

MCS 348: Topics in Film Genre – Horror Films

Prof. Blair Davis

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Office Hours: Tues/Thurs, Noon – 1 pm

Course Description:

Why do we willingly subject ourselves to films that seek to scare, shock and disgust us? What compels us to watch films with ghastly imagery, gory special effects and gruesome murders? Are horror film fans merely uncultured sadists who revel in watching others suffer on screen? Are there cathartic pleasures to be had in horror films that are actually beneficial to society? This course examines the horror film genre from a variety of perspectives – from the cultural implications of why certain images frighten us, to the technological factors involved in special effects advancements, to the moral panics arising from both 1930s monster movies and modern ‘torture-porn’ cinema. We will trace the horror genre back to its roots in the silent film adaptations of such gothic novels as *Frankenstein* and *Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde*, through the classical era of the 1930s/1940s and the Universal monster movies, into the new era of the 1970s (from big-budget and Oscar winning films like *The Exorcist* and *The Omen*, to the low-budget auteurist horror efforts like *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *Last House on the Left*), and into the modern era of slashers, stalkers, remakes and reboots. Prof. Blair Davis is a recognized expert in horror films, and has written widely about them in such books as *Horror Film: Creating and Marketing Fear*, *American Horror Film: The Genre at the Turn of the Millennium*, *Caligari’s Heirs: The German Cinema of Fear After 1945* and *Recovering 1940s Horror Cinema: Traces of a Lost Decade*. [NOTE: This course will regularly examine films with extremely gory imagery that may be offensive and unpleasant to some students (...and if that’s you, then you’re definitely taking the wrong course!). To quote the beginning of *Frankenstein* (1931): “We think it will thrill you. It may shock you. It might even horrify you. So, if any of you do not care to subject your nerves to such a strain, now’s your chance to... well, we warned you!”]

Learning Objectives:

Debate the role of horror films in society

Assess the cultural and aesthetic values of horror films

Analyze the emotional and psychological factors involved in horror spectatorship

Discern the different historical eras of horror films and their industrial contexts

Required Readings:

- 1.) Mark Jancovich, *Horror, The Film Reader* (Routledge, 2001) ISBN: 0415235626
- 2.) David Aldrich, *Framing the Dark: Dread by Design in Motion Pictures* (Dal LaMagna Publishing, 2009) ISBN: 0982186304
- 3.) Additional required readings available on D2L

Assignments:

Professionalism/Participation: 10%

Weekly Discussion Questions: 10%

Warm Up Exercise: 15%

Short essay: 30%

Final Paper: 35%

Grade Scale

93-100 A, 90-92 A-, 88-89 B+, 83-87 B, 80-82 B-, 78-79 C+, 73-77 C, 70-72 C-, 60-69 D, 0-59 F

SYLLABUS POLICY

NOTE TAKING

Taking notes during the lecture/discussion periods and the weekly screening/lab sessions is a key part of succeeding in this course. You should write down more than just the key points listed in my Powerpoint slides and also add your own thoughts, questions and observations. The same is true during screenings of clips and films - you will probably not remember everything about them later unless you take notes as you watch. While taking notes in the dark while trying to watch the screen may seem difficult at first, it is a key skill for film students to learn and gets easier with practice.

CELLPHONES

With the exception of scheduled breaks, the use of cellphones not permitted in class, including screenings. Please turn off your cell phones prior to the start of class unless you have the permission of the instructor. Cellphone use of any kind in class will negatively affect your Professionalism grade.

PREPARATION & READING STRATEGIES

Please complete all readings assigned for a given week prior to the start of class, so that you will already have a context for understanding the course material before we discuss it. I recommend taking notes while you read, such as key ideas and concepts, as well as making a list of questions regarding aspects of the material that are unclear to you or that you find interesting, challenging or enlightening. Note that completing the readings prior to each class is part of your professionalism grade. If it becomes clear to me during class that you haven't done the readings you will lose part of that grade.

ATTENDANCE

Class attendance is required. Promptness is expected as a general rule. If you are consistently late to class your grade will be negatively affected. Attending class means arriving on time and staying until class is finished. Arriving late to class or leaving class early will negatively affect your Professionalism grade, and two such instances will count as one absence. Changes in work schedules, personal celebrations (e.g., birthdays, etc.), assignments due in other classes, car problems/transit congestion, etc. are NOT considered to be legitimate reasons for being late/missing class/missing deadlines, etc. Please allow extra time in your travel schedule to accommodate things like transit delays, traffic, etc.

If you miss a class, even due to illness, I am not able to give you the lecture notes, so please make arrangements with someone in the class to get their notes from them.

You are allowed one unexcused absence in this class, and two absences total if at least one of those is excused (e.g., you have documentation about a medical illness/emergency, legal issue/civic responsibility, or due to an official DePaul function). Further absences will result in the following actions:

2 absences Professionalism marks lowered by two letter grade (i.e., A- => B)

3 absences Professionalism marks lowered by three letter grades (i.e., A- => B-)

Students who miss more than three days of class will receive a zero on their Professionalism grade.

MAKE-UP EXAMS, TESTS, QUIZZES, ETC.

There will be NO makeup tests, exams, presentations, quizzes or other class activities. If you miss a class activity you will receive zero marks. Exceptions may be made at the instructor's discretion for legitimate and unforeseen *documented* medical reasons or extenuating circumstances such as a death in the family or official DePaul function. In such a case, it is the responsibility of the student to inform the instructor immediately and make arrangements to provide any required documentation (I.e. a doctor's note, death certificate, etc.). Exceptions cannot be made if the student does not submit such documentation within a reasonable time frame.

Note that alternative arrangements for scheduled final exams will NOT be made for anything other than unforeseen *documented* medical reasons or extenuating circumstances such as a death in the family. Travel plans such as vacations, family functions, or the need to book a less expensive travel ticket are not legitimate excuses and will not be accommodated. If you are unable to write an exam during the scheduled time you should choose another course that better fits your schedule.

ASSIGNMENT REQUIREMENTS/DEADLINE

Assignments must be handed in on time, at the start of the class in which they are due. Assignments handed in after the start of class will be considered late. Late penalties will be applied at the instructor's discretion to any assignments handed in late. ***You will lose one letter grade per day late on the assignment.***

Assignments that are more than one week late will NOT be accepted and you will receive a zero.

Please allow yourself sufficient time to complete the last-minute details and to arrive in class on time: late assignments due to computer and printing problems and transportation troubles will unfortunately not be exempt from receiving a late penalty.

All papers should be typed, double-spaced throughout the entire essay, and use a consistent style (e.g., MLA, APA, etc.). Use one-inch margins and 12-point font.

All assignments must be submitted to the appropriate D2L dropbox. Assignments will automatically be run through a plagiarism detector. Any instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Academic Integrity Board.

ACCOMMODATION FOR DISABILITIES

Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussion will remain confidential. To ensure that you receive the most reasonable accommodation based on your needs, contact me as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first week or two of the course – note that accommodations cannot be made retroactively once assignments, exams etc. have already been completed) and be sure to contact the following office for support and additional services:

Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD)

#370, Student Center, LPC, [773.325.1677](tel:773.325.1677)

RESPECTFUL BEHAVIOR

Please respect the contributions of others in the classroom and/or online by not using insulting/inflammatory or discriminatory rhetoric. Class space (both in person and online) is intended to be a safe space for personal reflection and growth, so it is essential that the opinions of others be treated respectfully even if you do not agree with them. Students must therefore engage in respectful and professional in-class and online conduct (which also includes the use of proper grammar when replying online - I.e. please avoid excessive use of abbreviations, emoticons, etc. – full sentences should be used.)

When the instructor or another student is addressing the class, everyone else in the room is expected to listen attentively and to refrain from engaging in conversations or any other activities that constitute distractions. Students who do not abide by this guideline will not be permitted to continue with the course.

E-MAIL

I often send e-mail announcements to the class. You need to (1) make sure your preferred email address in Campus Connect is the address you check regularly so messages do not bounce back and (2) make sure my email address will pass through your spam filter. Please be aware that to avoid DePaul's spam filters, it is recommended that you send me messages using a DePaul email account, as messages sent through Hotmail, Yahoo and other such accounts regularly get quarantined.

I typically respond to emails within 24 hours, Monday to Friday. I do my best to respond to emails on the weekend, but this time is reserved first and foremost for my family, so cannot guarantee an immediate response. If you have not heard from me within this timeframe, you should assume that your email has not reached me and resend.

ONLINE EVALUATIONS

One of your responsibilities in this course is to complete an online teaching evaluation for this class. This course will be available for you to review during the 9th and 10th week of the quarter. Close to that time, you will receive a notification to this effect via email.

As instructors, we really appreciate learning what we are doing well in the classroom and where we can continue to improve. Your feedback really makes a difference.

DEPAUL UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

DePaul University is a learning community that fosters the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas within a context that emphasizes a sense of responsibility for oneself, for others and for society at large. Violations of academic integrity, in any of their forms, are, therefore, detrimental to the values of DePaul, to the students' own development as responsible members of society, and to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Violations include but are not limited to the following categories: cheating; plagiarism; fabrication; falsification or sabotage of research data; destruction or misuse of the university's academic resources; alteration or falsification of academic records; and academic misconduct. Conduct that is punishable under the Academic Integrity Policy could result in additional disciplinary actions by other university officials and possible civil or criminal prosecution. Please refer to your Student Handbook or visit <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/homehandbook.html> for further details.

The DePaul Student Handbook defines plagiarism as follows: "Plagiarism includes but is not limited to the following: (a) The direct copying of any source, such as written and verbal material, computer files, audio disks, video programs or musical scores, whether published or unpublished, in whole or in part, without proper acknowledgement that it is someone else's. (b) Copying of any source in whole or in part with only minor changes in wording or syntax even with acknowledgement. (c) Submitting as one's own work a report, examination paper, computer file, lab report or other assignment which has been prepared by someone else. This includes research papers purchased from any other person or agency. (d) The paraphrasing of another's work or ideas without proper acknowledgement." You may also not re-use any parts of an assignment that you previously prepared for another course. If you are unsure of how to cite a source, please ask!

Violations of DePaul's Academic Integrity Policy will be reported to the Academic Integrity Board. Violation will result in severe penalty, up to and including failure of the assignment/exam or the entire course, at the instructor's discretion.

CITATION STYLE

Students must cite in their papers according to the Chicago Manual of Style, which is the primary citation style in the field of media studies. The use of other citation styles are not permitted. See the following website for specific examples of how to cite your sources using Chicago Style:

http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

POLICY ON INCOMPLETE (IN) GRADES

Undergraduate and graduate students have two quarters to complete an incomplete. At the end of the second quarter (excluding summer) following the term in which the incomplete grade was assigned, remaining incompletes will automatically convert to "F" grades. In the case of the Law School incompletes must be completed by the end of the semester following the one in which the incomplete was assigned. Ordinarily no incomplete grade may be completed after the grace period has expired. Instructors may not change incomplete grades after the end of the grace period without the permission of a college-

based Exceptions Committee. This policy applies to undergraduate, graduate and professional programs. NOTE: In the case of a student who has applied for graduation and who has been approved for an Incomplete in his or her final term, the incomplete must be resolved within the four-week grace period before final degree certification.

ASSISTANCE WITH WRITING

For help with organizing your ideas, grammar, citing sources, and avoiding plagiarism, I encourage you to consult DePaul's Center for Writing-Based Learning. The center offers both on-campus and online tutoring. See <http://condor.depaul.edu/~writing/>

COURSE SCHEDULE:

(NOTE: All readings to be completed by date listed, or you will lose Professionalism and/or Discussion Question marks!!**)**

Week 1 (Sept. 10): Introduction (“Do You Like Scary Movies?”)

Readings: Mark Jancovich, “Introduction:

Screening: Cabin in the Woods (2012)

Week 2 (Sept. 15): Classic Horror I – The 1930s (“It’s Alive! It’s Alive!”)

Readings: Framing the Dark, pp.61-67; Noel Carroll, “Why Horror?;”

Clips from: Dracula; Frankenstein; The Wolf Man; Horror of Dracula; Curse of Frankenstein; Curse of the Werewolf

Screening: Bride of Frankenstein (1935)

Week 3 (Sept. 22): Classic Horror II – The 1940s (“The Way You Walked Was Thorny”)

Readings: “Rhona Berenstein, “Horror for Sale: The Marketing and Reception of Classic Horror Cinema”

Clips from: Son of Frankenstein; The Wolf Man; Return of the Vampire; The Brute Man; I Walked with a Zombie; Dead of Night

Screening: The Uninvited (1944)

***** Warm-Up Exercise due (Thurs. Sept. 24)**

Week 4 (Sept 29): The 1970s (“Keep telling yourself... it’s only a movie!”)

Readings: Framing the Dark, pp. 69-89; Robin Wood, “The American Nightmare: Horror in the 1970s”

Clips from: Last House on the Left; Texas Chainsaw Massacre; Jaws; The Omen; Dawn of the Dead

Screening: The Exorcist (1973)

Week 5 (Oct. 6): Gender and Sexuality (The Dread of Difference)

Readings: Linda Williams, “When the Woman Looks;” Barbara Creed, “Horror and the Monstrous-Feminine;” Harry M. Benshoff, “The Monster and the Homosexual;” Brigid Cherry, “Refusing to Refuse to Look: Female Viewers of the Horror Film”

Clips from: Nightmare on Elm Street, Friday the 13th, Prom Night, I Spit on Your Grave, Sleepaway Camp, Slumber Party Massacre

Screening: Carrie (1976)

Week 6 (Oct. 13): Audiences and Emotions (“Be afraid... Be Very Afraid!”)

Readings: Framing the Dark pp.1-59.

Clips from: Cat People; Halloween; Texas Chainsaw Massacre; Evil Dead II; Scream

Screening: The Devil’s Rejects (2005)

***** Short essay due**

Week 7 (Oct. 20): Sequels and Remakes (Old Monsters with New Faces)

Readings: Paul O’Flinn, “Production and Reproduction: The Case of Frankenstein”

Clips from: Son of Frankenstein; Friday the 13th Part V, VI, VII & VIII; Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man, Halloween H20; Freddy Vs. Jason; Texas Chainsaw Massacre (2003)

Screening: Psycho (1998)

Week 8 (Oct. 27): Moral Panics (“Think of the children!”)

Readings: Andrew Tudor, “Why Horror? The Peculiar Pleasures of a Popular Genre;”

Clips from: Frankenstein, Freaks, Blood Feast, Night of the Living Dead, Cannibal Holocaust, House by the Cemetery, Hostel, Saw, The Hills Have Eyes

Screening: Hostel 2 (2007)

Week 9 (Nov. 3): International Horrors (“Yoichi, give your fear to me”)

Readings: Antonio Lazaro-Reboll, “The Transnational Reception of El Epinazo del Diablo;” Colette Balmain, “Inside the Well of Loneliness: Towards a Definition of the Japanese Horror Film.

Clips from: Ringu, Ju-On, Uzumaki; Deep Red; Suspiria; REC; The Devil’s Backbone;

Screening: Let the Right One In (2008)

Week 10 (Nov. 10): Hybrid Horrors (“In space, no one can hear you scream”)

Readings: Framing the Dark pp. 91-99; Mark Jancovich, “Genre and the Audience”

Clips from: Stranger on the Third Floor, Black Friday, The Monster and the Girl, It! The Terror From Beyond Space, Alien, Aliens, Silence of the Lambs

Screening: Jason X (2001)

Week 10.5 (Nov. 17): Conclusions (“...and remember, the next scream you hear might be your own!”)

Readings: Framing the Dark pp. 101-136

***** Final Paper Due**