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On Honors Students Dreaming the Gothic

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INTRODUCTION

Filling an honors basic studies class in Gothic literature and culture was not a difficult challenge. By design, this course attracted students ranging from freshmen to seniors and from a wide variety of majors that included English, psychology, business, education, and chemistry. The trick was creating an even intellectual playing field, establishing and sustaining a high level of discussion in which everyone participated daily, and making the course intellectually rigorous for each student in the class. At the same time, I wanted to give to these students from different disciplines a flexible analytical method they could master for understanding the genre, but also one that excited and empowered them to better understand the workings of their intellectual lives and of the culture beyond the halls of academia. *Dreaming the Gothic—From Dracula to Lady Gaga* was structured to meet those challenges and to have students apply what they learned in the course beyond the study of literature to their lives. At this budget-tightening moment in higher education, when colleges and universities are increasingly pressured to focus on professional, practical, and core-specific courses, honors programs especially need to teach flexible critical thinking skills, especially ones that make meta-connections among disparate disciplines.

PEDAGOGY

Studying the Gothic was a novel idea for most of the students in the class. At the outset, they thought the course would be a lighthearted relief from the demands of their more serious classes, one that would provide credits but offer little of lasting value, but they ended up learning a rigorous analytical method and a new way of understanding what society has defined as unusual, abnormal, and perverse—and, just as importantly, what is “normal.” The course was particularly beneficial to honors students who often follow prescribed formulas for success and may not be as open to alternative ways of conceptualizing the world as they could be. Learning a sophisticated analytical method that disrupts expectations and defies received, normalizing knowledge is invaluable for honors students, who are typically well schooled in scientific method and proof-based inquiry and who are often fast-tracking for professional careers. When the honors students in my class saw that their own observations, many of which

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they at first dismissed as trivial, could be developed into sophisticated arguments, they grew confident in their thinking and in new ways of perceiving their lives and their culture.

I made it clear to the students from the first day that we were learning a form of apprehending texts, and I let the Gothic themes, images, and motifs arise from their analytical forays into the texts. This subject-specific methodology empowered the students to discover the greater issues of the genre for themselves through small details. Because this was an honors course with high-achieving individuals, I could teach them a challenging methodology that they could apply to any text, no matter their background, and I could set high expectations. Once they learned the method they ran with it.

Although close textual analysis can be useful in teaching many literary genres, I chose it for this course because it is easy to learn, immediately empowering non-majors, and because I could reinforce it with the application of Freudian psychoanalysis to the Gothic genre. Just as a literary work is especially effective if it performs in its language or form what it is literally saying (e.g., Coleridge's use of hissing sibilants to reinforce the descriptions of snake-like qualities of the soon-to-be stepmother in "Cristabel"), so too did I want the class, with self awareness, to perform in its methodological approach the operational mechanics of the subject we were studying. In the case of the Gothic, a psychologically based genre that in popular culture surrounds our students, little critical distance exists between them and the texts, films, music, music videos, graphic novels, and cultural objects that have tremendous and unquestioned effects on them. I wanted the students to track, through textual analysis of both content and form, how connotations and associative textual chains construct often hidden contexts for reading a given work and how these contexts shape the meanings and effects of the words on the reader (it is no accident that we are predisposed to distrust Coleridge's stepmother). This methodological approach is closely mirrored by the psychoanalytic approach we would learn in that psychoanalysis sees people as written by their experiences and culture and thus seeks to understand the individual workings of a person's text (e.g., dreams) and how individuals construct meaning in their lives, particularly in relation to larger cultural contexts.

HISTORY OF THE GOTHIC

Historically, the Gothic developed in a variety of cultural realms and at staggered times—from architecture and art to literature and film—as a response to the strictures of an excessive rationalism that, while propounding enlightenment concerns, often suppressed basic human emotions along with evidence of such evils as Western imperialism, war, slavery abroad, and cruelty at home. The term was at first derogatory, suggesting barbarism, but was soon embraced by its proponents as an alternate aesthetic with an alternate history, one particularly based in Europe not Greece, and consequently opening up a different aesthetic and conceptual future. In architecture, the term originally developed

from the twelfth to the fifteenth century to describe cathedrals and abbeys and then saw a revival in the eighteenth century with the rise of Gothic literature, beginning with Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* (1764) and Gothic visual art such as that of William Turner and Caspar David Friedrich. This eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century "abnormal" aesthetic, including a fascination with ruins, mystical places, asymmetry, and unnamable feelings, blossomed as the dark side of the Romantic movement, taking the aesthetics of what was visibly left of a European mystical tradition and giving voice and venue to the irrational, to the repressed, to socially or politically unspeakable human desires, emotions, and urges. This aesthetic embraced imagination, originality, superstition, sexuality, and the forbidden. Although often viewed as an eclectic and aberrant genre with a predilection for morbid and often sensual or depraved creativity, as in "Kubla Khan," it served for almost two hundred years to define by antithesis what Western societies deemed to be normal, constructive, and rational.

The Gothic did not remain in service as a mere foil. Walpole famously fashioned his Strawberry Hill Villa as a complement to his strange novel, and William Beckford lavished his fortune on his magnificently doomed Fonthill Abbey, rebuilding the tower again and again as, like the House of Usher, it repeatedly collapsed upon itself. In architecture, art, literature, commercial art, cinema, product designs, font typefaces, hair fashions, ironwork, carriage and then car designs, daytime television—in countless forms and in a series of waves—the Gothic genre, like its barbarian namesake, assailed Western culture throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Today, if we take television, film, and popular music as indicators, from *Wolverine* to *Willy Wonka* and from *Twilight* to Lady Gaga, we can say that the Gothic has carried the field. There is no better time to study it.

Science has also not been immune to the Gothic. From psychoanalysis to Einstein's "spooky phenomena," we know that forces are at work within and around us that are beyond our control, that are perhaps forever unknowable and indeterminable. Many concepts once viewed as quackery (the unconscious, repression, the uncertainty principle) have in the past half-century entered mainstream parlance and been accepted as givens. Advances in computer technology, cybernetics, artificial intelligence, medical science, computer imaging, and myriad other areas in the techno-realm make what was derided only a decade ago as science fiction now science fact. But this new knowledge (based in science) is nevertheless oddly spectral and "unreal," mystically enjoyed by many but rationally understood by few. What is more uncanny, and scary, than a "virtual world" accessible through a portal in everyone's home? We blithely fly through cyberspace, knowing full well that predators await us—and our children—on the aptly named "web." A course on the Gothic is particularly relevant as we are at a watershed moment culturally in our high level of anxiety about terror in the world. Aesthetically the Gothic is poised to become the norm in American culture.

CRITICAL TOOLS

The students in my course immediately wanted to talk about Gaga, *X-Men*, “Fringe,” Johnny Depp, Chuck Palahniuk, the new transsexual supermodel Lea T, and the latest computer games. They also wanted to know if rumors were true that we were going to analyze music videos and read a story narrated from the point of view of an evil sock monkey. Yes, I assured them, but I told them we could not have these discussions intelligently without first understanding how the genre to which they belong developed and how it functions. *Twilight* is a new spin on Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, but it is also a vehicle for articulating mass cultural fears about the importation of diseases (real plagues but also cultural ideas from the East and moral corruption) that coincided with British imperialism; Stoker’s novel is also about a masculine fear of femininity (e.g., the vampiric harem of three women at Dracula’s castle), and the social positioning of the “New Woman” through Mina Harker, a critique of a dying parasitical aristocracy, and a new nationalism and racism built on a redefinition of what “blood” means. Perhaps *Twilight* is similarly complex, and, before we get to Gagaism, I inform my students, we need to understand that she too is doing cultural “work,” that she hit the scene precisely when the stage was set for her to do so, and that we need to develop critical tools to understand how she functions as a cultural phenomenon.

To appreciate knowledge, students must discover much of it for themselves. I would serve as their Vincent Price and give one lecture on the history of the Gothic as it arose in various cultural fields to set the stage pedagogically for serious inquiry. I would also give two half-class lectures on analyzing texts, one literary critical and one psychoanalytic. I would gently steer discussions, but their minds and participation would forge their understanding of the genre.

EXPERIENCING THE GOTHIC THROUGH TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

“Though in many of its aspects this visible world seems formed
in love, the invisible spheres were formed in fright”

—Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick, Or the Whale* (169)

On the first day of class, two of the twenty-one students were obviously confident in the study of literature, but most of them were apprehensive if not downright scared. I went over the syllabus, explained the requirements: participation in discussions; sophisticated questions composed for each class session; two five- to seven-page textual analyses; and a lengthy research paper. I told them I had high expectations, and then I gave a lecture on the history and aesthetics of the Gothic in art (Caspar David Friedrich, David Fuseli, Joseph Beuys, and Hugo Ball), architecture (from Notre Dame to Gaudi’s *Sagrada Familia*), and literature (excerpts from Mary Shelley, Lord Byron, Coleridge, Edgar Allan Poe, Stephen King, and Maurice Sendak). I stressed specific elements in the

images and language, pointing out and connecting themes and motifs, in order to start the students' familiarity with the genre. I used and contextualized terminology that would help them conceptualize the genre in the future ("the sublime," "unnatural," "repression," "desire," "asymmetry," "corruption," "creativity," "transgression," "the polymorphously perverse," "alienation," "the uncanny"), and I ran from early examples to modern manifestations and back again as much as possible. A bit taken aback but dutifully taking notes, they thus set out on this journey in serious fashion.

Many stayed after this introductory class to tell me they were not English majors. I reassured them that they would be taught all the tools they needed and that no students by dint of their major or background would have undue advantage over others in the course. I wanted them to know that the course was demanding, as I had demonstrated in the dense lecture and its technical terminology, but I also reassured them that, if they worked hard, they would excel in the class.

In the subsequent classes, I set about giving them the tools they needed, explaining, for example, how one goes about performing a close reading. The two English majors were familiar with this approach already, but the rest of the class was relieved to discover that textual analysis is an accessible process. Instead of speaking generally about the text, we went to specific passages in *Dracula*, discovering hidden connotations in the words Stoker uses. With the help of an overhead projector, the *Oxford English Dictionary* online, and our own connections, we began to build subtexts of these passages, often diagramming sentences word by word.

We wrote, for example, the English narrator's first description of Dracula on the board: "His face was a strong, a very strong, aquiline, with high bridge of the thin nose and peculiarly arched nostrils, with lofty domed forehead, and hair growing scantily round the temples but profusely elsewhere" (23). Taking the sentence apart piece by piece, we strung chains of connotations below. "His" is, of course, gendered and shows ownership. The word "face" means more than the front of the head for it also suggests according to the OED, a person's countenance, his outward appearance, possibly a mask. A student connected the word to the "face of the cliff" above which Dracula's castle, Harker's prison, and thus life itself hangs "on the very edge of a terrific precipice," a "thousand foot drop" into a chasm, perhaps hell (321). Continuing this kind of analysis for the rest of the sentence, students were seeing that the reader is being prepared to see Dracula as a dangerous foreign threat to Harker (and, by extension, England) and as a corrupting, disease-spreading creature that attacks both body and morality. The "unnaturalness" of Dracula's description is in itself disturbing, and when we got to his teeth and hands, the class could see subtexts of Victorian fears of foreigners, violence, death, superstition, sexuality, and femininity:

[. . .] The mouth, so far as I could see it under the heavy moustache, was fixed and rather cruel-looking, with peculiarly sharp

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white teeth. These protruded over the lips, whose remarkable ruddiness showed astonishing vitality in a man of his years. For the rest, his ears were pale, and at the tops extremely pointed. The chin was broad and strong, and the cheeks firm though thin. The general effect was one of extraordinary pallor.

Hitherto I had noticed the backs of his hands as they lay on his knees in the firelight, and they had seemed rather white and fine. [. . .] Strange to say, there were hairs in the centre of the palm. The nails were long and fine, and cut to a sharp point. As the Count leaned over me and his hands touched me, I could not repress a shudder. (17)

Themes of death, sexuality, violence, and disease surfaced repeatedly in the course, and students learned to see how Stoker's language functioned on a hidden level as we focused on passages they chose as well as a few randomly selected "normal" passages so that they could find important subtexts anywhere.

Although textual analysis may have been familiar to advanced English majors, I needed to give students from other disciplines methods for approaching texts so that they could eventually excel at applying them. Robert Scholes argues that we often neglect to teach reading strategies, even in English departments, focusing more on teaching literature or culture; Scholes called for a fundamental change in the approach to teaching texts (213), a prompt that made me think hard about what we would do in this class. After reviewing the students' majors on the class roster, I described reading strategies using various major-specific metaphors, encouraging all the students to help me. Students in disciplines such as physics and chemistry, for instance, were relieved that they could arrive at the meaning of a text through a precise methodology rather than artsy intuition or years of reading literary classics. For the would-be forensic pathologist and the anthropologist, we metaphorically were piecing together a skeleton from a few fragments of text, not rushing to identify anything too soon. For the nursing student, we were making a diagnosis based on symptoms exhibited by the text. I stressed that the class as a whole formed a team of individuals with different strengths, all of whom could contribute something important. For the rest of the semester, I told them, we would be CSI-Honors Gothic: with each new text we would assume a literary crime had been committed (many were), and, using the OED and their own knowledge of the world, they would be detectives trying to figure out what that crime was, how each text worked. We would not jump to conclusions too soon, nor would we try to fit specifics of the texts into conceptual boxes that canonical scholars or popular culture had presented to us.

An important component of the course was the students' responsibility for coming to class each day with one sophisticated question about the text. The

question was to be a 150 words in length and to have three parts: a specific curiosity in the text; a hypothesis about that curiosity; and a more refined and sophisticated question that follows from the hypothesis. Here is one sample:

Why are Dracula's hands initially described by Jonathan Harker as "delicate," "fine," and "white"? Later his hands are described as "coarse, broad, with squat fingers," and "unnaturally strong," especially when he attacks Harker and then Lucy. Perhaps in the first instance the description of the hands is used to emasculate Dracula, to make sure the reader sees him as "unnatural" at a point in the text in which the reader needs to identify strongly with the "normal," narrating Harker. Does this early description position the reader to see Harker as the "natural" masculine hero by assuming the readership will identify with a male protagonist? And if the depiction of the "monster" can change from "monstrously" feminine men to coarse pillaging, sexually aggressive foreigners, does that suggest that Dracula is a social anxiety cipher, that the monster shifts, serves as a various metaphors for larger social issues? Is masculinity itself privileged in Stoker's very language?

I told the students that this form of asking questions will be useful to them in any major or profession, in a public lecture or in a business meeting. If you think of the first question, and then follow the implications so that you can ask a more sophisticated question, you can impress your boss and intimidate your competition. If they cultivated this art of asking questions and tried it out during the Q/A following the next public lecture they attended, every one of their professors in the room would lean over to the professor next to him or her and claim, "she was one of my students." Such directly applicable skills got the students' attention, and they came to class with specific examples from the text, prepared to begin the discussion at an elevated level. They submitted their questions at the end of each day, whether they asked them in class or not, and I gave them written feedback on them, also including the quality of their questions in their final grades.

After a short while, I would simply begin each class with a greeting and the question "where shall we go today?" This approach calls for patience with tangents and an open-mindedness to pursue what at times initially appear to be unfruitful leads, but the students established an easy and productive rapport among themselves. While serious inquiry was going on, the success of the student involvement depended on maintaining lightheartedness in the classroom. We had fun with the discussions, which were informal and lively. Research has repeatedly shown that, when students "are in environments where learning is occurring in a meaningful context, where they have choices, and where they are encouraged to follow their interests, learning takes place best" (Singer, Golinkoff, and Hirsch-Pasek 9). At the same time, I called on those who held

back to offer their insights until they were confident and actively participating on their own; no one was allowed a free ride.

PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY AS A CRITICAL TOOL

As I was more interested in training students to recognize, analyze, and decipher instances of the Gothic than in giving them a history of the genre, I prepared for the class by researching methods for teaching the subject as well as reading critical discussions of the genre. My training in psychoanalysis also helped me formulate the approach I used. Anne Williams' *The Art of Darkness* was a particularly helpful source; in it she argues that the Gothic is a poetics and that the novels within the genre proceed thematically rather than in a rational plot. I introduced this concept early on, identifying themes that surfaced repeatedly in *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* and beginning to show inter-textual connections as well. Imperialism as a disease, corruption of the body following infection by immoral thoughts, themes of incest and tainted bloodlines, sexuality associated with death, forbidden desire, suppressed anger toward family members, houses (and families) haunted by sins of the past: these themes and more emerged through class discussions of specific moments and descriptions in *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*. Students did not have to fear being lost in the text, missing important plot details, or forgetting characters; what mattered was what was happening thematically through them. Once they understood this focus, they lost their frustration in reading daunting texts with odd and difficult language. Once they got the hang of this, then we read Freud.

Chapters six and seven of *Interpretation of Dreams* articulate the ideas of repression, condensation, and displacement; the unconscious, the preconscious, and the conscious. My third and final mini lecture outlined how Freud's dream text functioned in the same way as a literary text, with connotations and subtexts forming around central themes. Texts, dreamy and otherwise, always reveal more than they say. A dream, Freud argues, is a rebus, the materials and keys of which are known only to the dreamer. The dream language for each individual is idiosyncratic. To understand what a dream signifies, and by extension what any utterance means, the Freudian psychoanalyst needs to learn how that patient's language functions; what the word "ball" means to every individual is different because of our different experiences in life. This is why analysis takes years. I noted that our psychoanalytic diagrams on the board looked remarkably similar to those we drew when discussing how to do a close reading of a text. I suggested that, if language itself functions as manifest dream material linked by associations to latent material, then it would behoove us to psychoanalyze our cultural texts to understand what drives us, what neuroses haunt our culture, and what our culture unconsciously privileges. The students for the most part accepted this logic, but they generally denied that Freud was applicable to their own lives or that repression of childhood incidents, desires, and emotions continued to affect them as adults. They accepted the general theory, but, probably as a consequence of cultural misconceptions of Freud,

they rejected the specifics that concerned their own lives and the cultural texts they liked. So we did a little in-class dream analysis.

Once I made sure everyone understood Freud's argument about how dream texts work, I asked if anyone would volunteer a dream for the class to analyze. A dozen hands immediately shot up. I stressed that we needed the class to be a "safe environment" and that any person could stop the discussion at any time. We chose a "safe word" to stop discussion if anyone became uncomfortable. I selected one student to share her dream, which she claimed to be mundane and nonsensical, not manifestly biographical at all. The class was invited to take notes but not interrupt; they could ask questions afterward. Following the recital of the dream, students began asking leading cause-and-effect questions (Did you ever have a dog like the one in the dream? Did you like your father?), and I had to steer them into asking associative chain questions (When you think of dog, what do you think of? And that makes you think of? And that makes you think of?). We wrote the dream associations on the board and then connected subtexts, leading to an "aha" moment for the student, to a specific incident from her childhood and a time when she was having a difficult relationship with her mother. The maternal metaphors had been clearly circulating in her discussion of the dream. She was satisfied with what we had uncovered and wanted to press on, but I made it clear we were trying to understand the psychoanalytic principles at work here and not to go too far down the road into students' lives. Dream analysis is potentially a dangerous undertaking, and one must be cautious, but it can be eye-opening in a good way and convincing, which is what the students needed to learn. We ended up analyzing four different dreams, all of which circled early family relationships and suppressed incidents or feelings that the class, if not the dreamer, could clearly see at work. We were, they realized, immersed in hidden fields of a haunted language that shaped our dreams and thoughts. The class loved exploring their dreams and playing detective, and the trust they had in one another grew enormously, as did the confidence they had in speaking about literary texts.

The students initially most resistant to the psychoanalytic method became its firmest adherents. Once the hard-science majors realized that Freud sought to discover "the scientific method by which the unconscious can be studied," they dropped what I think was fear-of-not-understanding-the-irrational-based dismissive posturing (Freud 130) and enjoyed the analysis. The class saw the connection between thematic close reading of literature and the psychoanalytic method, which is based in and perfectly suited for understanding the Gothic, and they made the argument (with the enthusiasm of having just discovered it) that the Gothic functioned as the manifestation of the repressed unconscious of society, that every text (from "Kubla Khan" to the "Wrath of Khan") was a dream text ripe for analysis. I invited them henceforth to bring cultural texts to class for analysis, and their CSI-mode went into overdrive. Every meeting afterward, in the final ten minutes of class, I asked whether anyone had artifacts to share,

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and a plethora of advertisements ripped from magazines, you-tube clips, posters, and music videos emerged. Thus the discussions of alienation in Byron's "Manfred," of the daughter's desire for and hatred of her love-smitten father in Coleridge's "Cristabel," and of the description of the girls as "more than sisters" in Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market" would resonate with current cultural texts such as *X-men*, "Two-and-a-Half Men," and *Dexter*. On the academic front, the anthropology major wanted to analyze the images of "other peoples" in her anthropology textbook, and the physics major wanted to discuss fractal imagery; the physical therapy major described the strangely Gothic elements of a local nursing home. When we read the Situationists on the psychogeography of urban life, the students went on a situationist *derive* (a strolling, analytical "drift") to map how the architecture and changes in ambience of our campus are creepy in the ways they emotionally and psychologically steer the students as they travel the university. Such mapping was probably not what our university exactly imagined in its recent push for more applied learning, but as far as critical learning goes, the students were "getting it" and using it.

Thus armed with tools, terms, and a methodology, the students were analyzing their own worlds, not just the texts we studied for class. For the remainder of the semester, we continued to discuss the assigned texts and marked the evolution of themes and motifs: the haunted castle in the eighteenth century became the haunted house in the nineteenth and then in the nineteen seventies the haunted supermarket, haunted car, and haunted planetary outpost, an ancient imperialism theme replayed through the fear of predatory aliens returning to earth.

By the end of the semester, having thoroughly deconstructed Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, the students were ready to make some prognostications for the future of the genre. Some suggested that the recent morphing out of the memoiristic teen angst closets of home into more traditional science fiction would continue for the genre post-9/11 and that the recent move toward protagonists with superhuman powers (Spiderman, the Green Lantern, the vampires and werewolves of *Twilight*) suggests that either we are getting more fearful and need more "super power" to combat our fears or that the "normalization" of the genre is accelerating so that the "normal" will be displaced, perhaps sparking a cultural showdown. Some suggested that our society is becoming less confining and more comfortable with ambiguity, but this was countered by the idea that we are in some kind of post-traumatic stress—a cultural crisis in which neuroses are evidenced everywhere, but with all our reliance on virtual technologies we are somehow dissociated from them, unable to feel them, relegated to spectral avatars watching our own cultural nightmare unfold. The class had much to say about the rage for Lady Gaga, but the students decided that, although provocative, her performances played upon existing cultural themes, stereotypes, and anxieties (fear of the womb, fear of liquids, masquerade as empowerment, eroticizing of the other/female/alien)

and that she is not ultimately very liberating for women. And, yes, we ended with a creepy murder mystery narrated by a sock monkey, which the class accepted as a reliable narrator.

CONCLUSION

We had a lot of good material to discuss, but the success of the class came from empowering the students to analyze the texts. The subject-specific analytical method of psychoanalytic dream interpretation that mirrored close textual analysis allowed the students to analyze their own lives and culture. Mastery of the analytical method allowed the students to uncover the themes, motifs, and issues of the genre; it kept them empowered, engaged, and learning. By the end of the course, the students were able to critically engage any Gothic text, image, or artifact and, beyond that, could analyze the world around them in a new way. In a way that is characteristic of honors classes, I may have learned as much about new ways of thinking as the students did; the class has encouraged me to be more flexible in my teaching methods, to take a more interdisciplinary approach to my classes, and to focus less on course content than on teaching analytical methods and skills that can be used beyond the class.

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APPENDIX A

FROM BOREN SYLLABUS—ENG 290H GOTHIC HONORS

Course Description

This course will follow the development of the Gothic in literature and to some extent culture from its inception to the present, with a focus on the transatlantic shift in the genre. The genre characteristically deals with such things as the supernatural, sexual ambiguity, violence, perversions, and myriad marginalized social human practices and beliefs, and the works belonging to this genre follow well-developed and highly complex structures. Using psychoanalytic and genre theory, we'll analyze the Gothic as both literary and social phenomenon in order to reveal, among other things, how this genre of deviance, which is more pervasive today than ever, functions to define less "deviant" genres, from children's tales to romance novels and historical fiction.

Texts

Bram Stoker, *Dracula*; Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*; Sigmund Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*; Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*; Shirley Jackson, *The Haunting of Hill House*; Jim Grimsley, *Dreamboy*; Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*; Chuck Palahniuk, *Fight Club*; Ira Levin, *The Stepford Wives*; Penn Jillette, *Sock*

* Works by Byron, Rossetti, Coleridge, Melville, Faulkner, Guy Debord, and others will be made available through Randall Library. Films will be put on reserve for check-out.

Course Requirements

Each class meeting, students will bring to class prepared, insightful questions on the material covered. Ideal questions will be 150 words in length and will catalyze a thoughtful discussion that engages both with the specific textual material and a greater issue or two of the text. One might, for instance, begin with a short quotation or a pair of quotations and build from there. A typed copy of your best questions will be turned in at the end of the semester. Cumulatively, these will comprise 10% of your grade.

Come to class prepared to participate in an intense discussion of the work. Class participation is 20% of your grade. Everyone in this class should participate, and observe good conduct, which includes listening respectfully to the observations of others.

Because we will be jumping quickly to specific places in the texts, we will all use the same editions of these texts. Class discussions should not be disrupted by students fumbling to find discussed material in aberrant editions (searching for pieces of sentences in a Melville or Faulkner novel can be a ridiculous venture). Your books are to be written in.

Attendance to class is, of course, mandatory, with absences affecting your final grade. If you miss a discussion, ask a colleague for notes.

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The first essay assignment will be relatively brief and will be an exercise in close reading; this essay should be well polished, show you're working closely with textual matter. This essay will constitute 20% of your grade. The second essay will be significantly longer, be based upon the same methodology. At this point I am more interested in your analytical skills and ideas than what others have said about your area of interest, but you need to demonstrate you've begun to explore and collect the critical work necessary to undertake a final project. This essay will comprise 20% of your grade.

Final research papers are due on the date noted. This is non-negotiable. They will include bibliography and demonstrate critical research. The final paper will comprise 30% of your final grade. I will explain my expectations for the papers in class, and if you have specific questions about your project or writing, I'm happy to discuss them with you outside of class.

Daily Schedule (class met 2x a week)

Day 1: **Introduction. Lecture on the Gothic**

Week 2: Bram Stoker, *Dracula*

Bram Stoker, *Dracula*

(Interactive lecture on close reading methodology)

Week 3: Bram Stoker, *Dracula*

Bram Stoker, *Dracula*

Week 4: Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

Week 5: Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* **Paper 1 due**

Week 6: Sigmund Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*

Sigmund Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*

Week 7: Sigmund Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*

(Interactive lecture on Psychoanalysis; Dream Analysis)

Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny* **(Dream Analysis continued)**

Week 8: Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Cristabel* **(Dream Analysis continued)**

Official break from classes

Week 9: Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Cenci*

Lord Byron, *Manfred*

Week 10: Christina Rossetti, *Goblin Market*

Herman Melville, *The Tartarus of Maids*, *Benito Cereno*

Paper 2 due

MARK BOREN

- Week 11: Edgar Allan Poe, *Murders in the Rue Morgue*, *The Fall of the House of Usher*, *The Black Cat*
William Faulkner, *A Rose for Emily*
- Week 11: Shirley Jackson, *The Haunting of Hill House*.
Shirley Jackson, *The Haunting of Hill House*.
- Week 12: Jim Grimsley, *Dreamboy*
Jim Grimsley, *Dreamboy*
- Week 13: Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*
Ray Bradbury, *The Veldt*; Guy Debord, *Theory of the Derive*
- Week 14: Chuck Palahniuk, *Fight Club*; **Folder containing all questions due**
Discussion of assigned films (*Alien*; *X-Men*)
- Week 15: Ira Levin, *The Stepford Wives*
Penn Jillette, *Sock*; **Final Research Paper due**

APPENDIX B

**END OF SEMESTER STUDENT PERCEPTION OF TEACHING:
OVERALL EVALUATION FOR INSTRUCTOR'S TEACHING
EFFECTIVENESS (QUESTION 16) FOR BOREN, ENG 290-001
GOTHIC HONORS, SPRING 2011**

Score: range is from 1 (very ineffective) to 7 (very effective)	Frequency: the number of times a score was given	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
3	1	4.76	1	4.76
5	2	9.52	3	14.92
6	2	9.52	5	23.81
7	16	76.19	21	100.00