



# RELIGION AND MONSTERS

WHAT SCARES US AND WHY IT MATTERS

## 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.

This course uses monsters and the idea of the monstrous to introduce foundational concepts in the academic study of religion. 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 religious and national identity.

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

- Nye, *Religion: The Basics*
- McCloud, *American Possessions*
- Baker, *The Zombies Are Coming* \*\*
- King, *Carrie*
- King, *Salem's Lot*
- Stoker, *Dracula*
- Blatty, *The Exorcist*
- Levin, *Rosemary's Baby*

\*\* ebook; not available at bookstore

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## READ THESE



# 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 Short Term coursework seriously. You are permitted one absence (no excuses necessary). After that, you lose a letter grade for every class missed, barring a documented emergency.

# EXPECTATIONS

This is an introductory course. I do not expect that you will know anything about religious 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 hir 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) and American culture.

# 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.

MIMMAL	ADEQUATE	GOOD	EXCELLENT
You usually make a single comment during discussions in response to another student's observations or insights. ("I agree with hir.")	You're present and prepared, but limit your contributions to several surface-level observations or clarifying questions about lectures or readings.	You're present and prepared, and you offer thoughtful questions and comments that demonstrate your preparation for discussion and attention to readings and lectures.	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.



# HOW DO I KNOW I'M PARTICIPATING?



# 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 (including Twitter, Storify, Slack, and Photoshop). 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%	Attendance
A-	= 93-90	15%	Participation
B+	= 89-87	10%	Quizzes
B	= 86-83	15%	Keywords
B-	= 82-80	15%	Micro-reviews
C+	= 79-77	35%	Final Project
C	= 76-73	E.C.	Monster
C-	= 72-70		Show & Tell
D+	= 69-67		
D	= 66-60		
F	= 59 and below		

Storify needed more grading weight

# GRADING

# CHEATING

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 30 April 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



# QUIZZES

There are reading quizzes posted on Lyceum for every novel assigned for this course. Quizzes are due before the start of the class during which we will discuss the novel. Quizzes are open book, but you may not work with other students to complete them.

# KEYWORDS

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.

# MICRO-REVIEWS

We'll be watching a number of films in class, and many others are assigned as homework. Provide 5 to 10 live-tweets for each film (#ReligionAndMonsters). At the end of the term, 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.

# ASSIGNMENTS

## 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.



# FINAL PROJECT: BE YOUR OWN FRANKENSTEIN

In groups of four or five, collaborate to create your own monster. This assignment includes both design and analytical elements. Your group will work together to generate an image of your monster (e.g. line drawing, charcoal sketch, Photoshop image) for 3D printing. 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.

Your group will present your monster on the day of our final meeting. Prepare a 10 minute presentation, explaining your monster's features, strengths, weaknesses, and (of course) its significance to the study of religion. You are encouraged to use creative presentation methods (Shadow puppets? Interpretive dance? Up to you!) to get your argument across to your audience.


Before our final meeting, prepare a portfolio that details your design process, your monster's religious and cultural significance, and its relevance to our discussions throughout the semester. Refer to no fewer than three scholarly sources assigned for the course. (How would Sophia Arjana think about your monster? Why might Kelly Baker find your creature interesting or important?) Portfolios should be between 2500-5000 words, and all group members must contribute equally to this written portion of the assignment.

Portfolios are due before class on **Friday, 29 May**. Submit your work as a single PDF via Lyceum. Consult the assignment sheet for further instructions.

**n.b.** This assignment requires basic familiarity with Slack, a platform for online collaboration, and Photoshop, a digital image editor. There will be workshops for all technological elements scheduled outside our normal meeting hours; **please watch your email for course announcements.**

# SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT
<b>T 28 April</b>	What is religion? What is a monster? How do we know?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nye, "Religion: Some Basics"</li> <li>• Ingebretsen, "The Semiotics of Terror"</li> <li>• Williams, "When the Woman Looks"</li> </ul>
<b>W 29 April</b>	The uncanny	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nye, "Culture"</li> <li>• Freud, "The Uncanny"</li> <li>• Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper"</li> </ul> <p>WATCH: "The Shining" OR "The Others"</p>
<b>T 5 May</b>	Belief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nye, "Belief"</li> <li>• Angela Carter, "In the Company of Wolves" and "Wolf Alice"</li> <li>• Carroll, from <i>Through the Woods</i></li> <li>• Chick, "Crazy Wolf"</li> </ul>
<b>W 6 May</b>	Belief (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• King, <i>Salem's Lot</i></li> <li>• Pickering, <del>"Constructing the Vampire"</del></li> <li>• Peacock, "Religious Shadows," "OMG!," and "Worship of the Blood God"</li> </ul> <p>WATCH: "Only Lovers Left Alive"</p>
<b>T 12 May</b>	Ritual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nye, "Ritual"</li> <li>• McCloud, <i>American Possessions</i> (excerpts)</li> <li>• Blatty, <i>The Exorcist</i></li> </ul>
<b>W 13 May</b>	Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nye, "Power"</li> <li>• Stoker, <i>Dracula</i></li> <li>• Arjana, "The Monsters of Orientalism"</li> <li>• Stevenson, "The Vampire in the Mirror"</li> </ul> <p>WATCH: "Girl Walks Home Alone at Night"</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><a href="#">final peacock chapter? Halberstam</a></p>
<b>T 19 May</b>	Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nye, "Gender"</li> <li>• King, <i>Carrie</i></li> <li>• Clover, "Carrie and the Boys"</li> <li>• Ingebretsen, "Entertaining Satan"</li> </ul>
<b>W 20 May</b>	Gender (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Levin, <i>Rosemary's Baby</i></li> <li>• Skal, "It's Alive, I'm Afraid"</li> <li>• King, from <i>Danse Macabre</i></li> <li>• Creed, "Horror and the Monstrous-Feminine"</li> </ul> <p>WATCH: "Carrie" (2013) AND "The Babadook"</p>
<b>T 26 May</b>	Texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nye, "Texts"</li> <li>• Ingebretsen, "Writing the Unholy"</li> <li>• Ingebretsen, "Death by Narrative"</li> </ul>
<b>W 27 May</b>	Endings, Timely or Otherwise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nye, "Contemporary Religions, Contemporary Cultures"</li> <li>• Baker, <i>The Zombies Are Coming!</i></li> <li>• Poole, "Undead Americans"</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;"><a href="#">check final peacock chapter</a></p>
<b>F 29 May</b>	Final projects presentations	



**Syllabus  
quiz?!**

# RELIGION AND MONSTERS

WHAT SCARES US AND WHY IT MATTERS

**SHORT TERM**  
2015

Prof. Megan Goodwin  
mgoodwin@bates.edu  
Hedge 213

Office hours: W 11-12pm  
or by appointment

## IMPORTANT DATES

- 30 April Syllabus & Plagiarism Quizzes Due
- 20 May Graphics for 3D models due
- 25 May Storify keyword analysis due
- 29 May Final projects due  
In-class group presentations

**Optional movie screenings every Wednesday**  
**Olin 104 @ 7pm**