

Unit 1: Historical & Theoretical Foundations of Horror

Unit Objectives:

- Recognize horror as a genre with a long and complex cultural history
- Interpret different horror symbols including the uncanny, or fear of the Other
- Consider the particularly visual (and later audio) technologies of horror cinema
- Contextualize silent horror according to the history of gender and sexuality, race, and nation

Week 1: Introduction to Silent Horror



The first week of class will be devoted to identifying core syllabus information as well as discussing the course design and expectations for learning online. Regarding the latter, we will develop as a class a set of 'best practices' for digital communication in our online learning community. We will also dip our toes into the world of silent cinema through an in-class viewing of *Ab! La Barbe* (the funny shave), a 15-minute silent film, and group discussion (pictured above). Finally, we will read and discuss foundational theoretical concepts related to the horror genre including Freud's landmark essay 'the uncanny.' In this way, we meet the central objective of Unit 1, to consider the historical and theoretical foundations of what we think of as modern horror.

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Locate key information on the syllabus such as deadlines, assessments, grading style, etc.
- Critically read & annotate the syllabus and source material
- Critically read, annotate or otherwise prepare to discuss to Freud's essay

- Participate in class discussions

To complete all the assignments for this week, students must:

- Locate the resources folder on Sakai for Week 1: Introduction to Silent Horror
- Download & carefully read the course syllabus
- Read and prepare to discuss Freud, “The Uncanny” in *Writings on Art and Literature* (1919)
- Synchronously or asynchronously participate in class discussion

Materials/Links

- All course readings are available under the Resources folder on Sakai
- All course viewings/films are available under the Warpwire tab on Sakai

Assessments:

- Participation assignment (synchronous & asynchronous)
 - Synchronous: attendance and meaningful participation at the scheduled class session
 - Asynchronous: VoiceThread comment on synchronous session; due by midnight the following week
- *No Sakai learning assessment for this first week

Week 2: Cinema Vamps & Vampires



This week, students will continue to think through the themes, techniques and history of silent horror, and also its imbrication with literary history. In particular, we will examine one of the most influential films ever made, F.W. Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922), and analyze the symbol of the early silver screen vampire. As a class, we will also discuss the literary influences on *Nosferatu*, including Bram Stoker's hugely popular and influential Gothic novel, *Dracula* (1897) as well as Sheridan Le Fanu's novella *Carmilla* (1872). Finally, we will critically consider gender and representations of the vampire by examining the early twentieth century trope of the 'cinema vamp,' most notoriously performed by film actress Theda Bara (pictured above). In this way, week two fulfills a central learning outcome of unit 1, to contextualize silent horror according to key developments in the early twentieth century related to gender, race and nation.

By the end of week 2, students will be able to:

- Recognize the basic components of German Expressionism
- Identify the literary influences on the film *Nosferatu* (Murnau 1922)
- Appreciate the impact of *Nosferatu* on horror cinema, and film in general
- Consider the vampire as a multifaceted and gendered symbol
- Contextualize horror media according to a history of race, nation and ethnicity

To complete all the assignments for this week, students must:

- Locate & read the assigned readings: selections from Rolf Giesen, *The Nosferatu Story: The Seminal Horror Film, Its Predecessors and Its Enduring Legacy* (2019): Introduction: "100 Years after WWI" (pgs. 1-5) ; Chapter 14: "The Vampire Jew and the Curse of Anti-Semitism" (pgs. 103-111); Chapter 6: "Dracula in Germany: Henrik Galeen and the Screenplay for *Nosferatu*" (35-41)
- Watch *Nosferatu* (F.W. Murnau 1922) by class time on Wednesday
- Complete the sakai learning assessment by class time on Wednesday
- Synchronously or asynchronously participate in class discussion

Materials/Links

- All course readings are available under the Resources folder on Sakai
- All course viewings/films are available under the Warpwire tab on Sakai

Assessments:

- Participation assignment (synchronous & asynchronous)
 - Synchronous: attendance and meaningful participation at the scheduled class session
 - Asynchronous: VoiceThread comment on synchronous session; due by midnight the following week; To gain asynchronous participation this week, submit VoiceThread Commentary on synchronous class session by Friday at midnight
- Assessments: sakai quiz #1 on the assigned viewing, *Nosferatu*; must be completed before class time on Wednesday

Week 3: The Hollywood Monster Movie



This week, we will continue moving chronologically forward in horror film history by considering the 1930s as a key time for the proliferation of the Hollywood Monster Movie. Although James Whale's 1931 *Frankenstein* is perhaps the more often discussed film, *The Bride of Frankenstein* is noted for being one of the most successful sequels of all time, picking right up where the previous films left off in Mary Shelley's story, and shifting our focus to gender and sexuality in the monster movie. This week, students will therefore shift their analysis from the 'vampire' cultural category, to a more complex and multifaceted notion of the monster and monstrosity. Overall, this week will fulfill a core learning objective of unit 1, or to consider the complex symbolic value of horror monsters.

By the end of week 3, students will be able to:

- Recognize the monster as an abstract, multifaceted symbol
- Historicize classic Hollywood representations of the monster
- Consider gender as axis of analysis in the monster
- Elaborate on the literary origins of horror cinema

To complete all the assignments for this week, students must:

- Read & prepare to discuss: selections from: Jeffery Jerome Cohen (editor), *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (1996); Preface: "In a Time of Monsters" (vii-xiii); Chapter 1: "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)" (pgs. 3-26)
- Complete the assigned viewing: *The Bride of Frankenstein* (Whale 1935)
- Complete the learning assessment: Sakai quiz #3
- Synchronously or asynchronously participate in class discussion

Materials/Links

- All course readings are available under the Resources folder on Sakai

- All course viewings/films are available under the Warpwire tab on Sakai

Assessments:

- Participation assignment (synchronous & asynchronous)
 - Synchronous: attendance and meaningful participation at the scheduled class session
 - Asynchronous: VoiceThread comment on synchronous session; due by midnight the following week; To gain asynchronous participation this week, submit VoiceThread Commentary on synchronous class session by Friday at midnight