

American Studies 428 American Monsters

Fall 2015
California State University, Fullerton
Wednesdays, 4:00-6:45
UH-319

“Dreams and beasts are two keys by which we are to find out the secrets of our nature.”
--Ralph Waldo Emerson

“There are terrible creatures, ghosts, in the very air of America.”
--D.H. Lawrence

“The... monster represents many answers to the question of who must be removed from the community at large.”
--Jack Halberstam

“In a deeply tribal sense, we love our monsters.”
--E.O. Wilson

“How many freakin’ vampires am I supposed to care about these days?”
--Stanley Hudson, *The Office*

AMST 428, #20514

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Office_Hours (UH-415): Wednesdays, 1:00-3:00, and by appointment

Course Description

This upper-division American Studies seminar examines the figure of the monster in American culture. The course provides students with an interdisciplinary framework for analyzing representations of monstrosity in film, literature, television, folklore, popular culture, performance art, and youth culture. Monsters symbolize deviations from the “normal” as it is constructed in American society—they are imagined others who represent transgressions of nature, science, race, gender, sexuality, age, space, place, and/or the body. In this course, we will analyze monsters in context, thinking about the ways in which monsters resonate with broader cultural fears and anxieties in different time periods. In addition, we will consider the ways in which images of monstrosity can reinforce or subvert culturally constructed classification systems (e.g., normal/deviant, natural/supernatural, primitive/civilized). Throughout the semester, we will study how different monsters—and their meanings—have changed over time.

Course prerequisites: AMST 201 or completion of GE section D.3 on American history, institutions, values

Required Texts

Books

- W. Scott Poole, *Monsters in America: Our Historical Obsession With the Hideous and the Haunting*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011.
- Max Brooks, *World War Z*. New York: Broadway Books, 2006.
- Richard Matheson, *I Am Legend*. New York: Tor Books, reissue 2007, orig. 1954.
- Charlaine Harris, *Dead Until Dark (Sookie Stackhouse, #1)*, New York: Ace, 2008

There will also be a number of assigned articles for this course, available on Titanium as web links or downloadable PDF files. Consult the course schedule for the list of readings.

Films/TV Episodes:

- Frankenstein* (dir. James Whale, 1931)
- The Bride of Frankenstein* (dir. James Whale, 1935)
- King Kong* (dir. Merian C. Cooper, 1933)
- Godzilla, King of the Monsters* (dir. Ishiro Honda/Terry O. Morse, 1956)
- I Was a Teenage Werewolf* (dir. Gene Fowler, Jr., 1957)
- White Zombie* (dir. Victor Halperin, 1932)
- Night of the Living Dead* (dir. George Romero, 1968)
- Dawn of the Dead* (dir. George Romero, 1978)
- Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, Season 1 Episode 1, “Welcome to the Hellmouth” (dir. Charles Martin Smith, 1997) and Episode 2 “The Harvest” (dir. John T. Kretchmer)
- Dracula* (dir. Tod Browning, 1931)
- Blacula* (dir. William Crain, 1972)
- True Blood*, Season 1 Episode 1, “Strange Love” (dir. Alan Ball, 2008)

You are required to view these films in advance of our scheduled discussions [see course schedule]. They are available on reserve in the CSUF library (and many are available in the Fullerton Public Library for free loan), or you may acquire them on your own through DVD-rental or digital streaming services (*Buffy*, *White Zombie*, and *Night of the Living Dead* are all streaming on Netflix). You will be expected to discuss these films in written assignments.

Student Learning Goals

- Analyze and evaluate representations of the monster in American culture, and develop an interpretive framework for connecting these representations to their larger cultural and historical context.
- Synthesize theories of monstrosity and apply to a broader understanding of the ways in which culture constructs, classifies, and codifies ideas about morality, gender, sexuality, the body, race, age, region, religion, and science.
- Understand and interpret the ways in which culture creates meaning and guides behavior.
- Develop a rigorous concept of culture and cultural process as well as an interdisciplinary sensibility, becoming aware of connections among the social sciences and the humanities.

- Learn reading, writing, and expressive skills to see connections among complex materials and to clearly communicate an understanding of the underlying meanings and causes of cultural/historical events and processes.

Course Assignments and Grading Standards

You will write three papers for this course. The papers will challenge you to analyze primary cultural sources and connect them to their historical and scholarly context.

The scholar Gene Wise has written that the practice of American Studies requires one to have a “connecting imagination.” Think of each paper as an opportunity to exercise your “connecting imagination.”

Each paper should be 6-8 pages in length (8-10 pages for graduate students). All papers should be double-spaced, 12-point font, with 1-inch margins. Acceptable citation styles include Chicago, MLA, APA—whichever you are most comfortable and familiar with. Title pages are not necessary; include a heading on your first page.

Paper #1 Monsters of Science and Nature

Analyze a primary source of your choice that engages with the theme of monsters of science and/or monsters of nature. The source should be a *mainstream popular text*—a film, television show, novel, or video game. Write a paper in which you describe the text you have chosen and explain how it connects to the longer history we have studied of monsters of science and nature. Then, analyze your text as an image of monstrosity, employing one or more of the monster theories we’ve discussed. No additional outside academic research is required. However, you **MUST** integrate material from *Monsters in America*, at least two of the scholarly articles we read in Unit II, and at least two of the films we discussed in Unit II.

Possible mainstream popular texts: *The Blob*, *Sharknado*, *Jurassic Park* (film or novel), *Edward Scissorhands*, any of the Frankenstein films, *Jaws* (film or novel), *The Descent*, *Creature From the Black Lagoon*, *Congo* (film or novel), *The Mist* (film or novella), King Kong remakes, *Teen Wolf*, *X-Files* episodes such as “Post-Modern Prometheus,” “Quagmire,” “Schizogeny”... and so on.

Paper #2 Zombie Culture

Analyze a primary source of your choice that engages with the theme of zombie culture. The source can either be a *mainstream popular text* (a film, television show, novel, or video game) OR an *ethnographic source* (interview/observation [participation if you so choose] with a performance, fan community, etc.). **If you choose a popular text for paper #2, you MUST chose an ethnographic source for paper #3, and vice versa. For your last two papers, one must analyze a mainstream popular text, and the other must analyze an ethnographic source.** Write a paper in which you describe the source you have chosen and explain how it connects to the longer history we’ve studied of zombie culture. Then, analyze your source as an image of monstrosity, employing one or more of the monster theories we’ve discussed. No additional outside academic research is required. However, you **MUST** integrate material from *Monsters in America*,

World War Z, at least three of the scholarly articles we read in Unit III, and at least two of the films we discussed in Unit III.

Possible mainstream popular texts: *The Walking Dead*, any of the Romero sequels or remakes of his films, *iZombie*, the comic book *Afterlife with Archie*, *Fido*, *Warm Bodies*, the film version of *World War Z*, the novel *Generation Dead*, the novel *Dead City*, *The Zombie Survival Guide*, the novel *Zone One*... endless possibilities here.

Possible ethnographic sources: Go to the Long Beach Zombie Walk Festival; attend a *Walking Dead* season premiere viewing party or observe real-time social media response to it; visit an online fan community related to a specific aspect of zombie culture; interview fans of some aspect of zombie culture; interview someone who writes zombie fan fiction... and so on...

Paper #3 Vampires in America

Analyze a primary source of your choice that engages with the theme of vampires in America. The source can either be a *mainstream popular text* (a film, television show, novel, or video game) OR an *ethnographic source* (interview/observation [participation if you so choose] with a performance, fan community, etc.). **If you choose a popular text for paper #3, you MUST chose an ethnographic source for paper #2, and vice versa. For your last two papers, one must analyze a mainstream popular text, and the other must analyze an ethnographic source.** Write a paper in which you describe the source you have chosen and explain how it connects to the longer history we've studied of vampires in America. Then, analyze your source as an image of monstrosity, employing one or more of the monster theories we've discussed. No additional outside academic research is required. However, you MUST integrate material from *Monsters in America*, *I am Legend*, *Dead Until Dark*, at least one of the scholarly articles we read in Unit IV, and at least two of the films/TV shows we discussed in Unit IV.

Possible mainstream popular texts: any of the Dracula films; *Twilight* (book/s or film/s), *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *The Lost Boys*, *Vampire Diaries*, *Salem's Lot*, *Scream Blacula Scream*, *True Blood* (TV series), *Interview with a Vampire* (film or Anne Rice book series)... seemingly infinite possibilities here.

Possible ethnographic sources: attend a *Vampire Diaries* season premiere viewing party or observe real-time social media response to it; visit an online fan community related to a specific aspect of vampire culture; interview fans of some aspect of vampire culture; interview someone who writes vampire fan fiction... and so on...

Additional Assignment for Graduate Students

M.A. students are required to read one additional book for the course, selected in consultation with the instructor from the list below, and write a 6-8-page response paper that 1) summarizes AND evaluates the author's main argument and methodology and 2) ties the book into larger themes/issues/questions examined in the course. The paper may be turned in anytime but is due no later than December 2.

M.A. Student Reading Options

Carole Clover, *Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (1992)

Judith "Jack" Halberstam, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* (1995)

Harry M. Benshoff, *Monsters in the Closet: Homosexuality and the Horror Film* (1997)
 James B. Twitchell, *Dreadful Pleasures: An Anatomy of Modern Horror* (1985)
 Elizabeth Young, *Black Frankenstein: The Making of an American Metaphor* (2008)
 William Tsutsui, *Godzilla on My Mind: Fifty Years of the King of Monsters* (2004)
 Eric Greene, *Planet of the Apes as American Myth: Race and Politics in the Films and Television Series* (1996)
 Joshua Blu Buhs, *Bigfoot: The Life and Times of a Legend* (2009)
 Brian Regal, *Searching for Sasquatch: Crackpots, Eggheads, and Cryptozoology* (2011)
 Sarah Juliet Lauro *The Transatlantic Zombie: Slavery, Rebellion, and Living Death* (2015)
 Kyle William Bishop, *American Zombie Gothic: The Rise & Fall (& Rise) of the Walking Dead in Popular Culture* (2010)

Grading Standards

	<u>Undergraduates</u>	<u>Graduates</u>
Paper #1	30%	20%
Paper #2	30%	30%
Paper #3	30%	30%
Participation	10%	10%
Book Analysis (Graduate Students)	N/A	10%

Attendance and Participation

Attendance is required at every class meeting. Attendance and class participation make up 10% of your final grade. American Studies seminars work best when students are actively engaged with the classroom community, concepts, and coursework. Please come to every class prepared to 1) describe the central argument or theme of the assigned text(s); 2) assess the text for its relative strengths and limitations; 3) connect the course readings and films to one another; 4) connect the readings and films to your broader understanding of contemporary and historical issues in American culture; 5) relate the readings and films to your own experience and/or areas of expertise.

Late Assignments

An assignment is considered late if it is not turned in at the beginning of the class session in which it is due. Late assignments will be lowered one mark **per day** (NOT per class meeting) after the due date (for example, C to C-). Extensions will be granted on a case-by-case basis for legitimate reasons and only when a student asks for an extension at least 24 hours before an assignment is due.

Community Policies

- It is unacceptable to arrive late or leave class early. If you must leave class early because of an appointment that cannot be missed, make sure that you tell me via email before class begins.
- Cell phones must be on silent (not vibrate), or preferably turned off. They must be stowed away out of sight. **No phones on your desk.**
- No text messaging or posting to social media during class. If you do so, you will be asked to leave.
- Laptops may only be used for notetaking or consulting assigned readings that you have already downloaded from Titanium; going online for other reasons is not permitted in class.

Grading

For this course, +/- grading will be used. No extra credit will be offered. Keep all graded work so that any discrepancies can be easily and fairly straightened out.

A+ 97-100; A 93-96; A-90-92; B+ 87-89; B 83-86; B- 80-82; C+ 77-79; C 73-76; C- 70-72; D+ 67-69; D 63-66; D- 60-62; F 0-59

Student Accommodations

CSUF complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act by providing a process for disclosing disabilities and arranging for reasonable accommodations. On the CSUF campus, the Office of Disabled Student Services has been delegated the authority to certify disabilities and to prescribe specific accommodations for students with documented disabilities. DSS provides support services for students with mobility limitations, learning disabilities, hearing or visual impairments, and other disabilities. Counselors are available to help students plan a CSUF experience to meet their individual needs. Prior to receiving this assistance, documentation from a qualified professional source must be submitted to DSS. For more information, contact DSS in UH 101; 657-278-3117. <http://www.fullerton.edu/DSS>

Academic Integrity

Integrity is an essential component of all students' academic experience. Students who violate university standards of academic integrity are subject to disciplinary sanctions, including failure in the course and suspension from the university. Since dishonesty in any form harms the individual, other students, and the university, policies on academic integrity are strictly enforced. I expect that you will familiarize yourself with the academic integrity guidelines found in the current student handbook. [<http://www.fullerton.edu/handbook/>]. Cheating is defined as obtaining or attempting to obtain credit for work by the use of any dishonest, deceptive, fraudulent, or unauthorized means, or helping someone commit an act of academic dishonesty. (UPS 300.021). Examples include, but are not limited to:

Unacceptable examination behavior: communicating with fellow students, copying material from another student's exam or allowing another student to copy from an exam, possessing or using unauthorized materials, or any behavior that defeats the intent of an exam.

Plagiarism: taking the work of another and offering it as one's own without giving credit to that source, whether that material is paraphrased or copied in verbatim or near-verbatim form.

Unauthorized collaboration on a project, homework or other assignment where an instructor expressly forbids such collaboration.

Documentary falsification, including forgery, altering of campus documents or records, tampering with grading procedures, fabricating lab assignments, or altering medical excuses.

Campus Emergency Procedures

Students should be familiar with campus **emergency procedures**: prepare.fullerton.edu

Course Schedule (subject to revision)

Date	Topic / Reading Due	Paper Due
W, Aug. 26	Introduction to Course	
	I: FOUNDATIONS: THEORY AND EARLY HISTORY	
W, Sep. 2	<p>Studying Monsters, part 1: Analyzing Monsters in Context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scott Poole, <i>Monsters in America</i>, Preface and Introduction [monsters are born out of history...] • Kendall R. Phillips, “Introduction,” <i>Projected Fears: Horror Films and American Culture</i> (2005), 1-10. [monsters resonate with cultural anxieties and concerns...] • Heather Urbanski, “The Cautionary Tale,” from <i>Plagues, Apocalypses, and Bug-Eyed Monsters: How Speculative Fiction Shows Us Our Nightmares</i> (2007), 5-18. [monsters offer a cautionary tale...] 	
W, Sep. 9	<p>Studying Monsters, part 2: Theorizing Monstrous Bodies and Boundaries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, “Monster Culture (Seven Theses),” from <i>Monster Theory: Reading Culture</i> (1996), 3-25. [monsters signify...] • John Edgar Browning, “Towards a Monster Pedagogy: Reclaiming the Classroom for the Other,” from <i>Fear and Learning: Essays on the Pedagogy of Horror</i>, ed. Sean Moreland and Aalya Ahmed (2013), 40-55. [monsters make visible our classification systems...] • Jack Halberstam, “Parasites and Perverts: An Introduction to Gothic Monstrosity,” from <i>Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters</i> (1995), 1-15. [monsters represent threats to the imagined community...] 	
W, Sep. 16	<p>Early American Horrors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Washington Irving, “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” (1819) 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nathaniel Hawthorne, “Young Goodman Brown” (1835) • Harriet Prescott Spofford, “Circumstance” (1860) • Scott Poole, <i>Monsters in America</i>, Ch. 1, “Monstrous Beginnings,” and Ch. 2, “Goth Americana” 	
	II: MONSTERS OF SCIENCE AND NATURE	
W, Sep. 23	<p>Frankenstein</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch <i>Frankenstein</i> (1931) • Watch <i>The Bride of Frankenstein</i> (1935) • Scott Poole, <i>Monsters in America</i>, Ch. 3, “Weird Science” • Elizabeth Young, “Here Comes the Bride: Wedding, Gender, and Race in <i>Bride of Frankenstein</i>,” in <i>The Dread of Difference: Gender and the Horror Film</i>, ed. Barry Keith Grant (1996), 309-337 	
W, Sep. 30	<p>King Kong and Godzilla</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch <i>King Kong</i> (1933) • Watch <i>Godzilla, King of the Monsters</i> (1956) • Scott Poole, <i>Monsters in America</i>, Ch. 4, “Alien Invasions” • Cynthia Erb, “A Showman’s Dream: The Production and Release of <i>King Kong</i>,” from <i>Tracking King Kong: A Hollywood Icon in World Culture</i> (2009), 21-57. • Aaron Kerner, “<i>Gojira</i> vs. <i>Godzilla</i>: Catastrophic Allegories,” from <i>Ritual and Event: Interdisciplinary Perspectives</i>, ed. Mark Franko (2007), 109-124. • Chon A. Noriega, “Godzilla and the Japanese Nightmare: When <i>Them!</i> is Us,” from <i>Hibakusha Cinema: Hiroshima, Nagasaki and the Nuclear Image in Japanese Film</i>, ed. Mick Broderick (1996), 54-74. 	

W, Oct. 7	<p>The Werewolf and Bigfoot</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch <i>I Was a Teenage Werewolf</i> (1957) • James B. Twitchell, “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Wolfman,” from <i>Dreadful Pleasures: An Anatomy of Modern Horror</i> (1985), 204-227. • Thomas Doherty, “The Horror Teenpics,” from <i>Teenagers and Teenpics: The Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950s</i> (2002), 115-144. • Brian Regal, “Crackpots and Eggheads,” from <i>Searching For Sasquatch</i> (2011), 7-29. • Joshua Blu Buhs, “Camping With Bigfoot: Sasquatch and the Varieties of Middle-Class Resistance to Consumer Culture,” <i>The Journal of Popular Culture</i> 46:1 (February 2013), 38-58. 	
	III: ZOMBIE CULTURE	
W, Oct. 14	<p>The Transnational Zombie</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch <i>White Zombie</i> (1932) • Chera Kee, “‘They Are Not Men... They Are Dead Bodies’: From Cannibal to Zombie and Back Again,” from <i>Better Off Dead: The Evolution of the Zombie as Post Human</i>, ed. Deborah Christie and Sarah Juliet Lauro (2011), 9-23. • Ann Kordas, “New South, New Immigrants, New Women, New Zombies: The Historical Development of the Zombie in American Popular Culture,” from <i>Race, Oppression, and the Zombie: Essays on Cross-Cultural Appropriations of the Caribbean Tradition</i>, ed. Christopher Moreman and Cory James Rushton (2011), 15-30. • Start reading Max Brooks, <i>World War Z</i> for discussion on 10/28 	PAPER #1 Due by midnight Friday, October 16, via TurnItIn on Titanium
W, Oct. 21	<p>The Romero Revision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch <i>Night of the Living Dead</i> (1968) • Watch <i>Dawn of the Dead</i> (1978) 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kendall R. Phillips, “<i>Night of the Living Dead</i> (1968),” from <i>Projected Fears: Horror Films and American Culture</i> (2005), 81-100. • Kyle William Bishop, “The Dead Walk the Earth: The Triumph of the Zombie Social Metaphor in <i>Dawn of the Dead</i>,” from <i>American Zombie Gothic: The Rise and Fall (and Rise) of the Walking Dead in Popular Culture</i> (2010), 129-157. • Scott Poole, <i>Monsters in America</i>, Ch. 7, “Undead Americans” • Continue reading Max Brooks, <i>World War Z</i> for discussion on 10/28 	
W, Oct. 28	<p>Zombie Apocalypse Now</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Max Brooks, <i>World War Z</i> • Stephanie Boluk and Wylie Lenz, “Generation Z: The Age of Apocalypse,” from <i>Generation Zombie: Essays on the Living Dead in Modern Culture</i>, ed. Boluk and Lenz (2011), 1-17. 	
	IV: VAMPIRES IN AMERICA	
W, Nov. 4	<p>Americanizing Dracula</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch: <i>Dracula</i> (1931) • Watch <i>Blacula</i> (1972) • Louis Warren, “Buffalo Bill Meets Dracula: William F. Cody, Bram Stoker, and the Frontiers of Racial Decay,” <i>American Historical Review</i> 107:4 (October 2002), 1124-1157. • Kendall R. Phillips, “<i>Dracula</i> (1931),” from <i>Projected Fears: Horror Films and American Culture</i> (2005), 11-33. 	
W, Nov. 11	NO CLASS – VETERANS DAY	PAPER #2 Due by midnight via TurnItIn on Titanium

W, Nov. 18	<p>Dead and Undead in Suburbia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch <i>Buffy the Vampire Slayer</i>, Season 1 Episodes 1 and 2, “Welcome to the Hellmouth” and “The Harvest” (1997) • Richard Matheson, <i>I Am Legend</i> (1954) • Scott Poole, <i>Monsters in America</i>, Ch. 6, “Haunted Houses” 	
W, Nov. 25	<i>Thanksgiving Recess</i>	
W, Dec. 2	<p>Love, Sex, and Coming Out of the Coffin</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charlaine Harris, <i>Dead Until Dark</i> • Watch <i>True Blood</i>, Season 1 Episode 1, “Strange Love” (dir. Alan Ball, 2008) 	
W, Dec. 9	<p>Conclusion of Course</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scott Poole, <i>Monsters in America</i>, Epilogue 	
F, Dec. 18	Paper # 3 Due via TurnItIn on Titanium	<p>PAPER #3 due by midnight Wednesday, December 16, via TurnItIn on Titanium</p>