

HS 2022 – B.A. Seminar
American Gothic: Literature, Philosophy, Film
Prof. Elisabeth Bronfen
Wednesday 14:00 -15:45

Puritan settlers came to America in the hope of fulfilling a divine promise, and yet, even during the crossing, what has since been called the American Jeremiad was born: What if we fail in this project and the country conceived as a ‘city on the hill’ will turn into a haven of devils, witches, and monsters? Gothic sensibility is a response to this specifically American cultural worry. Early fiction taps into a fascination with the horror lying beneath the surface of normality. Once the demonic moved to the silver screen, the gothic became one of the seminal concerns of cinema and T.V.

*Texts marked with an * will be posted on OLAT.*

- (01) 21.09 Meet & Greet: Introductions and course organization.
→ On **Zoom** (details on OLAT). All other sessions will be in person!

A PURITAN LEGACY

- (02) 05.10 M. Night Shyamalan (dir.): THE VILLAGE (2004)
- (03) 12.10 Charles Brockden Brown: *Wieland; or, the Transformation* (1798)
E.T.A. Hoffmann: “Der Sandmann”* (1816; optional)
- (04) 19.10 Nathaniel Hawthorne: “Young Goodman Brown,”* “Alice Doane’s Appeal”* (1835-37)
- (05) 26.10 Washington Irving: “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,”* “Rip van Winkle”* (1819-1820)
- (06) 2.11 Edgar Allan Poe: “The Black Cat,”* “The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar,”* “The Fall of the House of Usher,”* “Ligeia”* (1838-45)

DEAD MOTHERS, HAUNTED HOUSES, REVENANT BRIDES

- (07) 16.11 Henry James: *The Turn of the Screw* (1898)
Alejandro Amenabar (dir): THE OTHERS (2001)
- (08) 23.11 William Faulkner: *As I Lay Dying* (1930)
- (09) 30.11 Alfred Hitchcock (dir.): PSYCHO (1960)
- (10) 07.12 Herk Harvey (dir.): CARNIVAL OF SOULS (1962)
- (11) 14.12 Shirley Jackson: *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (1962)
- (12) 21.12 Wrap Up: What I have learned
Jordan Peele (dir.): GET OUT (2017)

Course Requirements

Portfolio (20% of final grade)

Students are required to complete the following tasks as part of the portfolio:

Forum Posts: You must write a preliminary discussion (approx. 250 words) for 8 seminar sessions, to be posted on the course's OLAT Forum by 9 a.m. on Wednesday of the respective week. Contributions should entail a thesis, but could also contain a series of questions, comments, or associations. This should not only help you practice your argumentative skills, but also facilitates class discussion by allowing us to see in what directions you have been thinking while preparing for each session. The point is not to read out what you have written, but using what you have developed in writing, to engage in a dialogue with the other members of the class.

Short Research Paper or Visual Research Essay: Students are required to do background research on the subject of the session assigned to them at the beginning of the semester and to compile this research either in a short, written essay or a visual essay. They will be asked to speak to the content of their research in the corresponding session. A final version of the research paper, as a PDF or transfer link, depending on the chosen format, should be uploaded to the appropriate OLAT Dropbox *one week after the session*.

Handing in your portfolio: At the end of the semester, please compile the thesis statements you have posted and short research paper/visual essay using *the template provided in the OLAT Materials folder*. Upload the portfolio as a PDF to the appropriate OLAT Dropbox last week of term, by **December 22, 2022**.

Final Essay (80% of final grade)

All students should hand in an essay (4000-5000 words) **in printed format** by **February 20, 2023**. Additionally, it should be uploaded as a PDF version (incl. *Selbstständigkeitserklärung*) to the appropriate OLAT Dropbox.

The essay should be based on the materials covered in this B.A. seminar, as well as the class discussions. Your essay must include a strong thesis statement (this can be several sentences) at the beginning of your paper (within the first page) and a set of research questions. A thesis is a statement that is arguable, but also one that requires a coherent argument and materials supporting the argument. The research questions should guide you in your argumentation. You are also expected to do research on your topic beyond the recommended literature and the theoretical texts discussed in the seminar. Students are encouraged to discuss their essay outline/thesis with Prof. Bronfen or her assistants before the end of term.

The essay should comply with the MLA format and style guidelines (i.e. be typed in a 12p serif font, 1.5-spaced, ample margins for comments by the instructor, and have a title page).

Select Bibliography

Botting, Fred. *Gothic*. Routledge, 2013.

Fiedler, Leslie. *Love and Death in the American Novel*. Stein & Day, 1966.

Hogle, Jerrold E. (ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to the Modern Gothic*. Cambridge UP, 2014.

Martin, Robert K. and Eric Savoy (eds.). *American Gothic: New Interventions in a National Narrative*. University of Iowa Press, 2009.

Weinstock, Jeffrey Andrew. *The Cambridge Companion to American Gothic*. Cambridge UP, 2017.