English 4ST3
Even Stranger Things: The Early Gothic
Fall 2019

Instructor: Stacy Ann Creech
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Seminar Times and Location: Tuesdays 3:30-5:20pm, CNH 332
Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:30-2:30pm, CNH 313

Course Description:
This seminar will chart the emergence of the Gothic mode of writing in English literature, which responds to the social ills and anxieties that attend the emergence of modern life. We will read a wide range of long eighteenth century transatlantic texts—novels, short stories, and poetry—that focus on the intersections between the Gothic mode and the institution of slavery, since this kind of writing flourished at around the same time as the abolition movement in Britain. While aiming to evoke terror and horror in the reader, the Gothic has always been haunted by historical and social injustice; these affective lines are never quite as blurred as when the Gothic addresses and tries to deal with colonial concerns. By turning to an analysis of the early Anglo-American Gothic, we will think with, through, and against a long eighteenth-century cultural landscape in which Enlightenment philosophy coincides with the institution of a transatlantic economy based in a currency that trades in the enslavement of human bodies. While gathering a working understanding of the tropes and conventions of the Gothic and of its place in a burgeoning literary marketplace, we will examine how this kind of writing is obsessed with the past and its traumas at the same time as it reveals what is brutal in the present, articulating problematic racial attitudes, fears of the “Other,” public alarm, and xenophobia. Students will be encouraged to apply a range of critical approaches to this body of writing.

Objectives:
- To introduce students to the key historical and sociopolitical antecedents that gave rise to Gothic literature in English in Britain and in the United States of America.
- To familiarize students with central Transatlantic authors writing within the Gothic mode.
- To examine the tropes and conventions of the Gothic that enable it to draw from the past and reflect the present, while relying on the supernatural, excess of subjective feeling, darkness, and terror/horror.
- To examine the intersections between the Gothic literature and the institution of slavery, focusing on colonial concerns dealing primarily with race and gender.
- To develop students’ analytical skills, by challenging you to engage in close reading and critical thinking.
- To consider some influential theoretical frameworks for literary study (e.g., Black Studies, Psychoanalysis, Feminism, Postcolonialism), and to encourage students to engage in a critical dialogue with theoretical concepts when writing about and discussing this type of literature.
- To enhance students’ written and oral skills, by offering guidance in planning, organizing, and crafting upper-level critical pieces, such as position papers, oral presentations, proposals, and longer essays. This course will offer students the opportunity to practice designing clear, well-argued, and well-supported analyses and arguments.
Accessibility Statement:
I assume that all of us learn in different ways, and that the organization of any course will accommodate each student differently. For example, you may prefer to process information by speaking and listening, so that some of the written handouts or the images on my PowerPoint slides may be difficult to absorb. Please feel free to talk to me as soon as you can about your individual learning needs, including any Student Accessibility Services arrangements, and how we can work together in this course to best accommodate you. Even if you do not have a documented disability, we are always glad to consult about your learning processes and to help you identify resources on campus; useful supports include the English and Cultural Studies Departmental Writing Tutors as well as McMaster’s Student Success Centre, which provides academic skills support for all students.

Required Texts:
The Castle of Otranto (1764), Horace Walpole (author) and Frederick S. Frank (editor).
Wieland: or, The Transformation (1798), Charles Brockden Brown (author).
The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave (1831), Mary Prince (author) and Sara Salih (editor).
Journal of a West-India Proprietor: Kept During a Residence in the Island of Jamaica (1834), Matthew Gregory Lewis (author).

Required online readings (Available on Avenue to Learn).

Recommended Reference Texts:
A good dictionary. Note that the Oxford Dictionary is part of the Oxford Online Reference Suite, which is available to you at no additional cost through Mills Library.

Evaluation (due dates are indicated below in the schedule of readings):
Participation and Attendance 20%
Avenue to Learn Topic Starter and Comments (200 words on assigned day) 10%
Gothic Tropes (Oral) Presentation (Group Work, due Oct. 29) 10%
Position Paper (600 words) 20%
Final Paper Proposal (500 words, due Nov. 19) 10%
Final Paper (2000 words, due Dec. 3) 30%
Total 100%

- There is NO EXAM for ENGL4ST3

Important Notes:
In the event of class cancellations, students will be notified on Avenue to Learn and via e-mail. It is your responsibility to check the site and your e-mail for any such announcements.
Link: http://avenue.mcmaster.ca/ (Avenue to Learn)

Seminars will run from Tuesday, September 3, to Tuesday, December 3. Students are expected to attend seminars and to be prepared to discuss the material weekly.
Attendance and Participation:
Students will be introduced to a variety of interpretive approaches, with considerable emphasis on close readings and the development of critical thinking skills in reading and writing. Seminars will focus on in-class discussions of the course material, as well as writing activities, note-taking, peer and group assignments, position papers, and an oral presentation. It is essential that you come to seminars on Tuesdays having completed the readings and having reviewed your notes. Your participation grade and your profiting from the seminars will be directly related to your attendance, and especially to your preparedness. I expect you to come to class with a moderate understanding of topics, course materials, etc., as well as some key questions.

Participation and attendance will comprise 20% of your final grade. Participation in seminars takes many forms, chiefly in-class discussions, active note-taking, asking pertinent questions, and completing all assignments in a timely fashion. Note as well that there are a series of writing assignments that will be due in class, on paper. Your contribution to the intellectual climate of seminars will be noted and counted towards your participation grade. Please keep in mind that the sensitive material we will be studying might generate disagreements. Since interaction between diverse points of view allows this format to function, do not be afraid to speak your mind, but please note that discrimination and/or harassment will not be tolerated, as the class environment is a safe and welcoming one.

Students are expected to attend all seminars. Frequent absences from class sessions will have a negative impact on your participation grade. Please respectfully arrive on time to avoid causing any disruptions. You are not allowed any unexcused absences during the term. If you will be absent from any seminar, make sure to communicate with me via e-mail to let me know beforehand. In the case of emergencies, you will have twenty-four (24) hours after the missed seminar to get in touch with me regarding your absence.

Avenue to Learn:
Please check the online course site regularly for announcements about the course as well as important course documents. Online discussion-board participation is required as part of the Topics Starter and Comments assignment, which will comprise 10% of your final grade. Check Avenue to Learn for assignment guidelines (e.g., position papers, topic starter and comments, oral presentation), rubrics, and submission folders. Note that the quality and quantity of any online postings will be taken into account when assessing your contributions at the end of the term.

Assignment Policy:
There will be submission folders on Avenue to Learn for all major assignments. For other, smaller assignments, hard copies will be due at the beginning of the class session during the relevant week.

Generally, I strive to provide enough feedback in order to let you know how I arrived at a particular grade, as well as giving suggestions for future improvement. I strongly advise that you submit your work on time so that you can refer to my previous feedback while working on assignments later in the term. Additionally, late assignments will be penalized one grade per day late up to 7 days. For example, a B+ paper handed in two days late would be lowered to a B-. Saturday and Sunday are included in the calculation of days late. After seven days the grade is zero. Position papers and essays more than 100 words over the assigned limit will be subject to similar deductions (deduction of one letter grade per 100 words over the limit). Note that you
will have to talk to me regarding any deadline extensions. Note, too, that students who have SAS accommodations that include consideration for due date flexibility do not need to go through the Faculty Office process to request an extension.

Students are encouraged to retain copies of all work submitted for the course.

**Grades:**
If you have a concern about a grade you have received, please wait twenty-four (24) hours before making an appointment to see me. For this sort of appointment, please bring the original copy of the assignment, as well as a short, written explanation (100-250 words in length) as to why you believe you deserve a different mark.

**Documentation:**
Students are required to use MLA format consistently and correctly. See the “Recommended Reference Texts” above for works that explain the MLA format and contain examples of how to apply it.

**Office Hours, Consultation, and e-Mail Policy:**
I look forward to getting to know you and to support your learning this year! Brief, logistical questions may be handled via email; please put the course code 4ST3 in the subject line, and I will reply within 48 hours. I will not answer student e-mails on weekends. Note that I can only help you with so much via e-mail; if you have a substantive query or wish to discuss course materials and/or your written work in detail, then please feel welcome to drop by during my posted office hours or to make an appointment to see me. Remember I am here to help you!

It is the policy of the Faculty of Humanities that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors, and from students to staff, must originate from the student’s own McMaster University email account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. Instructors will delete e-mails that do not originate from a McMaster e-mail account.

Students will be invited to complete an online course evaluation at the end of the year. Your feedback is much appreciated.

**Academic Integrity:**
Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, specifically Appendix 3, located at http://www.mcmaster.ca/senate/academic/ac_integrity.htm

The following illustrates only two forms of academic dishonesty:
1. Plagiarism, e.g., the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work. (Receiving a group grade for a presentation
without having done an equal amount of work on the project.)

Note that all online submissions of assignments will be scanned using the Turnitin software in order to promote academic integrity.

**Grading Scale:**
The McMaster grading scale is:

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<th>Equivalent Grade Point</th>
<th>Equivalent Percentages</th>
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<td>A+</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>90-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>85-89</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>80-84</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>77-79</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0-49 -- Failure</td>
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**Assignments:**

- **Avenue to Learn Topic Starter and Comments:** Pairs of students will work together once this term to start a relevant discussion thread on Avenue to Learn, on the assigned date starting Sept. 17. One of the students will be in charge of posting the topic for discussion, explaining it briefly in no more than 200 words, while the second student will be in charge of writing key questions for the rest of the class to answer. (See Avenue for guidelines).

- **Gothic Tropes (Oral) Presentation:** Students will form 4-5 groups of 4-5 people each to create a PowerPoint presentation that explains a set of standard “Gothic tropes” in English literature. Each member of the group will have an assigned role. (See Avenue for guidelines).

- **Position Paper:** Each student will write one (1) position paper (600 words). This paper should be a focused, argumentative intervention that takes an analytical stand on a course reading or introduces us to a relevant critical/theoretical text, testing its assumptions and framework against a course reading. Each paper should, above all, be designed to generate lively, high-level in-class discussion. It will be the presenter’s responsibility to lead the class discussion on their assigned presentation date. You must submit your position paper by the Saturday (8pm) prior to the relevant Tuesday class meeting. Missed or late position papers will receive the grade of 0. (See Avenue for guidelines, rubric, and a list of possible general topics).

- **Essays and Proposals:** Your major analytical essay (2000 words plus bibliography) is due on Dec. 3. Your final paper needs to engage with a text (or texts) from the syllabus. I would be glad to offer suggestions about particular research interests you would like to pursue, related to the content of the course. In preparation for this essay, we will workshop proposals on Nov. 26. The proposals should be 500 words long, with a bibliography of 4-6 critical/theoretical sources, each briefly annotated to identify their argument and relevance to your thesis. The week prior to the workshop I will read your proposals and organize the class into small groups with shared concerns. (See Avenue for more details and guidelines).
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Stacy Ann Creech, Fall 2019

Schedule of Classes and Readings:

Sept. 3: WEEK 1
Introduction to the course; Class goals questionnaire; position paper assignment sign-up; Avenue topic starter sign-up.

Sept. 10: WEEK 2

Sept. 17: WEEK 3

Sept. 24: WEEK 4
*The Castle of Otranto. Chapters 4-5. PP #3-6.*

Oct. 1: WEEK 5

Oct. 8: WEEK 6
*Wieland*. Chapters 8-17.
Supplementary reading (Available on Avenue).

**Oct. 15: MIDTERM BREAK.**

Oct. 22: WEEK 7
*Wieland*. Chapters 18-27. **PP #7-10.**

Oct. 29: WEEK 8


**Nov. 5: WEEK 9**
Gothic Tropes Presentation: Group Work. (See Avenue for details and guidelines).
Supplementary reading (Available on Avenue).

**Nov. 12: WEEK 10**
The Gothic Short Story (All available on Avenue).
   1) “The Adventure of the German Student” (1824) by Washington Irving.
   2) “The Fall of the House of Usher” (1839) by Edgar Allan Poe.
   3) “Olalla” (1885) by Robert Louis Stevenson. **Guest speaker: Barbara Ferguson.**

**Nov. 19: WEEK 11**
**Due: Final Paper Proposal (See Avenue for details and guidelines).**

**Nov. 26: WEEK 12**
**Final Paper Workshop (See Avenue for details).**

**Dec. 3: WEEK 13**
*Journal of a West India Proprietor*. Part II (1817).
Class goals questionnaire, cont.
**Final Paper due via Avenue Submission Folder.**