

CMST 3013: Topics in Film  
Focus: The Horror Genre  
Department of Communication Studies  
Fall 2014  
MWF 10:30-11:20 (Coates 225)  
Lab Wednesday 6-8:50 pm (Coates 225)

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**Course Description:** This course surveys the horror film—its themes, stories, and monsters. We cover a range of films: from German expressionism to the classic 1930's horror films of Universal to independent cult classics to the mainstream films of today. This course is multimethodological. We consider a variety of ways the genre has been analyzed and theorized, from contextualizing the films in history, to considering the films as works of art, to tracing the ways race and/or gender get imagined/represented in certain films, to highlighting the general themes that dominate the genre. Because this is a communication studies course, we will pay special attention to the way(s) that the horror genre, as an aesthetic act, communicates particular cultural obsessions, fears, and anxieties in particular historical moments. The course is worth 4 credit hours; it includes a lab for film screenings every Wednesday night from 6-8:50 p.m.

**Objectives:** By the end of this course, you should:

1. Be able to read a film and what it is trying to communicate more closely.
2. Have specific knowledge about the development of and historical trends in the genre.
3. Be familiar with several important and/or ground-breaking horror films.
4. Be knowledgeable of several approaches to analyzing/theorizing film.

There are no required texts in the course. The twenty or so films screened on Wednesday evenings serve as texts. In addition, Dr. Shaffer will offer approximately two lectures a week.

#### Assignments

Favorite Horror Film Intro	20 points
Film Screening Points	140 points
Film Discussion Points	240 points
Film Recommendation Paper	100 points
Midterm	200 points
Final	200 points
Lecture Attendance	<u>100 points</u>
Total	1,000 points

## Grading:

900-1,000	A
800-899	B
700-799	C
600-699	D
0-599	F

## Description of Assignments:

**Film Screening Points:** This course includes a screening lab on Wednesday evenings. While you may be able to find many of these films online, you should attend the screenings with your classmates. One of the joys of watching film is experiencing it with others who may or may not share your opinions/responses/reactions. In addition, the screenings force you to watch the films from beginning to end without hitting the pause button to text, prepare food, or go to the restroom. The screenings encourage careful attention; they are more akin to seeing the films in a theater. Screening attendance is worth 10 points per screening. You will not receive full credit if you arrive late or leave early. In addition, some screenings include two films. You will only receive 5 points if you leave after the first film. But honestly, what an easy way to earn a grade! You may bring a friend from outside the class. You may bring a comfortable chair. You may bring snacks. Just don't be disruptive, and take all trash out with you when the screening is over. And just like in the theater, turn cell phones OFF!

**Film Discussion Points:** There are 14 film discussions during this course. They are worth 20 points each and cover the film(s) shown in the previous lab. At the end of the semester, we drop the lowest 2 (this includes those you may have missed and/or skipped) and add the rest for an overall possible 240 points. We will discuss the films and how they relate to the class for the entire 50 minutes. Nicole will take attendance. You will receive 17 points JUST for being present. But those who contribute to the discussion in meaningful ways will receive 20 points. Of course, those absent will receive zero points. These discussions are fairly straightforward. Just pay attention to the films shown and relate them to the topics in the course!

**Film Recommendation Paper:** Anytime this semester (but before the Thanksgiving Break), turn in a well-written horror film recommendation that relates your recommended film to (a) topic(s) covered in class. Basically, Dr. Shaffer, you should see \_\_\_\_\_ because it relates to this class in \_\_\_\_\_ ways. This three-page paper should have a title, be typed and double-spaced in a reasonable and professional font, stapled, have an introduction, body, and conclusion. It should be clear, convincing, and grounded in concrete examples. Feel free to talk to me as you work on this. This paper is worth 100 points.

**Tests:** This class includes a midterm and a final. Each consists of 100 questions worth 2 points each. You will be tested on the lectures, films, and the class discussions. The tests are not cumulative.

**Attendance:** Attendance is absolutely necessary. The lectures will not be made available online. Attendance at each lecture is worth 4 points. Of course, the film discussions are mandatory for a good grade in the class.

## Tentative Course Schedule

Week 1	Aug. 25 Aug. 27 LAB Aug. 29	Introduction to course German Expressionism: The Beginnings of Horror The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari & Nosferatu Film Discussion #1
Week 2	Sept. 1 Sept. 3 LAB Sept. 5	LABOR DAY – NO CLASS Anthropomorphism/Theriomorphism/Val Lewton The Wolf Man/Cat People Film Discussion #2
Week 3	Sept. 8 Sept. 10 LAB Sept. 12	Classic Monsters/Contemporary Categories The Doppelganger/Stephen King The Shining Film Discussion #3
Week 4	Sept. 15 Sept. 17 LAB Sept. 19	Darwin's Influence/Primordial Fear Intro to Tonight's Films Freaks/King Kong Film Discussion #4
Week 5	Sept. 22 Sept. 24 LAB Sept. 26	Mid-Century Threats Bizarre Love Triangle Creature from the Black Lagoon/The Descent Film Discussion #5
Week 6	Sept. 29 Oct. 1 LAB Oct. 3	The Auteur Impact Intro to Jaws Jaws/Film Discussion #6 FALL BREAK – NO CLASS
Week 7	Oct. 6 Oct. 8 LAB Oct. 10	Paternity vs. Patriarchy Your Body is a Battleground Rosemary's Baby Film Discussion #7
Week 8	Oct. 13 Oct. 15 LAB Oct. 17	Generic Convergence Apocalyptic Horror 28 Days Later/Film Discussion #8 Midterm
Week 9	Oct. 20 Oct. 22 LAB Oct. 24	Nicole – Lecture One Little Red Riding Hood Psycho Film Discussion #9
Week 10	Oct. 27 Oct. 29	How Norman Changed Everything! The Stalker Film

	LAB Oct. 31	Texas Chainsaw Massacre & Halloween Film Discussion #10
Week 11	Nov. 3 Nov. 5 LAB Nov. 7	The Final Girl Gore/Alexandre Aja High Tension Film Discussion #11
Week 12	Nov. 10 Nov. 12 LAB Nov. 14	Zombies R Us History of Zombie Cinema White Zombie/Night of the Living Dead Film Discussion #12
Week 13	Nov. 17 Nov. 19 LAB Nov. 21	Slow Zombies vs. Fast Zombies Nicole – Lecture Two Dawn of the Dead NO CLASS – National Communication Association Conference
Week 14	Nov. 24 Nov. 26 LAB Nov. 28	Film Discussion #13 Thanksgiving Holiday Thanksgiving Holiday Thanksgiving Holiday
Week 15	Dec. 1 Dec. 3 LAB Dec. 5	Wrap Up: Tracy Wrap Up: Nicole Class Choice Film Discussion #14

**\*\*\*Course Policies:**

**1) Upon arrival to class, please turn off all electronic devices (other than laptops to take notes) before entering. If a cell phone or other device interrupts the class, I will ask you to leave the class for that day. Nicole will do the same during labs; 2) You may bring snacks to the labs, but I ask that you bring trash out after the films are over; 3) You may invite friends to attend the labs with you unless they are disruptive. At that point, they will be asked to leave; 4) Please be respectful of the other students during class and the labs; 5) Please see me before or after class or during my office hours if you have any issues you would like to discuss; 6) I reserve the right to add to the course policies over the course of the semester if the need arises.**

**Nicole and I look forward to a great semester and to sharing our love of film with you.**

**The Americans With Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. If you have a disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please see a coordinator in the Office for Disability Services (112 Johnston Hall) so that such accommodations may be arranged. After you receive your accommodation letter, please meet with me to discuss the provisions as soon as possible.**