

HL 8028: “Monsters in Literature and Film”

“He who fights with monsters should look to it that he himself does not become a monster.
And when you gaze long into an abyss the abyss also gazes into you.”

—Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*



Instructor: Joshua Lam, PhD

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Meeting Time: Wednesdays, 3:30-6:30PM

Meeting Place: LT29 (Lecture Theater 29), Block SS2 SS2-B1-16

Course Description

This course will introduce you to the literary and cultural study of “monsters” in the modern era, from nineteenth-century gothic literature, through modernism, to the postmodern and contemporary period. The course will introduce you to basic practices of interpretation and analysis, as well as fundamental elements of popular genres in film and literature, including horror, science fiction, and fantasy. Using close reading of literary and visual narratives, our study of these texts will include attention to their historical and cultural backgrounds; to issues of race, gender, sexuality, and disability; and to technology and definitions of the human. The course will include fiction and film, as well as supplementary poetry, music, and visual art.

Core Texts to Purchase (2):

1. Octavia Butler, *Fledgling*. Grand Central, 2007. ISBN: 0446696161

2. Franz Kafka, *The Metamorphosis*, trans. Susan Bernofsky. Norton, 2014.

ISBN: 0393347095

*Note: There are many English translations of *The Metamorphosis*, but I’d prefer you use the version listed here. It’s much easier to read and funnier than the others.

Core Texts to Read:

All other required texts will be made available online (NTU Learn). Additional supplementary material (not subject to examination) may be shown or distributed in class.

Core Films to View:

*Note: It is very important that you watch the correct version of each film. Most of these films have multiple adaptations, versions, and/or sequels. If you're procuring or watching the films yourself, take care to acquire the right one!

District 9 (dir. Neill Blomkamp, 2009)

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (dir. Kenneth Branagh, 1994)

Bram Stoker's Dracula (dir. Francis Ford Coppola, 1992)

The Fly (dir. David Cronenberg, 1986)

World War Z (dir. Marc Forster, 2013)

Godzilla [Gojira] (dir. Ishirō Honda, 1954)

Alien (dir. Ridley Scott, 1979)

Film Screenings

If scheduling permits, I will hold screenings for the films outside of class. These will usually be held shortly after class: for example, at 6:45pm, I may screen the film required for next week's class. There will be no in-class film screenings. In other words, you are responsible for watching each of the required films on your own time, whether you're able to attend film screenings or not. Each required film is on Course Reserve in the Business Library. You may view the films in that library, or reserve a room in the library to screen the film with friends and classmates.

Assessment

Participation, Group Work, Homework	10%
Mid-Term Exam	40%
Final Exam	50%

Exams

Please note that the mid-term exam will be taken *in-class* on Wed., February 24. *Barring extreme and extenuating circumstances, there will be no 're-take' exams or extensions.* If you are unable to attend this class, you must let me know well in advance and make other arrangements with me—this is your responsibility.

Disclaimer

Given the subject matter of this course, it should be no surprise that much of the required content will include violence, sex, horror, and things that are just plain gross. If you don't think you can handle it, you may wish to consider a different course.

COURSE SCHEDULE

*Note: The required reading and viewing listed is due on the day it is listed.

NB: I may occasionally make small adjustments to the syllabus, as I see fit. I will do my best to let you know about them beforehand—both in class and online (email or NTU Learn).

Week	Date	Required Reading	Required Viewing
1	Jan 13	Syllabus, Goals Brothers Grimm, “Little Red Cap”	
2	Jan 20	Angela Carter, “The Werewolf” Angela Carter, “The Company of Wolves” Terence Chua, “Faerie Tales, or Brother Grim and Mother Gruesome’s Totally Terrific Travelling Show” *Drop/Add ends Sun., 23 Aug.	
3	Jan 27	Mary Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i> (excerpt)	<i>Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein</i> (Branagh, 1994)
4	Feb 3	Franz Kafka, <i>The Metamorphosis</i>	
5	Feb 10	Franz Kafka, <i>The Metamorphosis</i>	<i>The Fly</i> (Cronenberg, 1986)
6	Feb 17	W.B. Seabrook, <i>The Magic Island</i> (excerpt)	<i>World War Z</i> (Forster, 2013)
7	Feb 24	Mid-Term Exam	
Recess	Mar 2	No Class (Begin reading <i>Fledgling</i>)	
8	Mar 9	Bram Stoker, <i>Dracula</i> (excerpt) Octavia Butler, <i>Fledgling</i> (first half)	<i>Bram Stoker’s Dracula</i> (Coppola, 1992)
9	Mar 16	Octavia Butler, <i>Fledgling</i> (second half)	
10	Mar 23	Maxine Hong Kingston, “No Name Woman” Catherine Lim, “Alien” Russell Lee & Anonymous, “Fatal Attraction”	
11	Mar 30	H.P. Lovecraft, “The Call of Cthulhu”	<i>Alien</i> (Scott, 1979)
12	Apr 6		<i>Godzilla [Gojira]</i> (Honda, 1954)
13	Apr 13		<i>District 9</i> (Blomkamp, 2009)

Drop/Add ends: **TBA**

Mid-Term Exam: Wednesday, February 24 (IN CLASS, 3:30-5:30PM)

Final Exam Date: TIME/PLACE TBA