

ISSU9MV- Monsters and Vampires: The Impact of British Gothic on Contemporary Popular Culture

Preliminary Syllabus

Overview From sparkly vampires to blockbuster monsters, gothic tropes appear to be all-pervasive in contemporary culture. As Catherine Spooner claims in *Contemporary Gothic* (2006), like ‘a malevolent virus, Gothic narratives have escaped the confines of literature and spread across disciplinary boundaries to infect all kinds of media, from fashion and advertising to the way contemporary events are constructed in mass culture’. What this course aims to do is to introduce students to Gothic’s literary expression in the British nineteenth century, before exploring the many ways in which this dark heritage continues to affect contemporary cultural production.

Focusing on three key texts from the nineteenth century, *Frankenstein (1818)*, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde (1886)* and *Dracula (1897)*, this class will discuss their adaptation, appropriation and influence on popular narratives such as those found in fiction, film, tv, fashion and music video. Some of the contemporary texts we will be drawing upon will be *Twilight* (book & film), *True Blood* (book & tv), *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (film & tv), *Scream* (film), *Supernatural* (tv), *Marilyn Manson* (music), *Interview with a Vampire* (book & film), *Blade* (film), *Blairwitch Project* (film) etc.

Instruction plan

The course will consist of a 1 hour weekly lecture which, after our introductory lecture, will focus on each of the novels, followed by a 2 hour tutorial in which we will discuss the re-presentation of Gothic narratives and tropes as they occur throughout contemporary culture. Students will be expected to attend all classes with a grade penalty applied for poor attendance. A class excursion to Edinburgh, where we will tour the Edinburgh Dungeon and visit a gothic theme bar in order to ask questions of post-modern gothic culture through the lens of gothic tourism and gothic marketing.

Assessment

Assessment will be in the form of a presentation (45%), essay (50%) and tutorial participation (5%).

Learning outcomes

By the end of the course, students will not only have been introduced to key gothic concepts such as transgression, excess and monstrosity as they pertain to both nineteenth-century literature and contemporary culture, but they will also have gained an understanding of popular culture within the framework of the Gothic mode. Some of the core transferrable skills developed throughout this course include the ability to i) analyse and critically reflect upon various media, ii) apply the skills of sustained oral and written argumentation in a coherent and persuasive fashion, and iii) work with others in the presentation of ideas and the process of collective problem-solving.

Required Reading

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, Penguin Classics

Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, Penguin Classics

Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and Other Tales of Terror*, Penguin Classics

Recommended Reading

Catherine Spooner, *Contemporary Gothic*, Reaktion