

First Year Seminar 050 Lovecraft: Horror and Madness

Fall 2019

MW 12:30-1:45 Medbury 115

Dr. Kyle McCord

Office Hours: MW 2:00-3:15 Howard 229

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Required Texts:

The Call of Cthulhu and Other Weird Stories (Penguin Twentieth-Century Classics)

Shadows of Carcosa (NYRB Classics)

New Critical Essays on H.P. Lovecraft (Palgrave MacMillan Publishing)

Course Description:

This course introduces students to the horrifying writing of Howard Phillips Lovecraft. Students will study Lovecraft to understand his craft, place in the literary canon, and historical context. Students produce their own works of horror building on Lovecraftian techniques, consider Lovecraft in the context of contemporary scholarship, and analyze his themes and their historical roots. Discussions center on expanding students' critical understanding of the connection between this bright but troubled author and the world of post-WWI America.

Course Assignments and Expectations:

1. Because this is a discussion-based class, physical participation is a vital component. Attendance is essential. Missing more than **5 classes**, unexcused, will result in failure of the course. **Be on time.** Being more than 5 minutes late will count as an absence for the day.
2. This class is designed as a course for you to write creatively and critically. As such, you will write in your notebook almost every class meeting. In-class writing exercises are to be done in a notebook. This notebook is a space where you can collect ideas for creative pieces and compose drafts. You will need to bring it to each class.
3. H.P. Lovecraft is a challenging writer, especially in terms of vocabulary. His critics are no less adept with the English language. As you read his stories, you will need to look up words or phrases using a dictionary. Get used to this process and expect to know the meaning of language used in the stories. Do not skip over words you don't know. I am giving you small chunks of reading, so you should have adequate time to look up the vocabulary. Take your time.
4. You will notice that there are few days on the calendar marked paper review. The morning of that day, you must send a copy of your paper to 1310papers@gmail.com. We will look at your work in class and discuss its strengths and what steps you might take to improve your work. **This is the only time you will be allowed to submit work electronically.**

Evaluation:

I will provide timely written and oral comments on all work turned in for class. You will be expected to use discussion and my commentary during paper review days to revise your work.

Appropriate and high-quality presentation is expected on all course work. All materials must be typed and in 12 pt. font. Students will be evaluated on the quality of class participation, both in workshop and in class discussion. This means come to class prepared. There is no excuse for coming to class unprepared to discuss work.

Your final grade will be calculated according to the following:

H.P. Lovecraft Imitation (5 pages)	25%
Literary Analysis (5 pages including works cited)	25%
Historical Analysis (5 pages including works cited)	25%
Participation	25%

All assignments must be handed in on time. **Barring an emergency, late assignments will not be accepted for evaluation. All assignments must be turned in to receive credit in the course.**

There is no need to contact me if you are ill for any single day. Just consult this syllabus for your assignment for the next session. As a reminder, I **will not** accept anything electronically. You must bring me a physical copy of any material you want to turn in.

Please remember that cell phones do not belong in the classroom. If you use your cell phone or your cell phone goes off, you will be asked to leave for the day and will be counted absent. I am deadly serious about this. This is your sole warning.

Schedule of Classes (subject to change)

- 8/26 – 08/28 Mon: Class introductions and discussion of syllabus. **Read Introduction and “The Whisperer in Darkness” in *The Call of Cthulhu***
Wed.: Prompt Analysis. Discussion of reading **Read “The Picture in the House” Generate First Page of Imitation**
- 9/02 - 9/04 Mon: NO CLASS -- Labor Day
Wed: Sharing of first page of imitation and discussion of Lovecraftian style **Read “The Shadow Over Innsmouth”**
- 9/09 - 9/11 Mon: Discussion of reading and exercise in plot **Generate First Draft of Lovecraft Imitation**
Wed: Paper Review **Read “The Call of Cthulhu”**

- 9/16 - 9/18 Mon: Discussion of reading and the Cthulhu mythos
Wed: Prompt Analysis, Discussion of Literary Theory **Lovecraft Imitation Due, Read Literary Movements Packet**
- 9/23 - 9/25 Mon: Discussion of Psychoanalysis
Read Simmon's Anthology 31-54
Wed: Discussion of Feminism **Read Simmon's Anthology 13-31**
- 09/30 - 10/02 Mon: Discussion of reading, MLA Practice **Read Simmon's Anthology 55-72**
Wed: Discussion of Post-Colonialism **Generate First Draft of Literary Analysis**
- 10/07 – 10/09 Mon: Paper Review
Wed: Library Visit
- 10/14 - 10/16 Mon: Fall Break - No Classes
Wed: Watch *Annihilation* (Wed. is semester midpoint)
- 10/21 - 10/23 Mon: Watch *Annihilation* **Literary Analysis Due**
Wed: Watch *Annihilation* **Read "The Rats in the Walls"**
- 10/28 – 10/30 Mon: Prompt Analysis, Discussion of reading
Wed: Library Visit to research realities of WWI and 1920's cultural landscape
Read "The Willows" by Algernon Black
- 11/04 – 11/06 Mon: Discussion of reading **Generate Topic for Historical Analysis**
Wed: Discussion of topics **Read "The White People" by Arthur Machen**
- 11/11 - 11/13 Mon: Research Day
Wed: Research Day **Generate First Draft of Historical Analysis**
- 11/18 – 11/20 Mon: Thanksgiving – No Class
Wed: Thanksgiving – No Class
- 11/25 - 11/27 Mon: Paper Review Day **Read "The Colour Out of Space"**
Wed: Discussion of reading with a focus on madness and physical universe
- 12/02 -12/04 Mon: Presentation on Topics/Lovecraftian Party
Wed: Final Day, Closing Discussion. **Historical Analysis Due** Enjoy your break!

Prompts

Lovecraftian Imitation For our first assignment, you will study the style and language of H.P. Lovecraft to create a worthy imitation. You must figure out your own plot line involving creatures from Lovecraft's world. The story must be horror and it must adhere to Lovecraft's established arc. Develop a clear speaker, utilize tension and horror, include elements from Lovecraft's mythos, include appropriate diction, and employ sound grammar and mechanics.

Literary Analysis: Analyze one of the stories we've examined using techniques from one of the movements of literary theory that we studied. You do not need to cover the whole story, but you need to demonstrate an understanding of the basic elements of that theory as well as the story itself. Develop a strong thesis, incorporate another text using MLA documentation, use quotes well, analyze effectively, and employ sound grammar and mechanics.

Historical Analysis: The final essay will require you to perform research and utilize sources to generate an original argument. Select a theme in Lovecraft's work and investigate how it connects with his historical context. Just make sure your argument is well-researched with four outside sources and is specific. Develop a clear thesis, show depth, use MLA well, analyze effectively, and employ sound grammar and mechanics.