

**English 1500: Experiences in Literature – Monsters and Haunted Houses**  
**Winter Session 2020-2021**

**Section 1: General Information**

**Web Deadlines:** Posts by 11:59 P.M. Monday through Friday

**Instructor:** Chris Weaver:

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**Required Reading\***

Texts have been ordered from University bookstore, but can also be found online or at local commercial bookstores.

1. *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson
2. *The Shining* by Stephen King
3. *Fight Club* by Chuck Palahniuk

Other readings will be posted to the Blackboard course web site. These readings will include:

- The first four chapters of *Dracula* by Bram Stoker
- “The Lottery” by Shirley Jackson
- “The Masque of the Red Death” by Edgar Allan Poe
- A chapter from *World War Z* by Max Brooks

\*Since this course is compressed to only six weeks, we will move through the literature *very* quickly. I highly recommend that you do as much reading as possible in advance of the starting date for the course—definitely the three novels and possibly some of the stories on the list above. (You can find full text versions of most of them online for free.)

**Course Description:**

As you can probably figure out from the reading list, this is a special "themed" section of Experiences in Literature that deals with monsters and horror fiction. Otherwise, though, it's like other sections of this course. We'll read and discuss the works on the list above, and do some thinking about the horror genre—what elements it uses, why many people love being scared, and what these works say about us as readers. I'll expect you to do the readings for the course, and, of course, I will require you to write about them, posting short writing assignments and drafts of papers to the website, and, eventually, turning in revised drafts to me for my comments.

This is not a course where I will teach you to write like future English majors; but it *is* a writing intensive course, and I will require you to do quite a bit of writing over the session. I will ask you to do some analysis of the works on the reading list, but I'm most concerned that you learn to write your reactions to the readings, to explain where these reactions come from, and to think more deeply about them. To a large extent, this will be a course about

extending, developing, and editing your ideas about the readings.

### **Course Objectives:**

In this course I will ask you to:

- Analyze the nature of "horror." We will consider why people read scary stories and go to scary movies and analyze what hidden fears (either personal, psychological, or cultural) may lie underneath the monsters and haunted houses in the stories on our list.
- Consider how each age looks at the same story differently--how horror stories get reinterpreted over time to fit the anxieties of changing societies.
- Read some literature that's new to you and, hopefully that you enjoy at least some of it.
- Share your ideas with others and use their ideas to spark your own.
- Work together to give and get feedback that helps you improve your writing.
- Get some basic understanding of the academic conventions of writing about literature--things like how to quote passages from literary works in order to illustrate or support what you are saying.
- Discover more about other people's ideas and reactions to the readings and that you are able to incorporate them into your own writing.
- Learn how to take your written reactions to a reading and, learn how to develop and revise them into thoughtful and engaging pieces of writing.

### **Course Outcomes:**

By the end of the course, you will be asked to--

- Write clear and readable essays in which you examine and explain your reactions to a literary work so that your own process of reading and interpretation is clear to readers.
- Write clear and readable essays in which you demonstrate that you understand other people's reactions to a literary work.
- Demonstrate through activities engaged in over the semester, that you are able to give and get feedback to each other's writing and to analyze that feedback for what it tells you about your writing process.

### **Section 2: How The Course Works**

**Readings:** I realize that we're trying to pack a lot into a six-week course. Nonetheless, you must remember that, even though the summer session is compressed, it is supposed to be the equivalent of a full fall or spring semester. Therefore, it is extremely important that you do the readings by the dates they are assigned. We simply can't have intelligent discussions

if people aren't prepared. Try to read ahead if you can. (Again, the best strategy is to read as much as you can before the semester begins!)

**Web Postings:** The day-to-day work for this course will consist of posts to the web site--usually on the *Discussion Board* area. Posts are due Monday through Friday with weekends off. Your posts must be legitimate responses to the Discussion Question that was posed for that day. They must be posted on time and be at least 300 words long in order for you to receive credit.

**Recorded Responses:** Each morning, I will read your posts for the previous day and respond. My response will probably be in the form of an audio file which you can listen to. In this recording, I will comment on some of the posts that you have made in the most recent discussion forum, and I will talk a little bit about the work of literature that we are discussing. These recordings will probably be from 10-15 minutes long. My responses should normally be available by noon or earlier, and I will also post the day's assignment by then, so you will have at least twelve hours to complete the next assignment.

I won't be responding to individual posts to the *Discussion Board*, so it's really important to listen to these recordings each day. The recorded responses should give you an idea about whether or not you are on the right track. Also, when you are writing your papers, I strongly suggest that you go back and listen to those particular recordings about the reading that you are analyzing in your paper. There will be comments that I'll expect you to incorporate into your papers, and I think that you will find the recordings really helpful as you begin to write.

### **Writing Circles:**

Four times over the semester, I will ask you to expand on our discussion and write three-page rough drafts of papers. I will assign you to a small group, and you will post these papers to the web site and read and respond to the papers posted to your group. Please note that your responses must be at least 300 words long in order for you to receive credit.

### **Revised Drafts of Papers:**

Three times over the semester, I will ask you to post drafts of revised papers. These papers should be 4-6 pages long.

**If You Are Away:** You are responsible for completing assignments on the dates they are due. Please do not email me and tell me that you will be away for certain dates and ask to complete the assignments ahead of time. This course does not work that way. If you are going to be away from home on any of the dates below, make sure that you will have access to an internet connection.

### **Section 3: Grades**

Your grades will largely be based on your three revised papers, but also note that posting on time is extremely important. It can help your grade significantly. Failing to post on time

will hurt your grade and may cause you to fail the course. Please read the following section carefully for details.

**Web Postings:** These aren't graded since I want this to be an area for free discussion, where you're not worried about trying out ideas, asking questions, or making mistakes. But it is important that you post regularly and that you respect the minimum length requirements--usually 300 words. If you post regularly, you will boost your final grade. If, however, you miss too many deadlines, it will hurt your grade for the course. (See chart below.)

**Papers:** There are three papers for the class, and the average of your grades for these three papers will determine your grade for the class (modified by whether you've missed any deadlines for the web postings--see chart below).

**Grades:** Here are the possible grades. Note that "Step" here refers to each grade level, including a plus or minus.

"Step"	Grade Point Average
A	4.0
A-	3.7
B+	3.3
B	3.0
B-	2.7
C+	2.3
C	2.0
C-	1.7
D+	1.3
D	1.0
F	0.0

**Final Grade:** Your final grade for the class will be the grade on your final portfolio, modified by your homework grades. What this means is that you have a lot of control over your final grade. If you meet the regular deadlines, you will almost certainly get a "B" or an "A" in the class. Your grade for the course will be your portfolio grade modified by your homework grade--see the *Grade Chart* below.

**Grade Chart:** Take a look at the chart below, and you'll see how important it is to post your writing on time. If you just keep up with the work, you can raise your grade, even if your writing isn't fantastic. Why do I grade this way? Because I believe that everyone's writing process is different. Everyone comes to this class in a different place in his or her development as a writer. I believe that if you take your writing seriously, if you seek out feedback, if you continue to experiment and take risks, then you will become a better writer. Just do the work, and good things will happen. But be careful not to fall behind, or you may end up failing the course because you missed too many assignments. So . . . your final grade for the course will be your portfolio grade modified by the "Homework Grade" as explained below:

Homework or Writing Assignments: Deadlines Missed	Modification to Your Grade (See Steps in Chart Above)
0 Assignments Missed	+2 steps
1 Assignment Missed	+1 step
2-3 Assignments Missed	No change.
4 Assignments Missed	-1 step
5 Assignments Missed	-3 steps
6 Assignments Missed	-6 steps
7 Assignments Missed	Automatic F

Make sure to post all of your assignments on time. It makes a huge difference!

#### **Section 4: Technical Help & Ethical Issues**

**Help:** The main message that I want to emphasize here is that technical problems sometimes arise, and that you need to be prepared to deal with them when they come up. If you take a pro-active approach, then these problems rarely get in the way of fulfilling our obligations for the course. There are a number of people who are here to help you. Serious problems only develop when you wait to do something about these problems until after an assignment is due. If there is a problem with Blackboard, you have a options:

1. On the Blackboard Log In Page (<http://bb.wpunj.edu>), there are help files that you can click on to answer questions about particular problems.
2. On the Blackboard Log In Page, near the top, there is a link that you can click which will bring up a help form that you can send to the technical support team. You can then fill out a form with your question or problem and then send it to them.
3. Contact me. You should definitely do this if the problem with Blackboard will cause you to be late with an assignment. But please call me *before* the assignment is due. Otherwise you will not get credit.

#### **Ethical Issues:**

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is defined as the submission of work of any kind that is not the work of the student and where there is no citation or explanation acknowledging the work of another person. In practice, there are generally two kinds of plagiarism:

- Unintentional Plagiarism - where a student because of carelessness or ignorance of conventions regarding the acknowledgment of outside sources unintentionally violates those conventions. Hopefully for graduate students this is not an issue. Unintentional plagiarism is a serious academic error and may result in a paper or possibly an entire portfolio being considered unacceptable for credit. In the case of

a final portfolio, unintentional plagiarism is reason in and of itself for receiving a failing grade.

- **Intentional Plagiarism** - where the student knowingly misrepresents all or a portion of his work as being his or her own. The most common offense is for a student to submit a paper written by someone else. Intentional plagiarism is a serious academic and ethical offense. Minimally it will result in a grade of "F" for the class. Additionally, students suspected of intentional plagiarism will be referred to the Department Executive Council, which may recommend disciplinary action up to and including expulsion from the University. (See the "Academic Integrity" section of the University Catalog.)

**Using Writing Of Your Own From Outside This Class:** It is possible that you will have done writing in another course that you may be able to use for this one. This is perfectly acceptable provided that you do substantial new work and revision. Students wishing to incorporate writing they have already finished or are working on outside of this course should consult me about what constitutes "substantial" revision and how this revision should be documented. Usually I will require that the original draft be submitted along with the revision and a brief explanation of how the two versions differ. Failure to go through this procedure, depending on the circumstances, may result in any of the penalties described in the section on plagiarism.