

English Composition: Representing Monstrosity

Course Description

This course helps students learn about college-level composition and research through an exploration of monsters and monstrosity that emphasizes fictional sources. The course begins with discussion of interpretation and argument as students learn both to interpret works of fiction and to critique the analyses of other scholars. As the course continues, students use their analyses of both fiction and nonfiction as means to improve their communication and rhetorical skills across multiple modes and media. While students build a repertoire of rhetorical strategies, they also consider the cultural and historical significance of monstrosity in terms of human identity, particularly gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity.

Required Texts

- Blake, Brandy Ball and L. Andrew Cooper, eds. *Monsters*. Fountainhead Press, 2012
- A rhetorical handbook of the instructor's choosing
- Films either screened by the instructor or viewed independently
 - *An American Werewolf in London* (1981)
 - *Night of the Living Dead* (1968)
 - *Psycho* (1960)
 - *Candyman* (1992)
 - *Twilight* (2008)

Assignments

Instructors may choose to have students select and revise completed shorter and longer assignments for a portfolio at the end of the semester.

- *Critical analysis essay* (based on *Monsters*, p. 192, Explore)
- *Short research essay* (based on *Monsters*, p. 111, Compose)
- *Photo essay* (*Monsters*, pp. 233–234)
- *Non-linear argument* (*Monsters*, pp. 235–237)
- *Shorter assignments* (from *Monsters*, listed in readings and assignments, below)

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

All page numbers refer to *Monsters*

Unit 1: Interpreting Monsters

Week 1: MAKING AND SHARING CLAIMS

Reading: "Introduction: Haunting Boundaries"

Assignment: p. 10, Collaborate

Week 2: READING FOR INTERPRETATION

Reading: E.T.A. Hoffmann's "The Sand-Man" (complete text online at <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/31377>)

Assignment: read passages closely for the significance of words and phrases

Week 3: CRITIQUING INTERPRETIVE ARGUMENTS

Reading: "Excerpts from *The Uncanny*"

Assignments: p. 192, Collaborate and Explore

Major Assignment: Use your answers from p. 192, Explore as the basis for an essay critiquing Freud’s analysis of “The Sand-Man”

Unit 2: Nineteenth-Century Classics

Week 4: VISUAL ANALYSIS

Reading: “Excerpts from *Frankenstein*” (complete text online at <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/84>)

Assignment: p. 41, Compose

Week 5: ORGANIZING INFORMATION

Reading: “Excerpts from *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*” (complete text online at <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/42>)

Assignment: p. 94, Collaborate and Compose

Week 6: BEGINNING RESEARCH

Reading: “Excerpts from *Dracula*” (complete text online at <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/345>)

Assignments: p. 121, Invent and either p. 121, Explore or p. 122, Compose

Unit 3: Twentieth-Century Innovations

Week 7: RESEARCHING LITERATURE AND HISTORY 1

Reading: “The Company of Wolves”

Assignment: p. 111, Compose

Week 8: RESEARCHING LITERATURE AND HISTORY 2

Reading: “Strange Transformations”

Film: *An American Werewolf in London* (1981)

Major assignment: revised essay based on p. 111, Compose

Week 9: RESEARCHING ACROSS MEDIA AND PERFORMANCE

Reading: “George Romero’s Zombie Films”

Film: *Night of the Living Dead* (1968)

Assignment: p. 62, Explore and Collaborate

Week 10: ITERATIVE DEVELOPMENT OF NARRATIVE AND ARGUMENT

Reading: “Movie Psychos and Slashers”

Film: *Psycho* (1960)

Assignments: p. 217, Explore and p. 218, Invent

Week 11: CONTROVERSY AND COUNTERARGUMENT

Reading: “The Horrors of Race and American History”

Film: *Candyman* (1992)

Assignments: p. 178, Compose and Explore

Major Assignment: Major Assignment #2, photo essay (pp. 233–234)

Week 12: RESEARCHING ACROSS MEDIA AND PERFORMANCE 2

Readings: “Evil Dolls”

Assignments: p. 201, Explore and Collaborate

Unit 4: Today: Zombies and Twi-Hards

Week 13: MEDIATING PERSPECTIVES

Reading: “Excerpts from *World War Z*”

Assignment: p. 77, Explore

Week 14: LINKING CONCEPTS AND COMMUNITIES

Reading: “Civilized Vampires Versus Savage Werewolves”

Film: *Twilight* (2008)

Assignments: p. 171, Explore and p. 172, Collaborate and Compose

Week 15: WORKSHOPS: final assignment or portfolio

Major Assignment: Major Assignment #3, media and non-linear argument (pp. 235–237)