

Honors 300 (4 credits)
Spring 2024
TTH 1:00-2:15
Office Hours: **1:30-3:30, Th 2:30-3:30**

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Monstrous Mirrors

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Swamps, closets, the occasional summer camp, haunted mansions on remote hills or on a neglected corner lot: that's where the monsters of our childhoods live. Or at least where we hoped they lived, either tightly shut away or securely removed from where *we* live. Yet during times of cultural disruption and political change, monsters can seem far closer to home, and the fictions which separate *them* from our daily lives grow thin. Rather, we may find the monster in our own mirror, the self and our own identity made strange through the prism of a world in flux. We are forced, in other words, to acknowledge a darkness within.

It is these very times that this course will be interested in; more specifically, we will begin by looking at the revolutions of the eighteenth century and how they reshaped the definition of the human. As literary and cultural beneficiaries of this revolutionary age, we have come to accept its definition as the norm and may find its representations of the monstrous just a little too familiar, at times our spitting images. Or as we become denizens of a digital age and engage in a new posthuman revolution, these norms may have started to seem slightly off kilter. Our primary texts for this section—two of them iconic—will be Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), Charles Brockden Brown's early American novel, *Wieland* (1798) and Mary Shelley's classic monster text, *Frankenstein* (1818).

The nineteenth century unleashed a revolution of a more insidious nature, a dramatic shift in the status of the domestic space and consequently the sense of an increasing, and for some threatening, power for women. Writers and artists of the period registered their anxiety regarding these changes through a fascination with the original bad girl—not Eve—but rather Lilith, Eve's dark double, and according to ancient legend, Adam's more profoundly disobedient first wife. Samuel Coleridge, John Keats, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Sheridan Le Fanu are just a few of the writers who evoked her cautionary image. Contemporary artists have found Lilith equally fascinating and feminist writers such as Angela Carter have returned to her image or one very like it to reclaim her transgressions as empowering ones; in some respects, Carter in *The Bloody Chamber* (1998) completes the work begun by the nineteenth-century poet, Christina Rossetti, in her strange tribute to female appetite in "Goblin Market."

The fears of the 20th century proved nightmarish. The rise of totalitarian states so distorted reality that visions of humanity proved grotesque by contrast. And whereas previous writers had viewed language as a weapon in combating such monstrous distortions, language—as manipulated by the state—now proved their greatest adversary. In *1984* published in 1949, George Orwell raised the specter of such a nightmarish state, and made the ability to alter the facts the greatest threat to moral existence. His hero is a monster by the end, no less disturbing for being an impotent, toothless one.

In our current world, we find the threat of totalitarianism once again an unsettling image in our mirror, and a term like "alternative facts" frighteningly commonplace. That means we will jump ahead in our reading at this point and look at a 2023 novel, *Julia*, written as both a homage to and an

alternative for Orwell's *1984*. Written from the point of view of *1984*'s secondary female character, Julia, it makes language less the center of its monstrous vision and instead focuses on the threats to bodily autonomy that play out most spectacularly when directed at the female body. In shifting the focus of Orwell's text, this latter work also implicitly acknowledges that at least one of Orwell's most feared states has already taken place—surveillance culture normalized through social media and a 24/7 online public presence that threatens to eliminate the private or the “within” altogether by bringing everything routinely to light.

Perhaps partly in response to the surveillance culture that emerged post World War II in America, being *outside the system* assumed an elevated status in 20th century American literature. To get at this phenomenon, we will conclude our survey by looking at the true crime story and the culture of American violence it encodes, starting with Alfred Hitchcock's still haunting 1968 *Psycho* and moving to Truman Capote's still controversial 1966 *In Cold Blood*. Each speaks to the American tendency to find something sympathetic in the villain, and in the case of these two stories of well-known serial killers, even something that borders on the heroic. At a time in which mass shootings have become neatly an everyday event in our culture, the need to examine these iconic treatments of the transformative effects of violence becomes urgent, and perhaps the most telling of our images in the mirror. Capote's *In Cold Blood* also allows us to reflect on what it means to tell these monstrous stories, and how it impacts us as readers and writers, as the circumstances of the text's composition have become nearly as notorious as the story it tells.

Our reading will be engaging and challenging, but the primary work for the course will be independently driven and determined by your interests and expertise. One paper—titled “My Own Personal Demon”—will span the length of the course and will consist of three parts: personal narrative, historical/cultural overview, and literary analysis. Drafts of this final project will be due throughout the course. (See syllabus.) Another—titled “Monster Rx”—will draw upon your disciplinary expertise and will ask you to diagnose the source of the “monster” in a text we read, using the tools of your chosen major. The first paper will be a more conventional analysis paper and will serve to introduce you to the methodologies and expectations of the literary discipline. In addition to these three formal papers, there will be frequent informal writings (i.e. response papers.) The informal writing will be factored into your class participation grade.

Both the writings and the readings in the course will ask us to examine what represents our “darkness within” and what constitutes the monstrous in the mirror for the time we inhabit.

Departmental Learning Outcomes for Course:

- 1) Apply skills of close reading to a variety of texts across a variety of historical and cultural contexts.
- 2) Persuasively identify and explain the meaning of a text using an interdisciplinary framework.
- 3) Understand connections between literary narrative and historical/cultural context.
- 4) Write persuasive critical analytical papers.
- 5) Integrate primary and secondary texts in a longer work that also incorporates personal narrative.
- 6) Heighten self-awareness, self-understanding, and compassion for others.

Connections Curriculum Learning Outcomes:

This course meets two of general education learning outcomes:

- 1) Learning Outcome 2: Students will write effectively, considering audience and purpose.

- 2) Learning Outcome 10: Students will analyze problems, issues, or representations using knowledge, theories and/or methods appropriate to the humanities.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Gulliver's Travels (Penguin edition)—also available online

Wieland (Penguin edition)—also available online

Frankenstein (1818 edition)—also available online

The Bloody Chamber (Vintage)

1984 (Signet)

Julia (Mariner)—Not in bookstore yet.

In Cold Blood (Vintage)

Selected additional readings on Moodle.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Class Participation (15% of the grade)

- **Attendance.** As this course is discussion based, your participation is essential, and attendance is mandatory. You are, however, allowed **three absences without penalty**, after which you will lose a letter grade for each absence. **If you miss more than six classes, I will ask you to withdraw from the class.** Of course, absences due to a documented illness are excused, but numerous absences based on extended illness can still affect your performance in the class. So please contact me as soon as possible if you know you are going to miss several classes. We will need to work out a plan for how to address these excused absences.
- **Class Participation.** The success of this course depends upon the quality of participation. So, I want to reward those who participate daily and who provide informed and reflective comments and questions on the readings. (That doesn't mean you provide all the right answers, but that your comments reflect an honest attempt to understand the material.) If I find that most students are not prepared for class, I will *regretfully* institute daily quizzes. Sometimes class participation may take a more formal turn with students leading class discussion or participating in class debates.
- **Response Papers:** Students will frequently be asked to do in-class writing and at times required to complete informal writings in preparation for the course discussion. These response papers will be graded with a check, check plus, or check minus. You will complete five response papers. These papers provide low stakes opportunities to develop analytical writing skills and demonstrate understanding of the assigned readings. They also allow us to jump start a class discussion and allow for a more layered response to a question to emerge.
- **Peer Critique.** As this class is writing intensive, I want us to spend time in class discussing your writing. I also think you have a lot to learn from your peers. So, we will be “workshopping” your first paper in class and providing brief feedback on the last two papers. Failure to participate in the workshop process by either not bringing a draft of your paper to class or not providing attentive commentary on another student's work will result in the loss of one letter grade on the final paper. (In the case of illness or other excused absence, a student can meet with a Writing Advisor in the Writing Center to substitute for the workshop, but I still need to receive the draft on the day it is due.)

2. Papers (85% of the grade)

- **My Own Personal Demon paper (8-10 pages)—35% of the grade (capstone project)**
As mentioned earlier, this paper will span the course of the semester and will be composed of three parts: personal narrative, historical/cultural overview, and literary analysis. Drafts of these three sections will be due at various dates during the semester. (See schedule of readings for details.) You will meet with writing groups throughout the semester to work on this paper.
- **Monster Rx (4-5 pages)—30% of the grade**
In this paper, you will diagnose the source of the monster in one of the literary or film texts we have reviewed. You will use the expertise acquired in your major to make this diagnosis. You will present the findings orally first and then a week later provide a formal written analysis. A draft of the paper will be due at the time of the oral presentation.
- **Literary analysis papers (3-4 pages)—20% of the grade**
Our first paper will be a comparative analysis of the monsters discussed in the first part of the course and will introduce you to the practice of literary analysis. Students will write two drafts of this paper; the second will be graded.

Late paper policy:

I will provide up to a one-week extension for one of your final drafts (no questions asked), but you do need to alert me that you will be using this option. I do not accept late first drafts; failure to provide a first draft will result in the loss of one letter grade. If your absence is excused for that day, you may make up for this loss of letter grade by workshopping the draft of the paper with a writing advisor at the Writing Center. I will accept one late response paper up to one week late.

Important Note:

To pass the course, students MUST complete ALL written work. No exceptions. In special cases, I will consider providing an incomplete in the course if all written work is not completed, but these exceptions need to be discussed one week in advance of the finals period and a written agreement signed.

Grading Scale

A 96-100; A- 92-96; B+ 88-91; B 84-87; B- 80-83; C+77-79; C- 73-76; C- 70-72; D+ 67-69; D- 63-66; D- 60-62.

Statement on Expectation of Out-of-Class Work

The time needed for out-of-class work will vary from week to week in class and will vary depending on the speed at which you read and write. There is an expectation that readings are completed at the time in which they are discussed. The average reader reads one page (250-300 words) per minute. That means that some assigned readings will take three-to-four hours to complete, and others will take far less. Weeks when formal papers are due will require considerably more time than others, and it is good to plan for those. I will hand out formal paper assignments at least one week before the first draft is due and two weeks before the final draft

is due. In general, students should expect to spend at least twice as much time out of class doing work for each course as they spend in class, and often more.

In addition to scheduled class times, students will also receive an average of an additional hour per week of direct instruction across the semester through a combination of the following activities:

- required attendance and preparation for outside speaker lectures, colloquiums, conferences, or other relevant events.
- required viewing of films and videos outside of regular class time
- office hours with faculty
- required conferences with the professor
- detailed feedback on student writing and other work
- required viewing or listening session to recorded lectures by the faculty member or a qualified instructor, as in the partially "flipped" classroom.

Statement on Academic Honesty

I take academic dishonesty very seriously, as I am sure you do as well. In the past, it has been my practice that if students *intentionally* plagiarize, they will *fail the course* regardless of their previous performance on other assignments. So, if you are tempted to plagiarize, please don't do it. If you start to feel overwhelmed, call me instead and let me help you.

Students are expected to sign each *final paper* with the Wittenberg Honor Code. Please see the link for Honor Council on the Wittenberg Web page <https://www.wittenberg.edu/sites/default/files/media/honorcouncil/CodeOfAcademicIntegrity-Rev2023.pdf> for further details regarding the code and for an explanation of what constitutes academic dishonesty.

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence Software (GenAI)—adapted from Wittenberg Communication Department:

Wittenberg Students using generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) software are expected to adhere to the standards set forth in Wittenberg's Code of Academic Integrity regarding plagiarism and unauthorized assistance. Presenting GenAI output as your own work is a violation of academic integrity. If you use GenAI in your work, you must indicate that you have done so and in what capacity. You should also keep track of all queries and outputs, as you may be required to list them as part of showing your work and/or citing your sources for an assignment. The entire purpose of coursework at Wittenberg is to learn; therefore, any use of GenAI that interferes with this essential outcome is considered antithetical to our purpose as an institution of learning. While some uses may be appropriate and helpful to a student's learning, it is each student's responsibility to understand what is and what is not appropriate for a given assignment. If you have questions about the use of GenAI for an assignment, ask your professor before the assignment is due.

Accessibility and ADA Accommodations

We all learn differently, and I am committed to addressing your individual learning needs.

Please be aware that Wittenberg is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. If you are eligible for course accommodations because of a disability, you need to register with the Accessibility Services Office, located in the COMPASS: Sweet Success Center in Thomas Library. After you register, give me your accommodation letter from Academic

Services and arrange to talk with me about your learning needs privately in a timely manner. Early identification at the start of the term is essential to ensure timely provision of services as accommodations are not retroactive. If you have questions or would like more information about services for students with disabilities, please contact the Accessibility Services office at accessibilityservices@wittenberg.edu.

Use of Moodle

I use Moodle in the following ways:

- to post lecture notes
- to post primary readings for class
- to post contextual, secondary readings for class
- to post supplemental videos for class, including recorded lectures
- to keep attendance

I do NOT use Moodle to post grades. The best way to calculate your grade is to keep track of the grades you have received on individual assignments, and to use the percentages provided in the syllabus to determine your current grade status. Feel free to contact me via email about your grade if you require more information and/or if you would like to know your class participation grade.

Communication and Closing Comments:

The easiest ways to get hold of me are either through my email account or in person at my office. I am typically on campus Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, and am available to answer questions and to make appointments whenever you see my door open. I answer my email from 8 in the morning to 5 in the evening, and as noted above, this is one of the easiest and most reliable ways to get hold of me. It is also how I will typically contact you and/or the class.

I am really looking forward to this course, and I have high hopes that you will find it engaging as well. But these readings are challenging, and our pace crisp. For many of you, it may also be your first foray into collegiate level literary analysis. So, please don't hesitate to come talk to me if you start to feel overwhelmed by the material or unsure of where the course is going. I am also happy to talk more generally about the course and how you can meet your course goals. My office hours are Monday 1:30-3:30, TH 2:30-3:30, or by appointment.

SYLLABUS

(Tentative: syllabus subject to change depending upon the needs of the course.)

Week I

January 9 Introduction; begin “My Own Personal Demon” Paper

**Eighteenth-Century Revolutions,
Monstrous Selves**

January 11 *The Glorious Revolution and the Glare of the Enlightenment*—read and Discuss **Part II of *Gulliver’s Travels***; also read contextual materials “A Modest Proposal” excerpt from John Locke’s “Essay on Human Understanding” and from Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*

Week II

January 16 Read and Discuss **Part IV *Gulliver’s Travels***; also read contextual materials, “Thoughts on the Present State of American Affairs” and “Letter from a Farmer.”

January 18 *The American Revolution and the Blank Space of a New World*—read and discuss ***Wieland* (Chapters 1-12)**

Week III

January 23 ***Wieland* (Chapter 12-27)**—Response paper #1 due

January 25 *The French Revolution and a Fractured State*—Read and discuss ***Frankenstein, Part I***; also read contextual materials (TBA)

Week IV

January 30 Read and discuss ***Frankenstein* (Volume II)**

February 1 ***Frankenstein* (Volume III)**—Response paper #2 due

Week V

February 6 **Workshop Paper #1**—First draft of first paper due (no late drafts)

February 8 *Nineteenth-Century Domestic Revolutions*—read and discuss “**The Little Mermaid**,” also read contextual materials on Lilith and “The Angel in the House.”

Week VI

February 13 *Romantic Incarnations and Victorian Specters*: “**Christabel**” and “**Goblin Market**”
Final Draft of Paper #1 due

February 15 *Turn of the Century Nightmares*: Read and discuss “**Camilla.**”

Week VII

February 20 *Postmodern Revisions*: Read and discuss “**The Bloody Chamber**” and “**The Lady of the House of Love**” from *The Bloody Chamber*—**Response Paper #3 due**
(*These readings reference sexual violence; please let know if you have any concerns about reading and discussing these texts.*)

February 22 **Monster Rx (Three presentations)**

FIRE WEEK and SPRING BREAK (No Class from Feb. 26-March 8)

**Totalitarian Nightmares:
Cold War and Modern-Day Dystopias**

(*Please be aware that both 1984 and Julia include descriptions of torture; let me know if you have any concerns about reading and discussing these texts.*)

Week VIII

March 12 *Ideological Revolutions, World Wars, and the Threat of Language* —read and discuss **1984—Part One**

March 14 **Monster Rx (Three presentations)**

Week IX

March 19 Read and discuss **1984 (Part Two)**

March 21 Read and discuss **1984 (Part Three)**—**Draft of Personal Demon Paper Part I due.**

Week X

March 26 **Monster Rx (three presentations)**

March 28 *Totalitarianism Revisited: Body Matters*—read and discuss **Julia—Part I**

Week XI

April 2 Read and discuss **Julia—Parts II and III—Response paper #4**

American Monster, American Hero

April 4 *America’s Highways*: Watch *Psycho* (extended class session)

Week XII

April 9 Discuss *Psycho*

April 11 **Monster Rx—one presentation and Draft of Personal Demon Part II due**

Week XIII

April 16 Read and discuss *In Cold Blood (Part I and II)*
(*In Cold Blood* includes a description of a violent crime; please let me know if you have concerns about reading and discussing this novel.)

April 18 **Monster Rx—three presentations**

Week XIV

April 23 **Read and discuss *In Cold Blood (Part II and IV)*—Response Paper #5 due**

April 25 Final reflections and workshop—**draft of Part III of Personal Demon Paper due**

Week XV (Finals week)

Tuesday, May 7 **Final Draft of Personal Demon paper due by 5 pm**