

# RELIGION + THE MONSTROUS FEMININE



THEY'RE COMING TO GET YOU, BARBARA

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

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Religion tells us what we should shun: the unfamiliar; the impermissible; the Other. We turn to religion to protect us from demons, vampires, and other monsters. Knowing what scares us tells us who we are, what we want, and what we cannot or will not tolerate. How, then, do we make sense of the monstrous feminine?

This course uses monsters and the idea of the monstrous to introduce foundational concepts in the academic study of religion and gender. Students analyze popular culture sources, including films, short stories, and novels, in conversation with scholarship on religion and cultural studies to explore what monstrosity can tell us about religion and embodiment.

WHY DOES ONE  
MAKE A MONSTER?  
WHY, TO WATCH IT DIE.  
OF COURSE.

- EDWARD INGEBRETSSEN -

In addition to the readings on Lyceum, you will need:

- Nye, *Religion: The Basics*
- Lewis, *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*
- Stoker, *Dracula*

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READ THESE

even monsters  
are welcome

when your home  
feels empty.

## EXPECTATIONS

This is an introductory course.

I do not expect that you will know anything about religious or gender studies. If you are unfamiliar with humanities scholarship—particularly reading and analyzing scholarly articles or writing in standard humanities styles—you might find some course assignments challenging. Please be sure to read directions closely and seek additional assistance as needed well in advance of deadlines.

Regardless of your academic background, **treat every student and every concept you encounter with scholarly respect.**

Challenge your assumptions and position(s) of privilege. Speak from your own experiences and understandings of the issues, and assume that each class member operates from his or her own best intentions. As scholars of religion, **it is not our job to evaluate the truth or validity of any tradition.** We only scrutinize the evidence we have, so we might position that tradition's beliefs, practices, teachings, and products in the broader context of religion(s), gender(s), and culture(s).

## CLASS FORMAT

Each class will center on discussion of the assigned texts; some will combine lecture, films screening, and presentation elements as well. None of these work unless you **attend regularly and read the assignments.** Please come to class ready to analyze and respond to the assigned readings, as well as to the contributions of your fellow students. Participating in the discussions will be easier if you bring your readings to class with you, so be sure to print them ahead of time.

**Your active engagement in these exercises is essential.** "Engagement" includes attentive listening as well as speaking.

I AM COMMITTED TO MAKING  
OUR CLASSROOM AND OUR  
CAMPUS AN INCLUSIVE AND  
SUPPORTIVE LEARNING  
ENVIRONMENT FOR PEOPLE OF  
ALL SEXUAL ORIENTATIONS,  
GENDER IDENTITIES, AND  
GENDER EXPRESSIONS.



KNOW  
YOUR  
IX

**Sex and gender-based violence & harassment are Civil Rights offenses.** Offenders are subject to the same kinds of penalties applied to offenses against other protected categories (such as race, national origin, etc.). **Survivors are entitled to confidential support.** If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, Bates wants to help.

**Here** are our resources.

# ACCESSIBILITY

If you need in-class or testing accommodations, if you have emergency medical information, or if you need special arrangements in the event of a building evacuation, please inform me as soon as possible. Students who require test accommodations must pre-register with **Bates' Learning Differences Office** and inform me of these accommodations during the first week of class. You are responsible for making timely arrangements with Learning Differences and me regarding your testing accommodations.

# ATTENDANCE

Is mandatory. Take your coursework seriously. You are permitted two absences (no excuses necessary). After that, you lose a letter grade for every class missed, barring a documented emergency.

## MIMMAL

You usually make a single comment during discussions in response to another student's observations or insights. ("I agree with hir.")

## ADEQUATE

You're present and prepared, but limit your contributions to several surface-level observations or clarifying questions about lectures or readings.

## GOOD

You're present and prepared, and you offer thoughtful questions and comments that demonstrate your preparation for discussion and attention to readings and lectures.

## EXCELLENT

You're present, prepared, and engaged. You refer consistently to the readings, lectures, and previous class discussions. You encourage other students' comments and questions in a productive and respectful manner.

**Attendance isn't enough.  
To succeed, engage fully in  
activities and discussions.  
Which means: speak up!**



# TECHNOLOGY



Unless you have learning accommodations that require their use, **laptops and other devices are only permissible in the classroom for specific class activities.** You are also required to use certain technologies to complete your assignments (especially Twitter and Storify). You must also know how to create a PDF document and submit it via Lyceum in a timely manner.

You are responsible for learning how to negotiate these technologies. **I only accept electronic submissions in PDF format, and only via Lyceum.** I will not accept assignments as \*.doc or \*.docx files or assignments sent to my email address.

In this course, you will be graded on **how** you think, not **what** you think. In other words, **you will not be graded on your beliefs, opinions, or the positions you advance.** I evaluate how well you articulate your thoughts and positions, how closely you read the assigned texts, and how much your ability to think **critically and synthetically** about course themes develops throughout the semester.

## RUBRIC      ASSIGNMENTS

A = 94-100	10%	Participation
A- = 93-90	20%	Keywords
B+ = 89-87	20%	Monster Manual
B = 86-83	25%	Final Project
B- = 82-80	25%	Micro-reviews
C+ = 79-77	E.C.	Monster
C = 76-73		Show & Tell
C- = 72-70		
D+ = 69-67		
D = 66-60		
F = 59 and below		



# CHEATING

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Please don't cheat or plagiarize — you will fail the course. You plagiarize when you present someone else's thoughts, words, or ideas as your own without proper attribution. You must complete this [plagiarism tutorial](#) and submit a passing certificate before **19 January** if you intend to remain in the course. If you're still unclear about what constitutes plagiarism, please consult the "What is Plagiarism?" handout available on Lyceum or [Bates' Academic Integrity Policy](#).

"I didn't know" is not a valid excuse. Go know.



## ASSIGNMENTS



## KEYWORDS

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Each class meeting has an assigned keyword (e.g. belief, power, gender, etc.). After our discussion of the keyword and before our next meeting, submit a brief reflection on the term. Include a one-sentence definition in your own words, at least three examples from the sources assigned for that day, and a 3-5 sentence statement of the term's significance to the study of religion and gender.

Submit your keyword reflections on Lyceum as LastName.PDF. Please be sure to review the assignment sheet for further instructions.

## MICRO-REVIEWS

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We'll be watching a number of films in class. During screenings, you'll provide 5 to 10 live-tweets for each film (#MonsterGrrls). At the end of the term, you will Storify these tweets to explain the films' relevance to one of our course keywords, and submit a 750-1000 word analysis explaining how the films contribute to your understanding of the concept.

Storify projects are due before our final exam period.

# ASSIGNMENTS

## MIDTERM PROJECT: BE YOUR OWN FRANKENSTEIN

### MONSTER SHOW & TELL

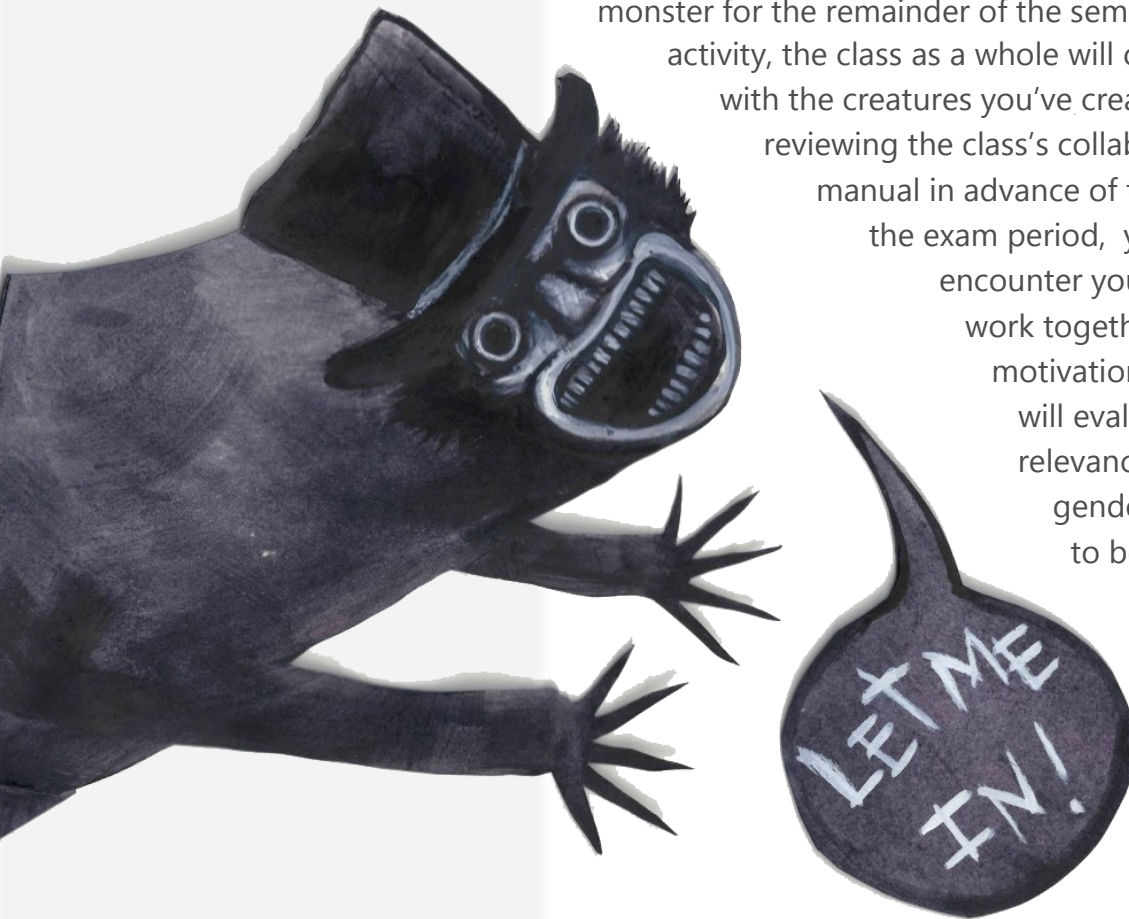
For extra credit, bring a monster (toy, book, poster, etc.) to class with you for show and tell. Explain what makes your creature a monster and why it is relevant to the critical study of religion.

You must email me **24 hours in advance** if you plan to bring a monster to class with you.

For your midterm, you'll propose a monster for our final project activity. Give your monster a name; craft a backstory; and provide a visual representation. The medium is up to you (line drawing? Collage? Sock puppet?), but think about what physical features denote monstrosity and why. Consider the significance of those features, and what they tell us about key elements in the study of religion and gender. You'll introduce your monster during a brief in-class presentation. Again, the format of your presentation is up to you (costume? Cartoon? Interpretive dance?), as long as you convey all the required information. Submit a brief reflection on how your monster helps us understand the study of religion and gender.

### FINAL PROJECT: CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

You'll have the opportunity to edit and augment your midterm monster for the remainder of the semester. For our final project activity, the class as a whole will confront and resolve conflicts with the creatures you've created. You'll be responsible for reviewing the class's collaboratively compiled monster manual in advance of the final exam period. During the exam period, you and your classmates will encounter your monsters on campus. You'll work together to determine the monster's motivations and desires. As a group, you will evaluate each creature, explain its relevance to the study of religion and gender, and decide whether and how to best placate or confront it, referring directly to at least three assigned sources per beast. The whole class will earn a single grade for this assignment.



# SCHEDULE OF CLASSES


DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT
<b>T 12 Jan</b>	Introductions: What makes a monster?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What's religion? What's gender? What (or who) is a monster? (in class)</li> <li>• Basics of film analysis (in class)</li> </ul>
<b>R 14 Jan</b>	Religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nye, "Religion: Some Basics"</li> <li>• Del Toro, from "Haunted Castles, Dark Mirrors"</li> <li>• Wisniewski, <i>Golem</i></li> </ul>
<b>T 19 Jan</b>	Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nye, "Culture"</li> <li>• Peacock, "Religious Shadows"</li> </ul>
<b>R 21 Jan</b>	Monsters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ingebretsen, "Death by Narrative"</li> <li>• Carroll: "Through the Woods"</li> </ul> SCREENING: <i>Cabin in the Woods</i>
<b>T 26 Jan</b>	Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nye, "Gender"</li> <li>• Williams, "When the Woman Looks"</li> </ul>
<b>R 28 Jan</b>	Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From <i>Women and Religion</i>, "Woman as Witch"</li> <li>• Budapest, "How This Book Was Born"</li> <li>• "The Seam of Skin and Scales"</li> </ul>
<b>T 2 Feb</b>	Reading against the text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alphabet of Ben Sira, "Lilith"</li> <li>• Plaskow, "The Coming of Lilith"</li> <li>• Ostriker, "Lilith Unveils Herself"</li> </ul> needs additional scholarly source
<b>R 4 Feb</b>	Reading against the text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lewis, <i>The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe</i></li> <li>• Gaiman, "The Problem of Susan"</li> </ul>
<b>T 9 Feb</b>	The Uncanny	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freud, "The Uncanny"</li> <li>• Brothers Grimm, "Hansel and Gretel"</li> <li>• Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper"</li> </ul>
<b>R 11 Feb</b>	Abjection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creed, "Horror and the Monstrous Feminine"</li> <li>• Ingebretsen, "Entertaining Satan"</li> </ul>
<b>T 16 Feb</b>	Uncanny + Abjection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clover, "Carrie and the Boys"</li> <li>• Creed, "Woman as Witch"</li> </ul> SCREENING: <i>Carrie</i>
<b>R 18 Feb</b>	Midterm presentations	
<b>T 23 Feb</b>	Winter recess	
<b>R 25 Feb</b>		
<b>T 1 March</b>	Belief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nye, "Belief"</li> <li>• Beal, "Introduction"</li> </ul>
<b>R 3 March</b>	Fear and Trembling and the Problem of Evil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peacock, "OMG!" and "Worship of the Blood God"</li> </ul> SCREENING: <i>From Dusk Til Dawn</i>
<b>T 8 March</b>	Ritual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nye, "Ritual"</li> <li>• Creed, "Woman as Possessed Monster"</li> </ul> SCREENING: <i>The Exorcist</i>

# SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT
<b>R 10 March</b>	Ritual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Raboteau, "Folk Belief"</li><li>• Hurston, "Graveyard Dirt and Other Poisons"</li></ul> SCREENING: <i>Wake</i>
<b>T 15 March</b>	Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nye, "Power"</li></ul>
<b>R 17 March</b>	Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stoker, <i>Dracula</i></li><li>• Arjana, "The Monsters of Orientalism"</li></ul>
<b>T 22 March</b>	Maternity and Monstrous Reproduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Halberstam, "Technologies of Monstrosity"</li><li>• Skal, "It's Alive, I'm Afraid"</li><li>• King, from <i>Danse Macabre</i></li></ul> SCREENING: <i>Rosemary's Baby</i>
<b>R 24 March</b>	Memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stier, "Memory"</li></ul>
<b>T 29 March</b>	Memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Yau, "A 'Horrible' Legacy"</li><li>• Fitzgerald, from <i>Ideology of Religious Studies</i></li></ul> SCREENING: <i>The Ring</i>
<b>R 31 March</b>	Space and Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tweed, "Space"</li><li>• Brereton, "Sacred Space"</li></ul>
<b>T 5 April</b>	Space and Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bivins, "Shake 'Em to Wake 'Em"</li><li>• Baker, "Hell House"</li></ul> SCREENING: <i>Hell House</i>
<b>R 7 April</b>	Final Project workshop	
<b>F 15 April 3:45pm</b>	Final Exam	







Syllabus  
quiz?!

# RELIGION + THE MONSTROUS FEMININE

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WINTER TERM  
2016

Prof. Megan Goodwin  
mgoodwin@bates.edu  
Hedge 213

Office hours: TR 12-1pm  
or by appointment

## IMPORTANT DATES

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|--------|--|
| 19 Jan | Syllabus & Plagiarism Quizzes Due            |
| 4 Feb  | Lewis, <i>LWW</i> discussion                 |
| 17 Feb | Midterm presentations                        |
| 17 Mar | Stoker, <i>Dracula</i> discussion            |
| 7 Apr  | Final project workshop                       |
| 15 Apr | Final class activity<br>Storify analyses due |