

First Year Seminar 003 Lovecraft: Horror and Madness

Fall 2020

TR 3:30-4:50

Dr. Kyle McCord

Office Hours: TR 5-6

Email: kfmccord@gmail.com

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.
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.
5. **COVID-19 Considerations:** We live in unusual times. We will closely follow advisement from Drake administration and health officials regarding potential or actual outbreaks of the Covid-19 virus. Should it become necessary to go to an online-only format, we will plan to use Blackboard Collaborate as our primary medium for class sessions. I will provide instructions at that time through email. Class sessions will continue in that environment with the same time, unless otherwise noted. Should this happen, I will work to keep in close touch via email, so be certain that you have access to

a consistent and speedy internet source for class and contact. We should plan to work as a team to make the semester safe and successful, so please communicate concerns as quickly as possible. We are a community in this classroom, and everyone's success and safety matters.

The first week of the semester will be conducted entirely through Blackboard Collaborate. Access will be via the Course Content tab of our Blackboard course.

Read this section carefully. At the beginning of the semester, you will be given a letter based on your intended mode of engagement with the course.

- a. Group A: Half of in-person students
- b. Group B: The other half of in-person students
- c. Group C: Students enrolled fully virtually or in quarantine

The first class period of each week is devoted to meeting in person with Group A or B, on alternating weeks (see schedule).

The second class period each week is devoted to meeting virtually with Group B or A, on alternating weeks, plus group C every week.

I will assign additional contact-equivalent learning opportunities to all students to allow you guided pathways through material or learning activities to make up for the 50% reduction in synchronous class time.

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 plus works cited)	25%
Historical Analysis (5 pages plus 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.

You will turn in physical copies of the first two papers. The Historical Analysis will be submitted via Blackboard (under the Course Content tab)

Please remember that cell phones do not belong in the classroom. Silence your cell phones in the classroom.

Schedule of Classes (subject to change)

8/25 – 08/27 Mon: Online: Class introductions and discussion of syllabus. **Read Introduction and “The Whisperer in Darkness” in *The Call of Cthulhu***
Wed: Online: Prompt Analysis. Discussion of reading **Read “The Picture in the House” Generate First Page of Imitation**

09/01 - 9/03 Mon: Group A Meets in Person
Wed: Group B & C Meet Virtually
Content: Sharing of first page of imitation and discussion of Lovecraftian style
Read “The Shadow Over Innsmouth”
Read “The Thing on the Doorstep”
Respond to Discussion Board Question on Lovecraftian Motifs and Tropes

09/08 – 09/10 Mon: Group B Meets in Person
Wed: Group A & C Meet Virtually
Content: Discussion of Short Stories with a focus on plot, Tips for Crafting Paper
Read “The Call of Cthulhu”
Respond to Discussion Board Question on “The Call of Cthulhu”
Generate First Draft of Lovecraft Imitation

9/15 - 9/17 Mon: Group A Meets in Person
Wed: Group B & C Meet Virtually
Content: Paper Review
Lovecraft Imitation Due by 10 AM on Friday. Submit via Course Content.
Read Literary Movements Packet
Watch Assigned viewing on Literary Theory and Respond to Discussion Board Question

- 9/22 - 9/24 Mon: Group B Meets in Person
 Wed: Group A & C Meet Virtually
 Content: Prompt Analysis, Discussion of Psychoanalysis, Discussion of Marxism
Read Simmon's Anthology 31-54
Read Simmon's Anthology 13-31
Watch Assigned Viewing on Derrida and Deconstruction and Respond to Discussion Board Question
- 09/29 - 10/01 Mon: Group A Meets in Person
 Wed: Group B & C Meet Virtually
 Content: MLA Review
Read Simmon's Anthology 55-72
Respond to Discussion Board Question on MLA Works Cited material
Generate First Draft of Literary Analysis
- 10/06 – 10/08 Mon: Group B Meets in Person
 Wed: Group A & C Meet Virtually
 Content: Paper Review
Respond to Discussion Board Research Sharing
Lovecraft Imitation Due by 10 AM on Friday. Submit via Course Content.
Watch *Annihilation*
- 10/13 - 10/15 Mon: Group A Meets in Person
 Wed: Group B & C Meet Virtually
 Content: Prompt Analysis, Discuss *Annihilation*
Respond to Discussion Board on Lovecraft in Film
Read “The Rats in the Walls”
Develop Topic
- 10/20 - 10/22 Mon: Group B Meets in Person
 Wed: Group A & C Meet Virtually
 Content: Prospective Topic Sharing
Read “The Colour Out of Space”
Respond to Discussion Board on Thesis Sharing
- 10/27 – 10/29 Mon: Group A Meets in Person
 Wed: Group B & C Meet Virtually
 Content: Discuss “The Colour Out of Space,” Develop a Research Plan
Respond to Discussion Board on Developing a Research Plan
Read “The Willows” by Algernon Black
- 11/03 – 11/05 Mon: Group B Meets in Person
 Wed: Group A & C Meet Virtually
 Content: Discuss “The Willows”
Read “The White People” by Arthur Machen
Respond to Discussion Board on Integrating Quotes

Bring a Research Source to Class

- 11/10 - 11/12 Mon: Group A Meets in Person
Wed: Group B & C Meet Virtually
Content: Research Sharing, Cross Pollination of Ideas
Respond to Discussion Board Question on Useful Quotation Sharing
Generate First Draft of Historical Analysis
- 11/17 - 11/19 Mon: Group B Meets in Person
Wed: Group A & C Meet Virtually
Content: Paper Review
Continue Work on Historical Analysis
- 11/24 – 11/26 Mon: Thanksgiving – No Class
Wed: Thanksgiving – No Class
- 12/01 -12/03 Mon: Online: Discussion of Topics
Wed: Online: Final Day, Closing Discussion. **Historical Analysis Due. Submit via Blackboard under Course Content Tab.** 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.