

# THE HORROR FILM

FILM 2195B

Western University—Film Studies Winter 2018

Screening: Mondays 4:30-7:30pm (AHB-3B04)

Lecture/Discussion: Wednesdays 5:30-7:30pm (AHB-3B04)

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Although marked by a consistently disreputable status, horror has long been one of the most popular and enduring global genres in the history of film. With deep roots in mythology, fairy tales, Gothic literature, and Freudian psychoanalysis, horror cinema continues to shock and delight audiences through tales of vampires, ghosts, zombies, werewolves, serial killers, and other monstrous icons. And yet the basic function of the horror film—to elicit unsettling emotions of fear, shock, anxiety, and disgust—has also made the genre a frequent target of censorship and a convenient scapegoat for broader social crises and moral panics. Such controversies also speak to the crucial ways that horror cinema both explores and negotiates cultural tensions and anxieties about identity, technology, religion, difference/Otherness, and the environment. Providing an introduction to the history of horror cinema, this course will explore the key forms, styles, and thematic elements of both classic and contemporary horror films from around the world. It will also frame the analysis of major films such as *Nosferatu* (Murnau, 1922), *Psycho* (Fisher, 1957), *Jaws* (Romero, 1968), and *Jaws* (Friedkin, 1973) in relation to their specific industrial and cultural contexts, paying close attention to both the perception and reception of horror audiences as well as the genre's allegorical potential.

Key topics to be discussed include: fears and anxieties addressed by horror cinema; cultural traditions of horror; horror and repression/the unconscious; bodily horrors; supernatural vs. psychological horror; normality and monstrosity; gender and sexuality in horror cinema; horror and technology; fandom and the pleasures of horror.

**Course Objectives:** This course functions as an introduction to the study of horror cinema, emphasizing both close textual analysis and key critical approaches to the genre. In addition to examining the key figures and forms of the monstrous in horror cinema, the course provides an historical overview of the Hollywood horror film as well as horror cinema from a variety of international contexts.

**Learning Outcomes:** By the end of the course, you will have a thorough grasp of the history of the horror film, its formal and narrative strategies, and the various critical and theoretical approaches used to examine it. You will also expand your knowledge of the diverse global forms of horror cinema as well as the complex relationship of horror cinema to issues of identity, nation, ideology, and affect. Close analysis of major horror films in class and on exams will make you a more skilled reader and critic of both cinema and the horror genre.

## COURSE TEXTS

1. Paul Wells, (London: Wallflower, 2000). Available at the University Bookstore.
2. Online Coursepack [OWL]. All other readings for the course will be available on the course OWL page under Resources (see schedule below).

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Class Attendance and Participation [10%]  
Discussion Leading [20%]  
Quizzes (10 min.) [Weeks 2, 6, 13] [10% total]  
In-Class Exams (1 hour) [15% each]  
Final Exam (3 hours) [30%]

### *General Tips for Success in the Course:*

—All students will attend screenings and seminars prepared to participate in discussions based on the week's assigned readings and screenings.

—Notes should be taken during or immediately following all screenings.

—Come to class with questions or comments that have arisen from the readings and screening.

—Take detailed notes during the lectures and class discussions

—Review lecture slides frequently and ask questions if you are confused. You will need to express your own views on the course material in class and on the exams.

**Course Content:** To find the lecture outlines for the course, click on the "Resources" icon found on the Home Page in Owl and then the "Lectures" folder. The folders here are organized by week and include lecture outlines, clips, and other materials pertaining to the week's lecture. The course syllabus is also available on the Home Page in OWL.

**Attendance and Participation:** You are required to attend all class meetings and screenings for the full duration. Attendance will be taken regularly. Be sure to come to class fully prepared, having read all of the weekly reading assignments, and with your course books and readings in hand. Lateness, early departures, or other disruptive behavior will adversely affect your participation grade. More than **THREE** absences will result in a zero for your final participation grade. Only documented medical emergencies—verified through your home faculty (see below)—will be considered for exam rescheduling. *If you are absent for TEN or more classes (excused or unexcused) you will automatically fail both*

**Discussion Leading:** Working with one of your fellow classmates, you will lead discussion on the screening/readings one week during the term. I will provide a list of guidelines and tips, but each discussion leader will be responsible for presenting specific questions about the film and/or the course readings as well as engaging your fellow students in a discussion about that element. You will need to coordinate with your group member in order to prepare and organize the discussion questions/material, and in most cases I will assess the group as a whole based on the overall quality of the discussion leading.

**Quizzes and Exams:**

There will be three short quizzes given at the beginning of the Wednesday lecture period (Weeks 2, 6, and 13). The quizzes will last 10 minutes and will consist of 5 multiple choice or short answer questions based on the readings and screenings. The quizzes cover the readings for the week in which they are given, and they are meant to be a warm-up for the longer

be permitted during lecture, but only on a probationary basis: if the instructor is distracted two times during the semester by non-note-taking/internet laptop use, the instructor will ban ALL use of laptops/tablets for the remainder of the year. In addition, be sure to turn off cell phones and refrain from text messaging during class. This counts as disruptive behavior and will lower your final participation grade.

**Note on Screenings:** You are required to attend weekly screenings on Monday evenings (attendance will be taken). Be sure to arrive to the screenings on time and to follow traditional screening etiquette (turn off cell phones, laptops, no talking, etc.). If you are ill or have a legitimate excuse, you should set up an appointment to view the films in the Film Studies Resource Library [AHB-1G19] before Wednesday's lecture. [[http://www.uwo.ca/arts/tech/video\\_resources\\_library.html](http://www.uwo.ca/arts/tech/video_resources_library.html)] The library is open Monday-Thursday from 10am-3pm and Friday from 10am-2pm. Remember to contact Joanna Smith (jsmit459@uwo.ca) in advance to make a viewing appointment in the Resource Library if necessary. Keep in mind, however, that screening the film independently on a small monitor will hardly substitute for experiencing the film with an audience and projected on a large screen.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### **WEEK 1—January 8-10—INTRODUCTION to the HORROR FILM**

**Screening:** (William Friedkin, 1973, 122 min.)

**Reading:** Wells, , Chapter 1 (pgs. 3-35)  
& Berliner, "Conceptual Incongruity and " (excerpt) [OWL]

### **WEEK 2—Jan. 15-17—SCREENING the VAMPIRE**

**Screening:** (F.W. Murnau, 1922, 94 min.)  
& (Tod Browning, 1931, 84 min.)

**Reading:** Wells, , Chapter 2 (pgs. 36-49)  
& Wood, "Burying the Undead" [OWL]  
& Elsaesser, "No End to " [OWL]

**\*\*QUIZ #1 at the beginning of class on Wednesday Jan. 17\*\***

### **WEEK 3—Jan. 22-24—HAMMER HORROR and the FRANKENSTEIN MYTH**

**Screening:** (James Whale, 1931, 71 min.) &  
(Terence Fisher, 1957, 83 min.)

**Reading:** Wells, , Chapter 2 (pgs. 49-73)  
& Mangravite, "The House of Hammer" [OWL]  
& Friedman & Kavey, (excerpts) [OWL]

**WEEK 4—Jan. 29-31—GHOSTS and GOTHIC HORROR**

**Screening:** (Jack Clayton, 1961, 100 min.)

**Reading:**

**WEEK 10—March 12-14—INVESTIGATING the SERIAL KILLER**

**Screening:** (Jonathan Demme, 1991, 118 min.)

**Reading:** Wells, , Chapter 3 (pgs. 89-101; 105-112)  
& Taubin, “Killing Men” [OWL]  
& Seltzer, “The Serial Killer as a Type of Person” (excerpt) [OWL]

**WEEK 11— March 19-21—J-HORROR**

**Screening:** (Hideo Nakata, 1998, 95 min.)

**Reading:** Stringer, “The Original and the Copy: Nakata Hideo’s Ring (1998)”  
& Wee, “Visual Aesthetics and Ways of Seeing” [both on OWL]

**WEEK 12—March 26-28—HORROR after 9/11: The Splat Pack & Torture Porn**

**Screening:** (Neil Marshall, 2005, 100 min.)

**Reading:** Pinedo, “Torture Porn” [OWL]  
& Bernard, (excerpt) [OWL]

**WEEK 13—April 2-4—REFRAMING the VAMPIRE**

**Screening:** (Tomas Alfredson, 2008, 114 min.)

**Reading:** Scahill, “Revolting Children” [OWL]

## **POLICIES and REGULATIONS**

Please go to the following site for information on the university Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness: (<https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>)

For information on the examination services provided by the Student Development Centre, please visit [www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd)

**Mental Health:** Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.  
<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/>

**Disabilities:** Please consult with me during the first three weeks of class regarding disabilities that might require special accommodations.

**Complaints:** If students have a complaint concerning a course in which they are enrolled, they must first discuss the matter with the instructor of the course. If students are still not satisfied, they should then take the complaint to the English Department chair. These regulations are in place because a failure to follow these procedures creates the potential for injustices of various kinds affecting either the instructor or the students themselves, or both parties. Concerns should not be allowed to fester but should be raised with the instructor in a timely manner, so that they can be addressed in time to make a difference to the course.

**Office Hours:** I will be available to answer questions, clarify concepts/assignments, and assist you with your coursework during my weekly office hours (posted above). If you have an occasional conflict, feel free to email me and we can set up an alternative time to meet. I will also be available via email M-F from 9-5 and will do my best to respond to your email within two days. **\*Please note, however, that I may not respond to questions about the course that can be answered simply by reviewing the course syllabus.**