your argument in particular.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND POLICIES

Workload Expectations

Students should expect to do between 3 and 4 hours of work outside class for each hour in class.

Attendance

Since this is a graduate class, your attendance is extremely important. I expect regular and punctual attendance. There are no excused absences. Whether you miss class because of an illness, a family commitment, a flat tire, work, etc., it counts as an absence. This semester, you are allowed one absence without penalty. Use this wisely: it is for an emergency. Three late arrivals or early departures will count as one absence.

Missing two classes will decrease your final course grade by one letter grade.

Missing three classes will result in not passing the course. Students who miss more than two classes should drop the class this semester and enroll again at another time.

Late Work

Written assignments are due at the times indicated in the reading schedule. Except in the case of extreme and documented emergency, late written assignments will drop by five percentage points for each day (24-hour period) that they are late. Late discussion questions will not be accepted and will receive a 0.

Core Beliefs

According to PPM 6--22 IV, students are to “[d]etermine, before the last day to drop courses without penalty, when course requirements conflict with a student's core beliefs. If there is such a conflict, the student should consider dropping the class. A student who finds this solution impracticable may request a resolution from the instructor. This policy does not oblige the instructor to grant the request, except in those cases when a denial would be arbitrary and capricious or illegal. This request must be made to the instructor in writing and the student must deliver a copy of the request to the office of the department head. The student's request must articulate the burden the requirement would place on the student's beliefs.”

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a violation of the WSU Student Code and is not acceptable in this course (IV.D.2.b). Any sources—whether or not they are scholarly, and whether or not they are quoted directly—must be explicitly acknowledged. Academic dishonesty also includes submitting old or duplicate essays for multiple classes, fabricating sources, or allowing others to produce your work for you. These behaviors will not be tolerated. Students whose work appears plagiarized, or whose sources are not properly documented, are subject to **failure (receiving a zero) of a specific assignment** or **failure of the entire course**. Students who plagiarize will receive a Notice of Academic Integrity Violation and will be reported to the Dean of Students.

Emergency Closures

If for any reason the university is forced to close for an extended period of time, we will conduct our class via Canvas. Look for announcements through the class website and your Weber email account. I recommend that you set up your notifications so that you receive Canvas announcements immediately through your email so that you have as much notice as possible about class announcements.

Americans with Disabilities Act

If you require accommodations or services due to a disability, you must contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) in room 181 of the Student Services Center. SSD can also arrange to provide course materials (including the syllabus) in alternative formats if necessary. For more information about the SSD, contact them at 801-626-6413, ssd@weber.edu, or <http://departments.weber.edu/ssd>. Closed-captioning is required for audio/visual materials per EEO.

Note

If you prefer an alternate name or gender pronoun, please advise me of your preference.

The instructor reserves the right to amend course policies at her discretion.

READING SCHEDULE

Readings must be completed by the start of class on the days indicated below.

All secondary readings can be found on Canvas. Make sure to bring either print or digital copies (not on a phone) of these readings with you to class.

All written assignments are due at the times and by the delivery methods (electronic copy on Canvas or hard copy in class) indicated below.

Note: Reading schedule and assignment due dates are subject to change (notice will be given).

WEEK 1: WHAT IS THE GOTHIC?

Monday, January 9

Spooner and McEvoy, "Gothic Traditions" and "Gothic Media" from *The Routledge Companion to Gothic*
Round, "A Brief History of the Gothic" from *Gothic in Comics and Graphic Media*
Botting, "Negative Aesthetics" from *Gothic*

Sunday, January 15

No Discussion Questions due this week

WEEK 2: NO CLASS MEETING

Monday, January 16

DUE to Canvas by 11:59 pm on Monday, Jan. 16: Statement: Defining the Gothic

We do not meet tonight. Read ahead for next week's class; and begin reading the text for your Gothic Narrative Presentation.

Sunday, January 22

DUE to Canvas by 5pm: Discussion Questions for *Otranto*, Lake

WEEK 3: THE ORIGINS OF THE GOTHIC

Monday, January 23

Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*

Crystal B. Lake, "Bloody Records: Manuscripts and Politics in *The Castle of Otranto*"

Sunday, January 29

DUE to Canvas by 5pm: Discussion Questions for "Uncanny Media" readings

WEEK 4: UNCANNY MEDIA

Monday, January 30

Jeffrey Sconce, "Introduction" from *Haunted Media*

Fred Botting, "Technospectrality: Essay on Uncannimedia" from *Technologies of the Gothic in Literature and Culture*

Annette Hill, "Armchair Ghost Hunters" from *Paranormal Media*

Tom Gunning, "Phantom Images and Modern Manifestations: Spirit Photography, Magic Theater, Trick Films, and Photography's Uncanny" from *Cinematic Ghosts*
Episode of "Most Haunted"

Sunday, February 5

DUE to Canvas by 5pm: Discussion Questions for *Dracula*, Jones, Rogers

WEEK 5: FICTION AND FACTICITY

Monday, February 6

Bram Stoker, *Dracula*

David J. Jones, "Introduction" from *Gothic Machine*

Scott Rogers, "In God's Name, What Does it All Mean? Epistemological Crisis in *Dracula*"

Sunday, February 12

DUE to Canvas by 5pm: Discussion Questions for *Dracula*, Wicke

WEEK 6: MEDIATED MONSTERS

Monday, February 13

Bram Stoker, *Dracula*

Jennifer Wicke, "Vampiric Typewriting: *Dracula* and its Media"

Sunday, February 19

No Discussion Questions due this week

WEEK 7: NO CLASS MEETING

Monday, February 20

Class does not meet tonight.

Read ahead—including reading for your Gothic Narrative Presentation.

Sunday, February 26

DUE to Canvas by 5pm: Discussion Questions for *Dracula*, *House of Leaves*, Galvan

WEEK 8: MEDIA AND MEDIUMS

Monday, February 27

Finish Bram Stoker, *Dracula*

Jill Galvan, “Tuning into the Female Medium” from *The Sympathetic Medium*

Begin Mark Z. Danielewski, *House of Leaves*

Sunday, March 5

No Discussion Questions due this week

WEEK 9: SPRING BREAK

Monday, March 6

Class does not meet tonight.

Read ahead for next week, and work on your Gothic Narrative Presentation

DUE: to Canvas by 11:59 pm: Research Paper Proposal + Annotated Bibliography

Sunday, March 12

DUE to Canvas by 5pm: Discussion Questions for *House of Leaves*, Aguirre

WEEK 10: THE BOOK AS HAUNTED HOUSE

Monday, March 13

Danielewski, *House of Leaves*

Manuel Aguirre, “Geometries of Terror: Numinous Spaces in Gothic, Horror and Science Fiction”

Sunday, March 19

DUE to Canvas by 5pm: Discussion Questions for *House of Leaves*, Southward

WEEK 11: MEDIATING AND REMEDIATING THE GOTHIC

Monday, March 20

Danielewski, *House of Leaves*

Daniel Southward, "Defeat is Good For Art: the Metamodern Impulse in Gothic Metafiction"

Sunday, March 26

No Discussion Questions due this week

WEEK 12: GOTHIC NARRATIVE PRESENTATIONS

Monday, March 27

Gothic Narrative Presentations today

Sunday, April 2

DUE to Canvas by 5pm: Discussion Questions for *Blair Witch*, Grant, Banash

WEEK 13: SEEING THE UNCANNY: GOTHIC ON FILM

Monday, April 3

The Blair Witch Project

Barry Keith Grant, "Digital Anxiety and the New Verité Horror and SF Film"

David Banash, "The Blair Witch Project: Technology, Repression, and the Evisceration of Mimesis"

Sunday, April 9

DUE to Canvas by 5pm: Discussion Questions for *Black Tapes*, Hand, Edwards

WEEK 14: HEARING THE UNCANNY: GOTHIC ON THE AIR

Monday, April 10

The Black Tapes Podcast, episodes 1-6

Richard J. Hand, "The Darkest Nightmares Imaginable: Gothic Audio Drama from Radio to the Internet" from *A Companion to American Gothic*

Justin D. Edwards, "Eerie Technologies and Gothic Acoustemology" from *Technologies of the Gothic*

Sunday, April 16

No Discussion Questions due this week

Week 15: "IS THIS REAL?" NARRATIVE, MEDIUM, AND ONTOLOGY

Monday, April 17

The Black Tapes Podcast, episodes 7-12

Tanis podcast, episode 1

Read the Reddit AMA with Paul Bae and Terry Miles

Lennard J. Davis, "Frame, Context, Prestructure" from *Factual Fictions*

Margrit Schreier, "'Please Help Me; All I want to Know Is: Is it Real or Not': How Recipients View the Reality Status of the Blair Witch Project"

Wednesday, April 19

Final Paper due to Canvas by 11:59 pm

Sunday, April 23

DUE to Canvas by 5pm: Discussion Questions for Bruhm

WEEK 16: CONCLUSIONS

Monday, April 24

Steven Bruhm, "The Contemporary Gothic: Why We Need It" in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*