

## COURSE DESCRIPTION SPRING 2019

### ENGL 239: "Why Women Love Horror & Suspense Films"

Time	Day	Sec	Faculty	Room
0130-0440p	W	001	Foster, G	RVB 123

Special lab fee - \$30.

**Aim & Scope:** Bela Lugosi famously quipped, "It is women who love horror. Gloat over it. Feed on it. Are nourished by it . . . and come back for more." Despite misconceptions, female audiences drive the box office when it comes to the success of horror films and texts. Patriarchal gender roles often define women as "prey," and the traditional space of the home is a particularly dangerous space for women, as is the public space, *onscreen and off*. Women are often the victim or the monstrous other in horror, which begs the question: why do female spectators avidly claim ownership of the genre? Why are horror and suspense commonly misperceived as "male" genres? *Through the lens of queer, intersectional, and globally diverse feminist perspective(s), we'll study female spectators and the horror that they consume & co-create as active viewers and fans. We'll look at how the horror film (and related genre films) frequently offer spaces for fantasies of female empowerment along with playful speculative engagement with that which is truly horrifying, in a patriarchal world that often denies women basic humanity, liberty, power over our own bodies, pleasure, agency and safety.*

Women traditionally love writing and reading horror and frightening tales. Horror has provided an outlet for women at least since the 1818 publication of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, and as early as 1913 with Alice Guy's film adaptation of *The Pit and the Pendulum*. *We will not only look at some of the films of women who create horror, but also recognize and redefine the female audience as the co-creator of horror.* We'll explore body horror, "bad girls," anxiety/fear of the female body, violence committed by women and upon women, efforts to suppress female and queer sexuality, as well as strong (and disruptive) female heroes, antiheroes and outsiders.

Films that are likely to be screened include CAT PEOPLE, HALLOWEEN, OFFICE KILLER, CANDYMAN, ORPHAN, HOMICIDAL, GINGER SNAPS, CARRIE, TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE, BABADOOK, SAFE, WHATEVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE, BORGMAN, MONSTER, MOMMIE DEAREST, WITH A FRIEND LIKE HARRY, DARK WATER, BLUEBEARD, THE BIRDS, VAMPIRE LOVERS, A GIRL WALKS HOME ALONE AT NIGHT, ONLY LOVERS LEFT ALIVE and THE SHINING.

**Teaching Method:** Classes typically include an opening lecture, discussion of readings, a film screening (with running analytical commentary during the film), and class discussions (in small groups as well as the larger group.)

**Requirements:** Students take notes and journal on the films (and readings) and write and revise three analytical 5 page papers. Weekly readings are required. *Active and engaged class participation is a strong requirement.* Fulfills ACE 7 Requirement.

**Tentative Reading List:** Expect readings on the monstrous feminine, the final girl, female spectatorship, horror fans, queer and intersectional feminist analysis of horror films and their audiences, readings on the films and interviews with film directors. Weekly readings will be assigned via web links.