

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

Email: lam1jd@gmail.com

Meeting Time: Wednesdays, 2:30-5:30PM

Meeting Place: HSS Auditorium

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 (1):

1. Marjorie Liu & Sana Takeda, *Monstress, Volume 1: Awakening* (Image Comics, 2016). ISBN: 1632157098

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)
World War Z (dir. Marc Forster, 2013)
Godzilla [Gojira] (dir. Ishirō Honda, 1954)
The Company of Wolves (dir. Neil Jordan, 1984)
Alien (dir. Ridley Scott, 1979)
The Thing (dir. Matthjis van Heijningen, Jr., 2011)

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 5:45pm, 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 | Aug 10 | Syllabus, Goals Brothers Grimm, "Little Red Cap" | |
| 2 | Aug 17 | Angela Carter, "The Werewolf" Angela Carter, "The Company of Wolves" | <i>The Company of Wolves</i> (Jordan, 1984) |
| 3 | Aug 24 | Mary Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i> (excerpt) | <i>Mary Shelley's Frankenstein</i> (Branagh, 1994) |
| 4 | Aug 31 | Julia Kristeva, "Approaching Abjection" (excerpt) | <i>Alien</i> (Scott, 1979) |
| 5 | Sep 7 | H.P. Lovecraft, "The Call of Cthulhu" | <i>The Thing</i> (van Heijningen, 2011) |
| 6 | Sep 14 | W.B. Seabrook, <i>The Magic Island</i> (excerpt) | <i>World War Z</i> (Forster, 2013) |
| 7 | Sep 21 | Mid-Term Exam | |
| Recess | Sep 28 | No Class (Begin reading <i>Fledgling</i>) | |
| 8 | Oct 5 | Bram Stoker, <i>Dracula</i> (excerpt) | <i>Bram Stoker's Dracula</i> (Coppola, 1992) |
| 9 | Oct 12 | TBA | TBA |
| 10 | Oct 19 | Maxine Hong Kingston, "No Name Woman" Alfian Sa'at, "A Hantu Tetek Story" Catherine Lim, "Alien" | |
| 11 | Oct 26 | | <i>Godzilla [Gojira]</i> (Honda, 1954) |
| 12 | Nov 2 | Marjorie Liu, <i>Monstress</i> vol. 1 (Comic) | |
| 13 | Nov 9 | | <i>District 9</i> (Blomkamp, 2009) |

Mid-Term Exam: Wednesday, September 21 (IN CLASS, 3:30pm – 5:30pm)

Final Exam Date: Wednesday, November 23 (5:00pm – 7:00pm)