

HON210-01: Monsters and Monstrosities
Online (and possibly Hyflex later) T/Th 11:30-12:45
Spring 2021



Professor: Justine K. Van Meter

Office: Virtual Realm! I'm everywhere at all times and yet nowhere at any time!

Office Hours: Remote (by email and/or Zoom); please contact me to arrange a meeting as needed.

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Catalog Description:

Prerequisite, acceptance to the University Honors Program, or consent of instructor.

Using an interdisciplinary approach, we will investigate and interpret the stories we construct about ourselves and the Other by exploring works from east/west involving the vampire, the spectre, and the witch. We will particularly focus on cultural, literary, and political representations from various periods and locations.

Course Objectives/Outcomes:

In many of his works, the anthropologist Clifford Geertz has argued that culture is simply the ensemble of stories we tell ourselves about ourselves. In this course, we will investigate and interpret the stories that we construct – about ourselves and about “the Other” – by particularly exploring literary works from east, west, and in-between which revolve around figures of dread: **the vampire, the specter, the witch** (and others along the way!). In the process, we will discuss who or what these figures represent; how constructions and representations of the frightening reflect cultural, social and political realities; and how images of, and myths involving, these figures have changed or have remained the same over the centuries. We will focus on various time periods (but will relate each of these to our contemporary experiences) and various locations around the world (but will particularly focus on England/Ireland, various parts of the Caribbean/West Indies and Africa, and the United States).

Major Topics Covered:

- I. Historical, cultural, and literary contexts.
- II. Diverse experiences, definitions and expressions of culture and identity.
- III. Psychoanalytic, feminist, and postcolonial interpretations/approaches to reading literature and culture (and the question of how to approach “World Literature”).
- IV. Storytelling and stories as creators of community and nation.
- V. The “Self,” the “Other,” and the “in-between.”

Honors Program Learning Outcomes:

- Obtain a starting point for integrative exploration of the development of cultures and intellectual achievements through a variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives;
- Sharpen the ability to critically analyze and synthesize a broad range of knowledge through the study of primary texts and through engagement in active learning with fellow students, faculty, and texts (broadly understood);
- Understand how to apply more integrative and interdisciplinary forms of understanding in the advancement of knowledge and in addressing complex challenges shaping the world;
- Develop effective communication skills, specifically in the areas of written and oral exposition and analysis.

General Education Learning Outcomes:

In addition to the outcomes specified above, this course also satisfies the following General Education areas:

- 7AI (Artistic Inquiry): Students compose critical or creative works that embody or analyze conceptually an artistic form at a baccalaureate/pre-professional level.
- 7SI (Social Inquiry): Students explore processes by which human beings develop social and/or historical perspectives.

Required Texts:

Maryse Conde, *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*
Ben Okri, *The Famished Road*
Anne Williams (editor), *Three Vampire Tales*
Handouts (posted on Canvas)

Requirements:

- I. Readings and informal writing assignments: as you will notice on the syllabus, there are many materials that will be posted on Canvas for your convenience. Please be sure to have the readings and assignments completed on the day that they are listed on the syllabus. **It usually is very obvious when that's not happening, so do your business so that we can all do our business together!**
- II. Essay 1 (200 points): Your essay needs to be submitted **by class time (11:30)** on the date listed on the syllabus and must be submitted using Turnitin on Canvas. **No late papers accepted!**
- III. Essay 2 (300 points): Your essay needs to be submitted **by 6:00pm** on the date listed on the syllabus and must be submitted using Turnitin on Canvas. Your presentation at the end of the semester will be based on this essay (more on this later!). **No late papers accepted!**
- IV. Presentation (100 points): More information will be distributed as this assignment approaches.
- V. Final Exam (300 points): The final will be comprehensive. More on this later!
- VI. Participation/Attendance (100 points): It is more than likely that, at this point in the syllabus and in your time in the Honors program, you are aware that your active participation in this class is necessary. We are in this together, to critically explore and examine a variety of texts, images and ideas; as such, all of our voices must be heard! **This is even more important with an online format, so please be sure to be present with both audio and video! To not do so means that you may be counted as absent for the day. If there are technical difficulties at any point that make this impossible on a particular day, please let me know.**

Additionally, software **may** be used to record live class discussions. As a student in this class, your participation in live class discussions will be recorded to assist those who cannot attend the live session, or to serve as a resource for those who would like to review content that was presented. These recordings will be made available **only** to students who are enrolled in the class, and **only** during the period in which the course is offered. All recordings will become unavailable to students in the class shortly after the course ends.

Regardless of the format, expectations regarding absences and tardies remain the same as if we were together in person, so please be aware that excessive unexcused absences (meaning absences that are not cleared with me **prior** to class and that are not legitimized by either a doctor's/dean's note or by other satisfactory means) or excessive tardiness will result in a reduction in your final grade according to the table shown below:

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|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Absence #3 | 20 point deduction |
| Absence #4-5 | 50 point deduction |
| Absence #6 and beyond | Failure in the class |
| Tardies | 3 Tardies=1 Unexcused Absence |

Special Note: Please do not use other distracting devices during our class time! If there is an emergency or circumstance in which one or both of these is required, please let me know before class begins.

Chapman University's Students with Disabilities Policy: In compliance with ADA guidelines, students who have any condition, either permanent or temporary, that might affect their ability to perform in this class are encouraged to inform the instructor at the beginning of the term. The University, through the Disability Services Office, will work with the appropriate faculty member who is asked to provide the accommodations for a student in determining what accommodations are suitable based on the documentation and the individual student needs. The granting of any accommodation will not be retroactive and cannot jeopardize the academic standards or integrity of the course.

Grades: I am painfully aware of the emphasis that we all place on the grades that we receive. Although I have listed below the point values/percentages assigned to the various course requirements, I would like to remind you to please keep in mind as we proceed that *learning* is a process, one which points and percentages are very often incapable of measuring (corny, but true). Enjoy the process!

Important Note: We'll discuss the writing process and the (often inadvertent) potential for plagiarism when working from sources throughout the semester; please note, though, that – due to the increase in academic dishonesty since working virtually – the university is monitoring websites such as Chegg and Coursehero. Any violation of our academic integrity standards will result in action from the Academic Integrity Committee.

Essay 1 200 points
Essay 2 300 points
Final Exam 300 points

Presentation 100 points
Participation 100 points

TOTAL 1000 points

Grade Scale:

A 950-1000
A- 910-949
B+ 880-909
B 840-879
B- 810-839
C+ 780-809
C 740-779
C- 710-739
D+ 680-709
D 640-679
D- 610-639
F 0-609

Schedule of Classes

*I reserve the right to alter the syllabus as needed.

Week 1:

- T 02/02 Introduction to the course/Review of Syllabus
- Th 02/04 **Be sure to have the syllabus available for your reference each day.**
Monsters in Lit./Film in *your* life: write about any experiences you have had with reading or viewing materials involving monsters (what books have you read/what films have you seen, etc.?). What do you think the purpose is of reading/viewing these works? What are the possibilities that might emerge from literary or cinematic works involving monsters? Why are you and/or we attracted to them?

Week 2:

- T 02/09 Read Teratology (attachments on Canvas)
We will view *Ancient Monster Hunters* (documentary) in class
- Th 02/11 **"Vampirism** Around the World" and excerpts from *Vikram and the Vampire* (India), PDFs on Canvas

Week 3:

- T 02/16 The Western Tradition/The Gothic (readings on Canvas); *Three Vampire Tales*: "Introduction" (1-12); Byron, "A Vampire Curse" and "Fragment of a Novel" (17-22)
- Th 02/18 Le Fanu, *Carmilla* (*Three Vampire Tales*, pp. 87-116)

Week 4:

- T 02/23 *Carmilla*, cont. (116-148)
- Th 02/25 Stoker, "Dracula's Guest" (*Three Vampire Tales*, pp. 57-66); Stoker's *Dracula* in graphic form (website on Canvas); The creation of *Dracula* (*Three Vampire Tales*, pp. 42-56)

Week 5:

- T 03/02 The Vampire Today (excerpt from *Blood Read* on Canvas) + Response Assignment (listed on Canvas)
- Th 03/04 Cinematic Representations (meet on Zoom for in-class discussion/viewing)

Week 6:

- T 03/09 **Zoom Break:** View the film *Let the Right One In* on your own (or organize a Watch Party!). This film is available for free through Swank. Use this website to register and view: <https://blogs.chapman.edu/library/2020/04/22/new-database-swank-digital-campus/>

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|-----------------|-------|---|
| Th | 03/11 | Zoom Break: Essay 1 Due via Turnitin on Canvas by the beginning of class (11:30am). No late papers accepted, so be careful with this and be sure to use all guidelines – provided on both the handout and on Canvas – to avoid deductions. |
| Week 7: | | |
| T | 03/16 | The Spectre: de Maupassant, “The Horla” (hand-out on Canvas) |
| Th | 03/18 | Colonial/Postcolonial Hauntings: Read pp. 3-71 of Ben Okri’s <i>The Famished Road</i> In class, we’ll focus on defining the “Postcolonial,” understanding the colonial history of Nigeria and discussing the main characters of the story. |
| Week 8: | | |
| T | 03/23 | Spring Break (No Class) |
| Th | 03/25 | |
| Week 9: | | |
| T | 03/30 | <i>The Famished Road</i> , pp. 75-150(ish) In class, we’ll focus on the abiku and what he/she represents. |
| Th | 04/01 | <i>The Famished Road</i> , pp. 150(ish)-250(ish) Write two questions on the assigned pages for the day and be prepared to lead the class discussion with them. |
| Week 10: | | |
| T | 04/06 | <i>The Famished Road</i> , pp. 250(ish)-400(ish) Write two questions on the assigned pages for the day and be prepared to lead the class discussion with them. |
| Th | 04/08 | <i>The Famished Road</i> , Finish the book! Write two questions and be prepared to lead the class discussion with them. |
| Week 11: | | |
| T | 04/13 | The Caribbean: the soucouyante/witch ; Chamoiseau (hand-out on Canvas) – please read the afterword first (at the end of the handout). |
| Th | 04/15 | Read (in this order , please) from Maryse Conde’s <i>I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem</i> : pp. 187-213 (the Afterword) and then the Forward. |
| Week 12: | | |
| T | 04/20 | <i>I, Tituba</i> , pp. 3-147 |

Th 04/22 *I, Tituba*, pp. 148-179

Week 13:

T 04/27 View *The Witch: A New England Folk Tale* on your own (or organize a Watch Party)! This film can be viewed on Swank for free.

Th 04/29 **Essay 2 Due via Turnitin on Canvas by 11:30am today** (no late papers accepted)! Be sure to use all guidelines!

Week 14:

T 05/04 Presentations

Th 05/06 Presentations

Week 15:

T 05/11 Presentations

Th 05/13 Presentations

Final Exam: Thursday 05/20 (1:30pm-4:00pm)