Horror Movies

FLMM 237 .01
Dr. David Sterritt – djsterritt@gmail.com
Brown 320
Thursdays 1:00 – 3:45 p.m.
GTI: Max Shuster - mshuster@mica.edu

Course Description:

This course gives an analytical overview of the horror-film genre, exploring key works representing a variety of nationalities, styles, and sub-genres, with particular emphasis on cultural differences related to sexuality, gender, technology, family, and modernity, as well as moral questions raised by cinema deemed markedly or excessively violent according to current standards, which are themselves variable and unstable, especially in the current American cultural climate. Films will be viewed and discussed in class. Reading assignments include theoretical, historical, and critical texts.

Course Objectives:

• Students will sharpen their critical skills through intensive historical and theoretical study of cinematic texts that employ devices of shock, suspense, transgression, and the uncanny, with the goal of gaining increased understanding of the social, psychological, and political roles played by media in contemporary Western culture.
• Students will cultivate skills for discerning important themes, ideas, tropes, and stylistic traits of the horror-film genre through the analysis of works by an array of international filmmakers, with emphasis on issues relating to gender, sexuality, family, technology, and modernity.
• Students will learn to integrate different modes of understanding related to modern artistic phenomena – historical, sociological, psychological – and will acquire proficiency in bringing these to bear on the works of leading moving-image artists working within various cultural contexts.
• Students will further their ability to communicate ideas and opinions cogently and effectively in both written and spoken form.

Topics for classroom lectures and discussions, films and videos to be screened, and reading assignments for each week are listed in the Course Schedule below. Additional reading may be
assigned and distributed during the semester. At the bottom of the Course Schedule you will find URLs for all reading assignments available on the Web.

Part 1 – Physical Horror

Class 1 – January 24  
Topic: Introduction to the horror genre  
Screening: Dracula (Tod Browning, USA, 1931)  
Roger Ebert, “Dracula (1931).” Chicago Sun-Times (19 September 1999).

Class 2 – January 31  
Topic: Dracula in Spanish  
Screening: Drácula (George Melford, USA, 1931)  

Class 3 – February 7  
Topic: The modern vampire  
Screening: Martin (George A. Romero, USA, 1976)  

Class 4 – February 14  
Topic: The postmodern vampire  
Screening: Bram Stoker’s Dracula (Francis Ford Coppola, USA, 1992)  

Part 2 – Metaphysical Horror

Class 5 – February 21  
Topic: Ghosts, children, and horrors of war  
Screening: Cronos (Guillermo del Toro, Mexico, 1993)  
Reading: Maitland McDonagh, “Cronos: Beautiful Dark Things.” The Criterion Collection Current (7 December 2010).
Class 6 – February 28
Topic: Hell
Screening: *Jigoku* (Nobuo Nakagawa, Japan, 1960)

Class 7 – March 7
Topic: Evil incarnate
Screening: *The Omen* (Richard Donner, USA/UK, 1976)

Class 8 – March 14
Topic: Demonic possession
Screening: *The Exorcist* (William Friedkin, USA, 1973)

[No class – March 21]

Class 9 – March 28
Topic: Sequels
Screening: *Exorcist II: The Heretic* (John Boorman, USA, 1977)

**Part 3 – Psychological Horror**

Class 10 – April 4
Topic: Horror and reflexive film
Screening: *Peeping Tom* (Michael Powell, UK, 1960)
Reading: Laura Mulvey, “*Peeping Tom.*” *The Criterion Collection Current* (15 November 1999).

Geoffrey Macnab, “They made the critics scream, but now these films are classics.” *The Independent* (18 June 2010).

Class 11 – April 11
Topic: Horror in the home
Screening: *Orphan* (Jaume Collet-Serra, USA/Canada/Germany/France, 2009)

Class 12 – April 18
Topic: Premature burial
Screening: The Vanishing (George Sluizer, Netherlands/France, 1988)

Class 13 – April 25
Topic: Extreme horror
Screening: Inside (Alexandre Bustillo & Julien Maury, France, 2007)

Class 14 – May 2
Topic: Psychopathology
Screening: Dead Ringers (David Cronenberg, Canada/USA, 1988)
Reading: Dan Shaw, “Psychological Determinism in Dead Ringers.” Film and Philosophy III.

Class 15 – May 9
Topic: Insanity and isolation
Screening: Shutter Island (Martin Scorsese, USA, 2010)
Reading: Mick Brown, “Martin Scorsese interview for Shutter Island.” The Telegraph (7 March 2010).
   David Cox, “Shutter Island’s ending explained.” guardian.co.uk (29 July 2010).

URLs for reading assignments available on the Web:

Class 1 – January 24
Mordaunt Hall, “Bram Stoker’s Human Vampire.”
http://movies.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=950DE7D61F3A
EE32A25750C1A9649C946094D6CF

Roger Ebert, “Dracula (1931).”
http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/1
9990919/REVIEWS08/909190301/1023

Class 2 – January 31
Kenneth Turan, “The Missing Dracula.”
http://articles.latimes.com/1992-10-31/entertainment/ca-
679_1_spanish-version

Class 3 – February 7
Brian Wilson, “George A. Romero.”

Class 4 – February 14
Reading: Brian Eggert, “Bram Stoker’s Dracula.”
http://www.deepfocusreview.com/reviews/bramstokersdracul
a.asp

Class 5 – February 21
Maitland McDonagh, “Cronos: Beautiful Dark Things.”

Class 6 – February 28
Chuck Stephens, “Jigoku: Hell on Earth.”
http://www.criterion.com/current/posts/448-jigoku-hell-on-
earth

Class 7 – March 7
http://cinefantastiqueonline.com/2008/06/film-review-the-
omen-1976/

Class 8 – March 14
Tom Huddleston, “William Friedkin interview.”
http://www.timeout.com/london/film/william-friedkin-interview

Nick Cull, “The Exorcist.”
http://www.historytoday.com/nick-cull/exorcist

**Class 9 – March 28**
John C. Kerr and Paul Rowlands, “Exorcist II: The Heretic.”

**Class 10 – April 4**
Laura Mulvey, “Peeping Tom.”
http://www.criterion.com/current/posts/65-peeping-tom

Geoffrey Macnab, “They made the critics scream, but now these films are classics.”
http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/they-made-the-critics-scream-but-now-these-films-are-classics-2003140.html

**Class 11 – April 11**
Todd McCarthy, “Orphan.”
http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117940720/?categoryid=31&cs=1

Melissa Faye Greene, “The New Movie Parents Hate.”

Roger Ebert, “Orphan.”

Manohla Dargis, “New Kid in the House, Clearly Up to Something.”

**Class 12 – April 18**
Kim Newman, “The Vanishing.”

Roger Ebert, “The Vanishing.”

Class 13 – April 25
“A Blood Soaked Interview with the Inside (À L’Interieur) Directors.”

Class 14 – May 2
Dan Shaw, “Psychological Determinism in Dead Ringers.”
http://www.davidcronenberg.de/psychoringers.html

Chris Rodley, “Dead Ringers.”
http://www.criterion.com/current/posts/31-dead-ringers

Class 15 – May 9
Mick Brown, “Martin Scorsese interview for Shutter Island.”
http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/filmmakersonfilm/7366950/Martin-Scorsese-interview-for-Shutter-Island.html

David Cox, “Shutter Island’s ending explained.”
http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/filmblog/2010/jul/29/shutter-island-ending

Course requirements:
Students must attend all class sessions, complete all reading assignments in a timely way, and participate actively in class discussions.
In addition, each student must keep a journal during the course, comprising two to three pages per week. This is the equivalent of a short paper each week, in which you respond to that week’s course material: the reading, the film, the lecture, and the class discussion. Journals must be printed by computer, not written by hand. Additional rules and guidelines for the journal are given below.

Grading schedule: Journals are due in two installments. Entries for the first seven weeks must be submitted on March 14. They will be returned to you on October 27 with
a midterm grade. Entries for the remaining weeks are due in class on May 9. No journal entry is required for our last class on May 7, since journals are due on that day.

Attendance and Participation:
Attendance will be taken. It is your responsibility to get to class on time. Unexcused absences or excessive lateness will result in a lower final grade. If you know you will be absent on a future date, let me know in advance. Absences will be excused only if you provide verification (documentation of a legitimate reason: illness, family emergency, etc.) as to why the class was missed. You must catch up with work missed due to absences, excused or otherwise. This includes all films that have been screened in class; if you miss something, you must watch it on your own. (All film material for this course is on reserve in the Media Resources Collection for re-viewing or catching up.) You should participate fully in class discussions, since part of your final grade will reflect class participation.

Journals must be submitted on the dates given above unless a later date is arranged because of special circumstances. Handing in a journal late because of unforeseen circumstances requires verification (documentation of a legitimate reason: illness, family emergency, etc.) as to why the due date was missed.

Journal rules and guidelines:
The journal must contain two to three pages on each week’s subject matter, demonstrating knowledge of the pertinent film material, topics considered in class discussions, and subjects covered in the reading assignments. You are encouraged to view additional relevant films outside class and include references to them in your journal entries. This is not a diary – it is an academic journal, meant to record what you are learning and thinking with regard to the course on a weekly basis. You are welcome to include material suggested by reading and film viewing outside class, but such material must be relevant to this course.

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Additional information

Academic integrity:
Academic integrity -- the pursuit of scholarly activity free from fraud and deception -- is an educational objective of this institution. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication of
information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, submitting work of another person or submitting work previously used without informing the instructor, and tampering with the academic work of other students.

A student charged with academic dishonesty will be given oral or written notice of the charge by the instructor. If students believe they have been falsely accused, they should seek redress through informal discussions with the instructor, department head, dean, or campus executive officer. If the instructor believes the infraction is sufficiently serious to warrant the referral of the case to the Office of Conduct Standards, or if the instructor decides to give a final grade of F in the course because of the infraction, the student and faculty will be afforded formal due-process procedures.

**Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is using someone else’s words or ideas without acknowledgment. Submitting work containing plagiarism is grounds for failure of an assignment or failure of the course. Repeat offenses will be brought to the attention of the department chair. To be responsible when summarizing, paraphrasing, or quoting, include a citation like:

*** I read in yesterday’s New York Times that…
*** As Simone de Beauvoir famously asserts: “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (p. 34).
*** My roommate Pete noticed that…
*** If it’s common knowledge and your own idea, you do not need quotations. The yellow of the Lance Armstrong bracelet suggests bravery.

Document your citations in a bibliography or “works cited” page at the end of your paper and follow standard guidelines such as MLA or Chicago manual style. Familiarize yourself with these guidelines in Diana Hacker’s A Pocket Style Manual, and always check with your instructor before turning in questionable work. You may also check on these and other language-related issues with one of the helpful tutors in the Writing Center, (410) 225-2418. The Writing Center has copies of the Hacker manual as well.

**ADA Compliance Statement**

**Classroom: Health and Safety Guidelines**
Health and Safety

It is the responsibility of faculty and students to practice health and safety guidelines relevant to their individual activities, processes, and to review MICA’s Emergency Action Plan and attend EHS training. It is each faculty member’s responsibility to coordinate with the EHS Office to ensure that all risks associated with their class activities are identified and to assure that their respective classroom procedures mirror the EHS and Academic Department guidelines. Each of these policies and procedures must be followed by all students and faculty. Most importantly, faculty are to act in accordance with all safety compliance, state and federal, as employees of this college and are expected to act as examples of how to create art in a way to minimize risk, and reduce harm to themselves and the environment. Faculty must identify, within each art making process, and require personal protection equipment use, by each student for each class, when applicable. Students are required to purchase personal protection equipment appropriate to their major. Those students who do not have the proper personal protection equipment will not be permitted to attend class until safe measures and personal protection is in place.

Classroom: ADA Compliance

Learning Resource Center ADA Compliance Statement

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss specific needs. Please contact the Learning Resource Center at 410-225-2416, in Bunting 458, to establish eligibility and coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: http://www.mica.edu/LRC

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