

HUMA 1301.007: Thrills, Chills, and Some Spills

Spring 2016

Tu-Th 11:30-12:45

JO 4.102

Professor Kenneth Brewer

Professor Contact Information

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Course Description

This course explores the methods of humanistic study through two genres of film: horror and thrillers (“scary movies”). “What are we afraid of?” is perhaps the most profound question we can ask about what it means to be human, and we will examine how films such as *The Silence of the Lambs* answer this question. We will analyze what kinds of pleasures these films offer to viewers, and why we find these films scary/thrilling even when we know that they are “not real.” We will draw on philosophy, film history, film theory, and psychology, sociology, and in particular, recent neurological research in order to understand how these films work and how they work on us as viewers.

Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives

General Education Core Objectives: Students who successfully complete this course will demonstrate competency in the following core objectives:

Critical thinking skills: Students will engage in creative and/or innovative thinking, and/or inquiry, analysis, evaluation, synthesis of information, organizing concepts and constructing solutions.

Communication skills: Students will demonstrate effective written, oral and visual communication.

Social responsibility: Students will demonstrate intercultural competence and civic knowledge by engaging effectively in local, regional, national and global communities.

Personal responsibility: Students will demonstrate the ability to connect choices, actions and consequence to ethical decision-making.

Students will learn:

Critical thinking skills: to examine and analyze a variety of works from the humanities, particularly those connected to literature and philosophy (assessed via short writings and exams)

Communication skills: to apply and respond to works in the humanities as an example of human expression and aesthetic and philosophical principles (assessed via class participation)

Social responsibility: to analyze and critically evaluate humanistic works in the context of culture and society (assessed via short response writings and exams)

Personal responsibility: to compare and contrast the works with each other in terms of personal ethics and values (assessed via short writings and exams)

Readings

Readings are posted on eLearning.

As there are no required textbooks for the course, you may consider it useful to rent films you are required to watch outside of class.

eLearning

We will use the eLearning site for the course for quizzes and submissions of short writing assignments. Get used to checking the site daily.

Agenda

Date	Learning Unit	Film	Reading	Assignment Due
Tu January 12	DEFINITION:	<i>The Silence of</i>		

	Horror or Thriller?	<i>the Lambs</i> (Demme, 1991) Screened in class		
Th January 14		<i>The Silence of the Lambs</i>	Worland, "Tracking the Thing"	Quiz (eLearning)
Tu January 19			Carroll, "Defining Art Horror" Derry, "The Suspense Thriller"	Short Writing (eLearning)
Th January 21	ANALYSIS: The Aesthetics of Scary Movies <i>Plotting: The Overreacher Plot</i>	<i>The Blair Witch Project</i> (Myrick and Sánchez, 1999) Screened in class		
Tu January 26			Carroll, "Overreacher Plots"	Quiz (eLearning)
Th January 28			Russin and Downs, "Fear and Loathing"	Quiz (In-Class Paper Quiz)
Tu February 2	<i>Plotting: The Complex Discovery Plot</i>	<i>Oculus</i> (Flanning, 2014)	Carroll, "The Complex Discovery Plot"	Quiz eLearning
Th February 4			Carroll, "The Fantastic"	

Tu February 9				Exam 1 in Testing Center
Th February 11	<i>Plotting: The Suspense Plot</i>	<i>Se7en</i> (Fincher, 1995) Screened in class		
Tu February 16			Carroll, "Horror and Suspense"	
Th February 18			Bordwell, "Continuing Tradition"	Quiz (eLearning)
Tu February 23	<i>Plotting: The Mind-Twist Plot</i>	<i>The Sixth Sense</i> (Shyamalan, 1999)		Quiz (In-Class Paper Quiz)
Th February 25		<i>Shutter Island</i> (Scorcese, 2010) Screened in Class		
Tu March 1				
Th March 3		<i>Source Code</i> (Jones, 2011)		Short Writing (eLearning)
Tu March 8			Buckland, " <i>Source Code's</i> Video Game Logic"	
Th March 10				Exam 2 in Testing Center
Tu March 22	EXPLANATION : "It's Only a Movie": Why are We Scared/Why do	<i>Inception</i> (Nolan, 2010)		

	We Care?			
Th March 24			Terjesen, "Even if it is a Dream, We Should Still Care"	
Tu March 29	EXPLANATION : Why Do We Like Scary Movies?	<i>Halloween</i> (Carpenter, 1978)	Zinoman, "The Critique of Pure Horror"	Short Writing (eLearning)
Th March 31	<i>Psychology/ Sociology</i>		Oliver and Sanders, "The Appeal of Horror and Suspense"	Quiz (eLearning)
Tu April 5		<i>The Babadook</i> (Kent, 2014) Screened in Class		
Th April 7				Quiz (eLearning)
Tu April 12	<i>Curiosity</i>	<i>It Follows</i> (Mitchell, 2015)	Carroll, "Horrific Appeal"	
Th April 14				Exam 3 in Testing Center
Tu April 19	<i>Allegory and Ideology</i>	<i>Cloverfield</i> (Godard, 2008) Screened in Classroom		
Th April 21			Carroll, "Horror and Ideology"	Quiz (eLearning)

Tu April 26	ARGUMENT: Should We Watch Scary Movies? The Moral Debate		DiMuzio, "The Immorality of Horror Films" Kreider, "The Virtue of Horror Films"	Quiz (eLearning)
Th April 28				Exam 4 in Testing Center

There is no final exam for this course.

Assignments & Grading Policy

Below are the required assignments for this course. I will provide more detailed information as the due dates approach. Please contact the TA with any questions you may have about assignments.

Participation 10%

Participation includes attending class, participating in discussions and in-class activities, and visiting me in my office as often as possible. The majority of classroom time will consist of discussion: for the class to be rewarding, it is imperative that you do the reading and come to class prepared to talk and listen actively. In writings and exams, you are expected to draw on class discussion. Participation in class activities is necessary to pass this class. Promptness and regular attendance are essential and will affect your grade. You must arrive, prepared, to class on time and stay for the class period.

Note on laptops etc: If you are using your laptop or phone for non-class related activities, it is really obvious to me and to your classmates. Your participation and overall class grade will suffer accordingly. Quizzes will often be given at the end of a class meeting to test comprehension of the material.

Short Writing Assignments and Quizzes 30%

Throughout the semester you will be asked to complete short writing assignments and quizzes in class or through eLearning. Online quizzes and short writings must be submitted by the due date to receive credit.

You are allowed ONE makeup of an in-class assignment (for example, a quiz) and ONE makeup of an online assignment. The makeups may be used for a missed assignment, an assignment you did not do your best on, or a combination of those. All makeups must be completed by Thursday, April 21. If the makeup is for a missed assignment, it must be completed within a week of the due date for the assignment, and in the presence of the TA if the makeup is a quiz.

The makeup policy does not apply to Exams.

Short writings assigned and completed during class meetings are not announced on the syllabus. All other assignments are.

Exams 60%

There will be four exams over the course the semester (due dates are listed on the Agenda). These exams will be administered through the UTD Testing Center.

Exam 1: 15%

Exam 2: 15%

Exam 3: 15%

Exam 4: 15%

.Avoid Plagiarizing by Accident!

Using another's ideas or language without acknowledging the source or passing off another's ideas or language as your own is plagiarism and will not be tolerated. Students often plagiarize without intending to because they are unsure about how to cite sources. Plagiarism by accident is still plagiarism (and will be punished as such), so please feel free to come see me or your TA if you are unsure about how to cite sources. (see full syllabus for policy on Academic Integrity).

Student AccessAbility Services

If you are a student with a disability and would like to see me to discuss special academic accommodations, please contact me after class or during my office hours. For more information about AccessAbility Services, visit the website: <http://www.utdallas.edu/studentaccess/> or call 972-883- 2098.

Other Policies

The policies that comprise the rest of the syllabus may be accessed online:

<http://coursebook.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies>

Tips for Success in HUMA 1301

A large lecture course presents specific challenges for students. Based on my several years of experience teaching HUMA 1301, some observations:

- Students who rarely if ever miss class meetings tend to do very well.
- Students who pay attention in class--meaning primarily that they put away electronic devices and other distractions--tend to do well. Most of this class is discussion-based, and exams require that you have been following and participating in the discussion. If you need documentation on the severely detrimental effect of smartphones and laptops on student grades, see this survey of empirical research at <http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-professor-blog/multitasking-confronting-students-with-the-facts/>
- Students who start the class strongly tend to do well. The Exam 1 grade is significantly predictive of performance in the class.
- Students who sit in the front tend to do exceptionally well. Students who sit in the middle of the classroom tend to do very well.
- Students perform better if they find someone in the class to watch the films with, for films assigned to be viewed outside of class.
- It's best not to screen a film the night before it's due: try to be slightly ahead with the films assigned to be viewed outside of class.
- Students who come to office hours to discuss class material (either the TA's or the professor's, or both) tend to do exceptionally well.