COURSE POLICY

*Gothic Literature and Visual Culture*

English 3407 Section D560

Professor Sean Scanlan

**Details:**

Prerequisite:ENG 1121 or any 2000 level literature class

Day/Time/Place: Tuesday and Thursday 11:30 - 12:45, P511

Office: Namm 520

Office Hours: Monday 4-5, Tuesday 3-4, and by appointment

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Course Website: https://openlab.citytech.cuny.edu/scanlan-eng3407-gothiclit-f2015/

American fiction has been “bewilderingly and embarrassingly, a gothic fiction, nonrealistic and negative, sadist and melodramatic—a literature of darkness and the grotesque in a land of light and affirmation.”

Leslie Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, 1960

“And then came, as if to my final and irrevocable overthrow, the spirit of Perverseness. Of this spirit philosophy takes no account. Yet I am not more sure that my soul lives, than I am that perverseness is one of the primitive impulses of the human heart—one of the indivisible primary faculties, or sentiments, which give direction to the character of Man. Who has not, a hundred times, found himself committing a vile or silly action, for no other reason than because he knows he should *not*?

Edgar Allen Poe, “The Black Cat,” 1843

**Course Description:**

THE PURPOSE OF THIS COURSE is to gain a better understanding of the popular genre of gothic literature and visual culture as it was developed and practiced in Great Britain and the US starting during the late-eighteenth-century and as it continues today. Three subjects usually inform what is considered the gothic: suspense, mystery, and terror. But in this class, we will push against these subjects and investigate three more subjects: sexual identity, imagination, and the uncanny. Gothic literature made these subjects strange, outside the norm; in a word, the gothic made things queer. Fundamental to our class will be the idea that the gothic is more than simply strange; it is a transgressive and provocative sort of strange.

The gothic genre enabled a new type of reading: it created a new imaginative space in which to consider not only dreams and nightmares, but also fantasies of alternate identities. It was possible to imagine scenarios, actions, and places outside of daily life. In order to consider these strange desires and fantasies, we will examine how the gothic came about, especially its medieval, romantic, and British roots.

Our class experience will be varied. We will examine old and new gothic texts, images, spaces, and film, and we will discuss our readings in a participatory class setting where feelings and imaginations will be taken seriously. We will examine gothic, uncanny, and queer ideas in order to question what we know about different ethnic identities and different regional identities. Towards the end of the semester, we will question the role of vampires and zombies within the gothic genre.

**Student Learning Outcomes:** By the end of this course, students will be able to:

• Identify and explain the various features and subtleties associated with Gothic Literature in the primarily Romantic and Victorian traditions, in both Great Britain and the United States.

• Analyze and synthesize the common tropes typically associated with Gothic Literature as well as their parodies.

• Recognize and identify the role of architecture and setting as primary modes in the genre.

• Articulate the influence of Gothic Literature and rhetoric in popular culture fiction and film.

• Appreciate the relationship between the gothic and the uncanny as it played out historically as well as how it is discussed in contemporary American culture.

• Apply gothic frames of reference to complicate and better understand differences in identities, ethnicities, and sexualities.

• Identify the basic similarities and differences among the major media types that feature gothic representations such as film, television, poetry, fiction, and graphic novels.

• Develop a vocabulary that consists of key terms such as the sublime, romanticism, the fantastic, and the grotesque in order to describe the gothic effectively in the context of academic writing and class discussion.

• Draft and revise for content, organization, style, clarity, and emphasis.

• Work with peers to research and present material in a variety of situations, both

oral and written.

• Gather, interpret, and evaluate sources for research essays on gothic literature

and visual culture.

**Required Books:**

Stevenson, Robert Louis. *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. New York: Dover, 1991.

ISBN 13: 978-0486-266886, $1.50

Oates, Joyce Carol, ed. *American Gothic Tales*. New York: Plume, 1996.

ISBN 13: 978-0452274891, $21.00

Groom, Nick. *Gothic: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013.

ISBN 13: 978-0199586790, $11.95

Rice, Anne. *Interview with the Vampire*. New York: Ballantine, 1991.

ISBN 13: 978-0345337665, $7.99

\*\*All books are available at the City Tech Book Store: 259 Adams St. in the General Building.

**Other Materials:**

Bring to class one sturdy notebook with paper for notes and at least one folder with pockets for handouts/assignments. Both spiral-bound or 3-ring are acceptable. You must devise a system to record, store, and organize the course materials. It is very important that you save all of your work for this class. Devise a filing system that allows you to maintain prior drafts and final copies of all major assignments, as well as your research notes, outlines, and written evaluations. In addition to keeping a copy of your work on the hard drive of your computer, save all final drafts of assignments on a stable format such as a flash drive or on a remote hard drive/server such as iCloud, Dropbox, or Google Docs. Never throw away or delete drafts or notes until after you have received your final grade. Computer/Printer malfunctions are not viable excuses for late or lost work.

**Grading:**

• Journal Responses (6) 15%

• Reading Quizzes (3) 10%

• Gothic Spaces Presentation 10%

• 2 Essays (5-7 pages each) 40%

• Final Exam 10%

• Participation 15%

**Participation:**

Participation includes attendance, in class discussion, short in class and homework assignments, and peer reviewing.

**IMPORTANT NOTES:**

1. Attendance: Attendance is mandatory in this discussion-based course. Arriving late or leaving early will count as a partial absence. City Tech’s policy states that three or more absences will result in a WU grade—see the Student Handbook. I will not grant excused absences since **two** absences are permitted without penalty. Being absent is not an excuse for missing or late work: you must get notes from a classmate and keep up with the assignments.

2. Drafts and Typing: The two essays require organization, honesty, and clarity. Essays must be typed, correctly formatted, and proofread. If you have word processing questions, please ask me. If you do not have access to Microsoft Word, you can use Google Docs for free (<https://docs.google.com/>) or Open Office for free ([www.openoffice.org/](https://openlab.citytech.cuny.edu/scanlan-english1101-d324-fall2014/policies/www.openoffice.org/)).

3. Assignments and Grading:Completing all the required elements in good order and form constitutes

the average, or a C. To raise your grade above this average, you will need to invest your time, talents,

and energies to add insightful commentary, sound argumentative reasoning, and show initiative in your

approach to scholarship. I recommend that you make an appointment to see me if you receive a grade of

C- or lower.

There will be times when your expectations and my evaluation do not match. I am always willing to explain my comments on your assignments, and to discuss ways in which your work might benefit from additional effort. Lower grades most often result from misunderstanding the assignment goals, and from insufficiently realized or poor executions of these goals. I do not grade beliefs or values. If you are unhappy with a grade, or unsure as to why you received such a response to your work, please make an appointment to see me.

4. Late Papers: For each day that an assignment is late, one full letter grade will be deducted (5 days = 0).

5. Plagiarism: Is the unauthorized use of another person’s ideas, language, or research as your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally. City Tech does not tolerate plagiarism. Using proper documentation and textual analysis will help you avoid plagiarism. If you have any questions about plagiarism, please ask me. Any cases of plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty will result in a failing grade and appropriate administrative measures. Please familiarize yourself with City Tech’s policies on academic honesty in the Student Handbook (89-92), or at: <http://www.citytech.cuny.edu/files/students/handbook.pdf> (76-79).

6. Be on time: tardiness disrupts the entire class. Come prepared: turn off/silence all gadgets, please. There may be times when we discuss the role of digital technologies as a tool for learning and instructions, but, as a general rule, if you are on your phone/tablet/device without permission and without regard for the classroom activity, you will be asked to put your device away. Each time a student is asked to put away a device, he or she will have their overall participation grade lowered by 5 points (participation is worth 10%).

7. The Atrium Learning Center: This is an excellent resource. ATRIUM LEARNING CENTER: Atrium

Building G-18.