HON210: Monsters and Monstrosities

Fall 2023

**Credits: 3**

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**Professor: Justine K. Van Meter**

**Office/Office Hours:** Let’s Zoom (T 3-5 and by appointment/at your convenience)

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**Catalog Description:**

Prerequisite, acceptance to the University Honors Program, or consent of director. 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:**

1. Historical, cultural, and literary contexts.
2. Diverse experiences, definitions and expressions of culture and identity.
3. Psychoanalytic, feminist, and postcolonial interpretations/approaches to reading literature and culture (and the question of how to approach “World Literature”).
4. Storytelling and stories as creators of community and nation.
5. 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:**

1. Readings: as you will notice on the syllabus, there are materials that will be posted on Canvas. Feel free to use your laptop to access them in class if needed, but **PLEASE only use your device for this purpose** during class; I’ll call you out big-time if it’s apparent that you’re on Facebook or your email! **Additionally, if it becomes clear that readings are not completed by the day they are due, quizzes will be added and they will be very difficult!** **You will be responsible for not only reading the material, but leading the discussions and presenting the material in question, so please be ready to participate each day!**
2. We will also have writing assignments at times, as seen on the syllabus, but note that unlessthese are specified as graded assignments with guidelines to follow, these are informal and can be handwritten or typed. While they’re not graded, they are an important component of your participationgrade.
3. Essay 1(200 points): **No late papers accepted!**
4. Essay 2 (300 points): your presentation at the end of the semester will be based on this essay (more on this later!). **No late papers accepted!**
5. Presentation (100 points): More information will be distributed as this assignment approaches.
6. Final Exam (300 points): The final will be comprehensive. More on this later!
7. Participation/Attendance(100 points): It is more than likely that, at this point in the syllabus, 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!

With regard to attendance, excessive unexcused absence (meaning any absence that is not cleared with me **prior** to class and that is not legitimized by either a doctor’s/coach’s/dean’s note or by other satisfactory reason) or excessive tardiness will result in a reduction in your final grade according to the table shown below:

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

**Academic Integrity:** I am assuming that you are all extremely bright and eager students; as such, you are expected to be fully aware and respectful of Chapman’s Academic Integrity policy (as described in your Student Handbook). We will discuss guidelines regarding citation throughout the semester, but if you have any questions or doubts at any time, please put your mind (and writing) at ease and discuss them with me.

**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.

**Special Notes:**

\*Please be aware that this is not a hyflex/hybrid course; in other words, I’ll be zooming each class (with minimal interaction with anyone who is there), but this is to be used sparingly and only when necessary!

\*If you need to discuss accommodations, please contact Disability Services ([ds@chapman.edu](mailto:ds@chapman.edu)) right away.

\*Please do not use laptops/cell phones during class time other than to access materials! If there is an emergency or circumstance in which one or both of these is required, please let me know before class begins.

\*Dr. Richard Ruppel from the English Department has succinctly explained my own policy regarding the use of AI here, so please read his words carefully:

Chatbots or generative AI tools may offer useful information. However, students are solely responsible for the accuracy and authenticity of the material that the Chatbot generates in response to their prompt or AI query. It is the student’s responsibility to verify the accuracy of the information provided and to use that information in ethical ways that avoid academic integrity issues. Students should also be aware of the inherent bias that may be manifested in generative AI responses and need to think critically as they analyze the information provided. To stay in compliance with university policies on academic integrity, a student’s use of AI tools must be properly documented and referenced in the citation style of your chosen discipline.  
*The use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Dall-e, etc.)****is permitted****in this course for the following activities:*

* Brainstorming and refining your ideas.
* Fine-tuning your research questions.
* Finding general information about the topic.
* Drafting an outline to organize your thoughts.
* Checking grammar, writing conventions, and/or style.

*The use of generative AI tools****is not permitted****in this course for the following activities:*

* Writing a draft of a writing assignment.
* Writing entire sentences, paragraphs, or papers to complete class assignments.

If you have questions about whether a specific AI tool is permitted, please ask me for clarification prior to turning in classroom or research assignments. Should I determine that an assignment has used generative AI tools in unauthorized ways, I will ask you in for a conference. Repeated offences may be brought before Chapman University’s Academic Integrity Committee for final arbitration.

**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!

Grade Scale:

Essay 1 200 points A 950-1000

Essay 2 300 points A- 910-949

Final Exam 300 points B+ 880-909

B 840-879

B- 810-839

Presentation 100 points C+ 780-809

Participation 100 points C 740-779

C- 710-739

D+ 680-709

D 640-679

D- 610-639

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**TOTAL 1000 points**

Schedule of Classes

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

**Week 1:**

T 08/29 Introduction to the course/Review of Syllabus

Th 08/31 **Be sure to read through the syllabus, consistently know**

**what’s ahead, and refer to it often.**

Monsters in Lit./Film in *your* life: Write a page or two – handwritten or typed – on the books read/films seen that you would classify as “monstrous” (or involving monsters) and explain why you are/were either attracted or repelled by the works. Take it further after that and explain why you think we seem to be drawn to the materials that inspire terror.

**Week 2:**

T 09/05 Teratology (attachments on Canvas);

*Ancient Monster Hunters*

Th 09/07 “**Vampirism** Around the World” and excerpt from *Vikram*

*and the Vampire* (India), PDFs on Canvas

**Week 3:**

T 09/12 The Western Tradition/The Gothic (readings on

Blackboard); *Three Vampire Tales*: “Introduction”(1-12); Byron, “A Vampire Curse” and “Fragment of a Novel” (17-22)

Th 09/14 *Three Vampire Tales*: Le Fanu, *Carmilla* (87-116)

**Week 4:**

T 09/19 *Carmilla*, cont.(116-148)

Th 09/21 *Three Vampire Tales*: “Dracula’s Guest” (57-66);

Stoker’s *Dracula* in graphic form (website on

Canvas); *Three Vampire Tales*: the creation of

*Dracula* (42-56)

**Week 5:**

T 09/26 Excerpt from *Blood Read* (hand-out on Canvas) + Write an

informal page or two analyzing a contemporary work – film, book, advertisement, online source, anything! – that involves the vampire. How does the argument in the readings for today relate to what you’ve found?

Th 09/28 *Let the Right One In*

**Week 6:**

## T 10/03 **The Spectre**: de Maupassant, “The Horla” (hand-out on

## Canvas)

Th 10/05 Writing Workshop

**Essay 1 Due by 11:00pm on Canvas (No late papers accepted)!**

**Week 7:**

T 10/10 Informal Writing Assignment: Write 1-2 pages – handwritten

or typed – on the following question: What is the “postcolonial”?

Th 10/12 Colonial/Postcolonial Hauntings: focus on the *abiku*

Ben Okri, *The Famished Road,* Book 1

**Week 8:**

T 10/17 *The Famished Road*, Books 2 and 3

Bring in two questions/issues from these sections that you would like to ask/discuss with others.

Th 10/19 *The Famished Road,* Book 4 and 5

Bring in two questions/issues.

**Week 9:**

T 10/24 *The Famished Road,* Books 6 and 7

Bring in two questions/issues.

Th 10/26 *The Famished Road,* Book 8

**Week 10:**

T 10/31 The Caribbean: **the *soucouyante/*witch**; Chamoiseau

(hand-out on Canvas)

Th 11/02 Maryse Conde, *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem* (reading

schedule on Canvas)

**Week 11:**

T 11/07 *I, Tituba*

Th 11/09 *I, Tituba*

**Week 12:s**

T 11/14 *The Witch*

Th 11/16 Writing Workshop

**Essay 2 Due by Sunday 11/26 (no later than 11:00pm on Canvas). No late papers accepted beyond this date/time!**

**Week 13:**

T 11/21

**No Classes** (Thanksgiving)

Th 11/23

**Week 14:**

T 11/28 Presentations

Th 11/30 Presentations

**Week 15:**

T 12/05 Presentations

Th 12/07 Presentations

Final Exam: **Friday 12/15 (due on Canvas by 11:00pm – no in-class final exam**

### time). No late papers accepted beyond this date/time, so be careful!)