

**FTS 122: Horror Film and Psychoanalysis**  
**CRN 141444 10:05-11:20 T/Th (Perkin 102)**

Professor Hilary Neroni  
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Hours: Tues/Thurs 12-1  
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***Required Reading:***

Reading Packet (must be bought at the bookstore)  
Also on black board as pfs

**Course Description:**

This course will investigate the horror genre through psychoanalytic theory. Some of the most prevalent film theory on the horror genre engages concepts from psychoanalysis. Ideas such as the uncanny, the role of desire, fear, the role of nightmares, fantasy and so on are key psychoanalytic concepts that many writers on horror have found essential. This course will delve deeply into these psychoanalytic concepts and other concepts that may help unlock aspects of the horror genre. Through psychoanalysis, we will investigate why horror is so popular, what role it plays in society, why we enjoy fear, and what other psychological responses viewers have to horror. We will also consider the cultural implications of many types of horror tropes and characters. On top of this, through this course we will consider the history of horror and the different movements it has had.

**The Goals of the course:**

1. to become familiar with key psychoanalytic concepts and be able to engage horror films (their form and content) with these concepts
2. to understand the history of horror and how it functions as a genre.
3. to work on film analysis through weekly assignments, exams and two papers
4. to work together to create knowledge through presentations in class on the history of horror

**Classroom Environment Expectations:**

*Come to every class. Be on time and be present. The beginning of class is a great time to review, build new concepts, and write down any questions you may have. Take notes by hand throughout class. Your goals should be to think actively and make connections so that the concepts make sense to you. I will set you on the path to make these connections but you need to finish the job!*

*Take advantage of all the course materials. Also address any issues or questions you may have well before the assignments are due. Reach out when you need help studying, preparing a paper or project, with concepts in class, and so on. Use office hours and email to communicate with me.*

*Computers and cell phones are not allowed in class unless I specifically ask you to bring them in. You are expected to take notes by hand.*

Assignments (descriptions of all the assignments and weekly due dates can be found on blackboard):

Two exams 30%  
Two Papers 30%  
One Group Presentation 10%  
Weekly screening notes 10%  
Weekly responses to the reading 10%  
Attendance 5%  
Participation (in online and inclass discussion) 5%

### **Week One:**

1/15 Tues: Intro

1/17 Thurs: Reading: Wood, Robin. "Return of the Repressed" (bb)  
**Film:** *Frankenstein* (James Whale, 1931, USA, 2hrs)

### **Week Two:**

1/22 Tues: Sigmund Freud's "Repression" (packet pgs 32-38)  
1/24 Thurs: Sigmund Freud's "The 'Uncanny'" (packet pgs 2-22)  
**Film:** *The Wolfman* (George Waggner, 1941, USA, 1hr 11m)

### **Week Three:**

1/29 Tues: Sigmund Freud's "Negation" (packet pgs 29-31) & "Wish-Fulfilment" (packet pgs 39-53)

1/31 Thurs: Sigmund Freud's "On Transience" (packet pgs 75-77) & "Our Attitude Towards Death" (packet pgs 54-55)  
**Film:** *The Haunting* (Robert Wise, 1963, UK, 1hr 54min)

### **Week Four:**

2/5 Tues: Sigmund Freud, "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming" (packet pgs 23-28)

2/7 Thurs: Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," (packet pgs 66-74)  
**Film:** *The Babadook* (Jennifer Kent, 2014, Australia, 1hr 35min)

### **Week Five:**

2/12 Tues: Jacques Lacan's "The Line and the Light," (packet pgs 78-85)

2/14 Thurs: Mladen Dolar's "'I Shall Be with You on Your Wedding-Night': Lacan and the Uncanny" (packet pgs 86-104)

**Film:** *Ringu* (Hideo Nakata, 1998, Japan, 95min)

### **Week Six:**

2/19 Tues: Hugh S. Manon's "Living Dead Spaces: The Desire for the Local in the Films of George Romero" (on bb)

2/21 Thurs: LeDrew, Stephen le Drew's "Jokes and Their Relation to the Uncanny: The Comic, the Horrific, and Pleasure in Audition and Romero's Dead Films" (on bb)

**Film:** *The Night of the Living Dead* (George Romero, 1968, USA, 1hr 36min)

### **Week Seven:**

2/26 Tues: Hugh Manon's "Paranormal Activity and the revenge of the Mulveyan male gaze" (on bb)

**Film:** *Paranormal Activity* (Oren Peli, 2007, USA, 1hr 26min)

2/28 Thurs: First Paper Due

### **Week Eight:**

3/5 Tues: Town Meeting Day Recess—No class

3/7 Thurs: \*First Exam

Week of Spring Recess 3/11-3/15

### **Week Nine:**

3/19 Tues: Linda Williams's "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess," (on bb)

3/21 Thurs: Harry M. Benshoff, "Blaxploitation Horror Films: Generic Reappropriation or Reinscription?" (packet pgs 112-131)

**Films:** *Blackula* (William Crane, 1972, USA, 1hr 33min) & *Ganja and Hess* (Bill Gunn, 1973, USA, 1hr 50min)

### **Week Ten:**

3/26 Tues: Julia Kristeva's "Approaching Abjection" (on bb)

3/28 Thurs: Rachel Widawsky's "Julia Kristeva's Psychoanalytic Work." (packet pgs 105-111)

**Film:** *The Exorcist* (William Friedkin, 1973, USA, 2hr 12min)

### **Week Eleven:**

4/2 Tues: Barbara Creed's *The Monstrous-Feminine* (packet pgs 132-141)

**Film:** *Carrie* (Brian De Palma, 1976, USA, 1hr 38min)

4/4 Thurs: Poe's "The Raven," talk by Professor Tony Magistrale in class

### **Week Twelve:**

4/9 Tues: Neroni's "Introduction: confronting the Abu Gharib photos" (on bb)

**Film:** *Hostel* (Eli Roth, 2005, USA, 1hr 35min) and *Hostel: Part II* (Eli Roth, 2007, USA, 1hr 40min)

4/11 Thurs: Neroni's "Torture Porn and the Desiring Subject" (on bb)

**Film:** *Saw* (James Wan, 2004, USA, 1hr 43min)

### **Week Thirteen:**

4/16 Tues: Žižek on fantasy

**Film:** *Halloween* (John Carpenter, 1978, USA, 1hr 31min)

4/18 Thurs: Carol J. Clover, "Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film" (on bb)

**Film:** *Halloween* (David Gordon Green, 2018, USA, 1hr 44min)

### **Week Fourteen:**

4/23 Tues: TBA

4/25 Thurs: TBA

**Film:** *A Quiet Place* (John Krasinski, 2018)

### **Week Fifteen:**

4/30 Tues: **Film:** *It follows* (David Robert Mitchell, 2014)

5/2 Thurs: \*Final Paper Due or during the exam

Final Exam: 07-MAY-2019 1:30 to 4:00 PERKIN 102

## First Paper Assignment

For this assignment, you will choose a horror film to analyze that we haven't watched in class and analyze it in terms of Freud's ideas. Choose at least three of Freud's articles to bring into your essay. Form an argument about the film based on these ideas. It will be helpful to do some research about the film to understand what cultural moment it arises out of and also what is happening in the film industry at that time. For example: What are the attitudes toward gender, race or sexuality during the time of the film? What historical events are taking place? Is the film a B genre film, an A list art film, a box office hit, etc? In other words, some of this research will help you make arguments about—for example—why things are uncanny or what repressed is returning. When you introduce a Freudian idea, make sure you explain it.

### Requirements:

1. 6 pages double spaced + a work cited page
2. Bring in three of Freud's essays/ideas
3. One film to analyze
4. At least one close analysis of a scene (shots, visuals, sound, etc.)
5. Some background on the film, the director, or the cultural moment

## Final Paper

The Final paper for this class will be a 8 page double spaced paper in which you take any film or tv series in the horror genre and investigate it through a psychoanalytic lens. This means engaging either one or more of the types of readings we did in class or bringing in outside psychoanalytic reading. Make sure you have a strong thesis that addresses the specificity of your film(s) and is informed by the readings. This paper also requires three outside sources from peer reviewed journals. This means doing research into what others have written about your film(s), and/or the psychoanalytic concepts you are engaging.

### Requirements:

1. 8 double spaced pages + 1 work cited page=9 pages total
2. Strong thesis
3. At least one close analysis of a scene from your film(s) or tv series
4. 3 outside sources

### Possible Topic ideas:

1. Focus on a particular subgenre of horror and theorize why it arose (for example, the vampire film, the zombie film, torture porn, etc.)
2. Focus on a particular film and make an argument about what the main idea of the film is and how the form of the film gets this idea across through an engagement of psychoanalytic ideas
3. Concentrate on a particular filmic technique often used in the horror genre and investigate why this is specific to the horror genre and how it relates to the viewer

4. Consider the representation of women, race, sexuality, or class in a film or a trend of films within the horror genre and make an argument about why that representation exists and how it functions in the genre and relates to social anxieties