The Australasian Nightmare: Horror Films and the Traumatic Imagination on the Pacific Rim

COURSE DESIGNATOR: SDNY 3035
NUMBER OF CREDITS: 3
LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: English
CONTACT HOURS: 46

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The classic American horror film is derived from a gothic heritage, an inheritor of a European context and its tropes: the disintegration of civilization through wars, disease, economic collapse, and associated social traumas. The horror that the current, post-9/11 generation has produced is notably different; it plays upon central themes that derive from an Australasian context, driven by the recent horror films of Australia, Japan, and Korea. These influential films have been made and distributed outside of an American context but then repackaged for the West in remakes and variations that awaken an American audience to themes of horror that are decidedly non-European in substance. This course will examine these films, comparing and contrasting European and Australasian tropes for horror as well as their reflection of and impact on society.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

All students will develop the skills necessary to analyze film by utilizing critical texts, discussing each film, and developing their own writing. Students will also acquire a strong sense of trends in horror across time and space, differentiating between classic European and newer Australasian themes and tropes. Perhaps most importantly, students will gain insight into how film, and particularly the horror film, can reflect the societies from which they emerge, underscoring our deepest fears, national and individual traumas, and the catalysts that make these experiences scary. By the time they depart, students will have a sense of where horror comes from, the events and issues that make it possible and attractive to an audience, and how the form changes over time in response to social transformations. Students will also gain an understanding of horror in the context that the things that scare us can be both personal and transpersonal; that fears can be markedly different across cultures and can be central to the discussion of hundreds of years of history.

METHODOLOGY

This course will meet once weekly for the 8 hours (inclusive of a one-hour lunch break). In the morning students will watch a short film or excerpts followed by lectures with Adam Lownstein and Adam Simon. Students will then break for a brown bag lunch on their own or, in at least one case with their professors. After lunch students will gather for an additional discussion. In some sessions, a second film will be shown and subsequent discussions will take place. Each week, a group of students will be assigned to lead the discussion and will be expected to have thoroughly mastered the material through the readings as well as additional research and recommendations from the professors. In as many classes as possible, special guests will be lecturing. These will be comprised of industry insiders throughout the region, and may include screenwriters, authors, producers, directors and other industry professionals connected to the horror genre.

Field Components: CAPA provides the unique opportunity to learn about the city through direct, guided experience. Participation in the field activity(s) for this course is required. You will actively explore the Global City you are currently living in. Furthermore, you will have the chance to collect useful information that will be an invaluable resource for the essays/papers/projects assigned to this course.

Depending on what is currently playing, students will have the opportunity to see a film at an Australian theatre, particularly if it is connected to one of the productions studied in the class. If possible, students will also visit a set location or production studio so that they can gain an understanding of how ideas become film. Additionally, students will have the opportunity to meet several industry leaders to learn from the experts on how these films are made, consumed and distributed.

Students are strongly encouraged to participate in co-curricular activities.
REQUIRED READINGS/ MATERIALS

REQUIRED TEXTS
Lim, Bliss Cua. Translating Time (2009).
Lippit, Akira, Atomic Light (Shadow Optics) (2005).
Schneider, Steven and Tony Williams, eds. Horror: International (2005)

RECOMMENDED TEXTS
The Dread of Difference (2015)

Additional readings will be made available in Xerox or electronic format when possible to supplement the required texts and films. Examples of such supplements are not limited to the following: Asian horror manga excerpts, Freud’s essay on the uncanny, as well as excerpts from the works of Edgar Allan Poe.

The above texts will be available to borrow from CAPA or purchased in advance (most can be found online relatively cheaply). It is imperative that students do the assigned readings before the class for which they are assigned, as they will be required to discuss and evaluate these ideas in the sessions. Readings will be supplemented with screenings which are equally if not more critical to the course objectives.

REQUIRED FILMS
Students will watch and analyze the following films:
The American Nightmare (Adam Simon, 2000, United States)
The Cure (Kiyoshi Kurosawa, 1997, Japan)
Godzilla (Ishiro Honda, 1954, Japan)
The Last Wave (Peter Weir, 1977, Australia)
Memories of Murder (Joon-ho Bong, 2003, South Korea)
New Godzilla (Hideaki Anno, 2016, Japan)
Pacific Rim (Guillermo del Toro, 2013, United States)
Pulse (Kiyoshi Kurosawa, 2001, Japan)
A Tale of Two Sisters (Je-woon Kim, 2003, South Korea)
Wolf Creek (Greg McLean, 2005, Australia)

GUEST LECTURES
As part of the course, students will have the opportunity to learn from several guest lecturers potentially including (depending on availability) but not limited to: Greg McLean (writer and producer), Aaron Sterns (writer and producer), Tate Brady (former chair of Melbourne Film Festival and Producer), Raffaele Caputo (writer, editor, and film analyst), Philip Trophy (writer, producer, and film analyst). Mark Hartley (director, editor, writer) Hideo Nakata (director, writer, producer) Ryuhei Kitamura (director, writer, producer)
GRADING

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
<td>Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
<td>Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements.</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60-66</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0-59</td>
<td>Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an I.</td>
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SUMMARY OF HOW GRADES ARE WEIGHTED

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion Facilitator Assignment</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly Analysis Assignments</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Research Paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Overall grade</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
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ASSESSMENT DETAILS

WEEKLY SELF AND FILM ANALYSIS PAPERS
Students will be expected to turn in a short piece of writing each week (300 words). Assignments will include one question designed to elicit personal reflection about each student’s relationship to fear and horror as well as one or several short-answer questions designed to facilitate reviews of the films and themes discussed each week. The assignments will be related to the week ahead so that each student will come prepared with decompressed thoughts on the content.

DISCUSSION FACILITATOR AND PRESENTATION
Each week a small group of students will be responsible for taking the lead in the facilitating the discussion via introductory class presentation. The discussion facilitators will be expected to turn in their enhanced papers (600 words) for the week prior to the class meeting. Particular pieces of recommended reading will be required of the facilitator for the week. Students will be expected to turn in their detailed notes and be prepared to present on the identified topics.

FINAL PAPER:
Students will be expected to produce a final paper of 2500 words. Topics will be approved by the end of the third week of the class so that students will have ample opportunity to research their topic and complete the writing by the end of the term.

### COURSE CONTENT

#### WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Context of the European and the Australasian horror traditions</th>
<th>There are distinct differences between the horror tropes and themes in the classic European model and the Australasian counterpart. While Europe and America were following the classical formula, the Japanese, Australians, Koreans, and others were creating something new. This session will introduce students to some of the key tenets of horror so that students can be prepared to compare and contrast across the regions. Such key elements include industrial contexts, historical traumas, the contagious nature of horror objects, fear and coping mechanisms as they relate to childhood, and others.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Morning:</strong> Watch The American Nightmare, with opening lecture from Adam Lowenstein &amp; Adam Simon followed by discussion</td>
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<td><strong>Afternoon:</strong> Watch The Babadook, with opening lecture from Adam Lowenstein &amp; Adam Simon followed by discussion</td>
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#### WEEK 2: GHOSTS

| Ghost stories form one of the most recognizable subgenres within horror. The use of ghosts as a device for fear is one that is common both in childhood and throughout our lives as we become aware of our mortality and the perils of the world around us (and potentially beyond). Australasian horror differs distinctly in its deployment of ghosts than does the classic European model, most notably in the notion that bad things to happen to good people for no rational reason. In this sense, film mimics life itself. |
|---|---|
| **Morning:** Watch Ringu, with opening lecture from Adam Lowenstein & Adam Simon followed by discussion  |
| **Afternoon:** Watch Ju-on: The Grudge, with opening lecture from Adam Lowenstein & Adam Simon followed by discussion |
| **Assignments:** Weekly Analysis Assignment Due |
| **Readings:** David Kalat, “Dead Wet Girls” and “A Ghost is Born” (in Kalat, pgs 1-19 & 121-143); Lowenstein,“Unmasking Hiroshima: Demons, Human Beings, and Shindo Kaneto’s Onibaba” (in Lowenstein, pgs 83-110). |

#### WEEK 3: HUMAN MONSTERS

| Horror is often easiest to digest when the subjects are paranormal, supernatural, or imagined. The audience can separate what is real from what is not and take comfort in the reassuring belief that vampires are merely fantastic |
|---|---|
or that it would be impossible to turn into a werewolf. However, in many instances some of the greatest atrocities are those committed by humans against other humans or humankind. In this distinct brand of horror, there is no safe place to hide; there is no denial based on total implausibility. In these cases, the real fear comes from the fact that anyone could be the perpetrator and anyone could be the victim.

Morning: Watch Wolf Creek; with guest lecture by Greg McClean and Aaron Sterns, writers and producers of Wolf Creek

Afternoon: Watch Cure, with opening lecture from Adam Lowenstein & Adam Simon followed by discussion

Assignments: Weekly Analysis Assignment Due; Topics for Final Research Paper due by the end of class in week 3.

Readings: Origin: Wolf Creek Book 1 (Sterns &McLean); David Kalat, “You are the Disease and Kiyoshi Kurosawa is the Cure” (in Kalat, pgs 96-120); Akira Lippit, “Phantom Cures: Obscurity and Emptiness” (in Lippit, pgs 133-158).

Out-of-Classroom Activity: The professors will use one of the following weeks (3, 4, or 5) to invite students to accompany them to the cinema to watch a horror production. If possible, individuals connected to the production will be invited to attend and comment on the film’s creation.

WEEK 4: AUSTRALASIAN APOCALYPSE

Apocalypse films date back much further than the modern versions of Mad Max and The Terminator. In this session, students will be introduced to the apocalypse film, drawing upon what they have already seen from British and American films, and what they think they may know about the Australian counterparts given the success of the recent Mad Max: Fury Road. Students will develop an understanding that Mad Max falls into a complex and nuanced Australian landscape context that differs from its analogue in the United States and may make more national and cultural “sense” in an Australasian context.

Morning: Watch The Last Wave, with opening lecture from Adam Lowenstein & Adam Simon followed by discussion

Afternoon: Watch Pulse, with opening lecture from Adam Lowenstein & Adam Simon followed by discussion

Assignments: Weekly Analysis Assignment Due


Out-of-Classroom Activity: The professors will use one of the following weeks (3, 4, or 5) to invite students to accompany them to the cinema to watch a horror production. If possible, individuals connected to the production will be invited to attend and comment on the film’s creation.

WEEK 5: TIME, FORM, AND OUR OWN SOCIAL NIGHTMARES

Horror films are often designed to reflect our discomfort with society: its inequalities, injustices, and faults. Time and cinematic form are used to help guide an audience through situations which would otherwise be difficult to perceive,
creating suspense and fear. How does a cinematic approach to time affect our perception of social events, as well as social structures such as family, school, religion, etc.? Horror films with particular investments in time as an agent of cinematic form will be the focus of our discussion in this unit.

**Morning:** Watch A Tale of Two Sisters, with opening lecture from Adam Lowenstein & Adam Simon followed by discussion

**Afternoon:** Watch Memories of Murder, with opening lecture from Adam Lowenstein & Adam Simon followed by discussion

**Assignments:** Weekly Analysis Assignment Due: Read Bliss Cua Lim, “Introduction: Clocks for Seeing” and “The Ghostliness of Genre: Global Hollywood Remakes the ‘Asian Horror Film’” (in Lim, pgs 1-42 & 190-244); Graham Huggan, “Ghost Stories, Bone Flutes, Cannibal Countermemory” (in Gelder, pgs 352-363).

**Out-of-Classroom Activity:** The professors will use one of the following weeks (3, 4, or 5) to invite students to accompany them to the cinema to watch a horror production. If possible, individuals connected to the production will be invited to attend and comment on the film’s creation.

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**WEEK 6: VISUAL IMAGINATION: KAIJU-MONSTERS AND SPECTACLE**

Possibly the most famous example of Asian-style horror is Godzilla and the classic kaiju-monster movies of the post-war period tokusatsu films. Images of kaiju monsters have never ceased to find their way to U.S. shores, and the film itself has been made and remade decade after decade. In this session, students will use two examples of kaiju films, the original Godzilla and more modern version along with clips from several other versions throughout the decades, to better understand the collective spirit behind the kaiju, its purpose, and its connection to the deep trauma of post-war Japan. Remembering that Godzilla was made just 9 years after the atomic devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the original film itself was always far more than a simple monster movie. Instead, it is a reflection on science, atrocity, and coping with the realities of both.

**Morning:** Watch the original Godzilla (1954), opening lecture from Adam Lowenstein & Adam Simon followed by discussion

**Afternoon:** Watch New Godzilla (2016) if available or Pacific Rim, opening lecture from Adam Lowenstein & Adam Simon followed by discussion

**Assignments:** Final Papers Due Today! Read Philp Brophy, “Horrality – The Textuality of Contemporary Horror Films” (in Gelder, pgs 276-284); Jason Barr, “The Japanese Origins of the Kaiju” and “International and Domestic Politics” and “America and Kaiju” (in Barr, pgs 25-36 & 68-104 & 121-155).

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**ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Students are expected to be on time and attend all classes while abroad. Many instructors assess both attendance and participation when assigning a final course grade. Attendance alone does not guarantee a positive participation grade; the student should be prepared for class and engage in class discussion. See the onsite syllabus for specific class requirements.

**UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**
Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else’s work as your own can result in disciplinary action. The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows:

**SCHOLASTIC DISHONESTY:**

Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis.

Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an “F” or “N” for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

**STUDENT CONDUCT:**

The University of Minnesota has specific policies concerning student conduct. This information can be found on the Learning Abroad Center website.