

Phil 3910

Special Honors Topic in Philosophy:
Philosophy of Horror and the Monstrous
Professor Lewis Gordon

Room: Anderson 542

Time: Wednesdays, 3 PM to 5:30 PM
215-204-8292 / email: gordonl@temple.edu
Office hours: TBA (648 Anderson Hall)

This course will explore the meaning of horror and monstrosity through resources from philosophy, literature, and film.

Required texts:

Timothy Beal, *Religion and Its Monsters*. Routledge. ISBN-10: 0415925886
Noel Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart*. Routledge. ISBN-10: 0415902169
J. & L. Gordon, *Of Divine Warning: Reading Disaster in the Modern Age*. ISBN-10: 1594515395
Richard Kearney, *Strangers, Gods and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness*. Routledge. ISBN-10: 0415272580

For fiction, simply get the copies of the classic texts: Le Fanu, "Carmilla"; Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*; Bram Stoker, *Dracula*; Clive Barker, "The Forbidden" (in *Books of Blood*, 4–6), Fritz Leiber's "The Girl with the Hungry Eyes"

But order these:

Poppy Z. Brite, *Lost Souls*. ISBN-10: 0440212812

Euripides: 10 Plays, trans. Paul Roche. Signet. ISBN-10: 0451527003

The instructor will also post some links to short stories and films.

Your requirements are: (1) write short critical commentary (3-5 single-spaced pages) on a film or novel or short story integrating the philosophical text of the assigned week, (2) a group presentation on the week's assignment (groups will be determined 2nd week of class), (3) a final term paper. The short commentary is worth 15 percent of your grade; the presentations will be worth 15 percent of your grade. The final term paper will be 55 percent of your grade. Class attendance and participation, 15 percent. That paper will be due on **April 30, 2012**.

Because there is not enough time for full discussions and viewing the films in a single session, you are expected to view the films on your own (or with groups of friends) before class as you would a reading assignment and be prepared for discussions. These films are available cheap or for free on the internet or you could share the costs if you view them collectively by each purchasing one film and sharing it. Or you could use the library. The instructor will bring the film to class if the designated presentation leader would like to show selections for discussion.

Any student who has a need for special accommodations due to disabilities should speak with me as soon as possible to discuss the specific situation and contact Disability Resources and Services, located in Ritter Annex, at 215.204.1280. Finally, the University has adopted a policy on Student and Faculty Academic Rights and Responsibilities (Policy #03.70.02) which can be accessed at http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy_no=03.70.02

Sessions

Assignments

- 1 introduction of course and hand out syllabus

Part I: Some analytical tools

- 2 Let's talk about horror. *Viewings*: **2010 Halloween Horror Nights Scary Good Film Competition** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8mfqyXas0iM&feature=endscreen&NR=1>
Creepy things: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lBs1EyMAq0s&NR=1&feature=fvwp>
Reading: Noel Carroll, *Philosophy of Horror*, "Introduction and chapter 1."
3 Theorizing horror, continued. *Short film*: "Panic" (1978): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5mPxaPTX-8>. *Reading*: Carroll, *Philosophy of Horror*, chapters 2 and 3. Class will be short this meeting so students could attend Rob Redding's public lecture in CHAT.
4 Theorizing horror, ending discussion. *Reading*: the rest of *Philosophy of Horror*.

Part II: Bring on the Monsters... and Some Hermeneutical Tools

- 5 The Creature and the science fiction horror. *Readings*: Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein*; Richard Kearney, *Strangers, Gods and Monster*; *Films*: Kenneth Branagh (dir.), *Frankenstein* (1994); Vincenzo Natali (dir.), *Splice* (2009).
6 Kearney, *Strangers, Gods and Monster* (continued). *Additional readings*: Le Fanu, "Carmilla" (http://www.sff.net/people/doylemacdonald/l_carmil.htm) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. *Films*: F.W. Murnau (dir.) *Nosferatu* (1922); Todd Browning (dir.), *Dracula* (1931), Francis Ford Coppola (dir.), *Dracula* (1992)
7 Youthful old, elderly youth. *Readings*: Poppy Z. Brite, *Lost Souls*; *Films*: Tomas Alfredson (dir.), *Let the Right One In* (2008). *Recommended*: P. J. Hogan (dir.), *Peter Pan* (2003) and Joel Schumacher (dir.), *The Lost Boys* (1987); recommended, J.M. Barrie, *Peter Pan (Original Version)*, CreatSpace (2010); and *The Hunger*
8 Violations of the sacred, more on the Other: *Reading*: Timothy Beal, *Religion and Its Monsters*; *Films*: Robin Hardy (dir.), *The Wicker Man* (1973); cf. Neil LaBute's version (2006); George Waggner (dir.), *The Wolf Man* (1941); Joe Johnston's version (2010); John Landis (dir.), *An American Werewolf in London* (1981) and John Landis (dir.), *Innocent Blood* (1992)
9 Beal (continued) and nihilistic horror. *Reading*: Euripides' *The Cyclops*; *Films*: George Romero (dir.), *Night of the Living Dead* (1968); Ridley Scott (dir.), *Alien* (1979); John Carpenter (dir.), *The Thing* (1982)

Part III: Philosophy of Myth, Monstrosity, and Ruin... From a Phenomenological Point of View

- 10 Disaster, race, gender, class, and the monstrous. *Readings*: Jane and Lewis Gordon, *Of Divine Warning*; Barker, "The Forbidden" and revisit Mary Shelly, *Frankenstein*
11 *Of Divine Warning* (cont.); Frantz Fanon, "Psychopathology and the Negro." *Film*: Bernard Rose (dir.), *Candyman* (1992); continued discussion of *Night of the Living Dead*
12 *Of Divine Warning*; *Film*: Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979); recommended Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*
13 *Conclusion*