

Honors 300 (4 credits)  
Spring 2019

Cynthia Richards

whom even love becomes indistinguishable from performance. She may win the game, but she doesn't like what she sees in the mirror at the end of Volume I.

Finally, we will look at the contemporary crime story and the culture of American violence it encodes, starting with Alfred Hitchcock's still haunting *Psycho* and moving to Truman Capote's still controversial *In Cold Blood*. Each speaks to that odd American phenomenon of finding something sympathetic in the villain, and in the case of these two stories of serial killers, even something that borders on the heroic. At a time in which violence has become an everyday event in our culture, the need to examine these iconic treatments of the transformative effects of violence becomes urgent.

A course entitled "Monstrous Mirrors" cannot end, however, without some meta-reflection, without looking in the mirror ourselves. The contemporary play *Pillowman* will help us reflect on how the very commerce in horror stories can make monsters of its literary players, both its writers and its readers. This play, also set in a totalitarian state, forces us, brutally, to think about what it means to tell stories about monsters and whether such acts represent forms of resistance to larger controlling narratives or become the literal (and literary) manifestation of our fears.

The primary work for the course will be independently driven and determined by your interests and expertise. One paper—titled "My Own Personal Demon"—will span the length of the course and will consist of three parts: personal narrative, historical/cultural overview, and literary analysis. Another—titled "Monster Rx"—will draw upon your disciplinary expertise and will ask you to diagnose the source of the "monster" in a text we read, using the tools of your chosen major. The first paper will be a more conventional analysis paper and will serve to introduce you to the methodologies and expectations of the literary discipline. In addition to these three formal papers, there will be frequent informal writings (i.e. response papers.) The informal writing will be factored into your class participation grade.

Both the writings and the readings in the course will ask us to examine what constitutes our darkness within and what constitutes the monstrous in the mirror of our own time.

Learning Outcomes for the Course:

- 1) Apply skills of close reading to a variety of texts across a variety of historical and cultural contexts;
- 2) Persuasively identify and explain the meaning of a text using an interdisciplinary framework;
- 3) Understand connections between literary narrative and historical/cultural context;
- 4) Write persuasive critical analytical papers;
- 5) Integrate primary and secondary texts in a longer work that also incorporates personal narrative.
- 6) Heighten self-awareness, self-understanding, and compassion for others.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

*Gulliver's Travels* (Penguin edition)  
*Wieland* (Penguin edition)  
*Frankenstein* (Longman Cultural Edition)  
*The Bloody Chamber*  
1984 (Signet)  
*Hunger Games* (Scholastic)  
*In Cold Blood* (Vintage)

The Pillowman

Selected additional readings on Moodle.

#### COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

##### 1. Class Participation (15% of the grade)

- Attendance. As this course is discussion based, your participation is essential, and attendance is mandatory. You are, however, allowed four absences without penalty, after which you will lose a letter grade for each absence. If you miss more than seven classes, I will ask you to withdraw from the class. Of course, absences due to a documented illness are excused, but numerous absences based on extended illness can still affect your performance in the class. So please contact me as soon as possible if you know you are going to miss several classes. We will need to work out a plan in advance for how to address these excused absences.
- Class Participation. The success of this course depends upon the quality of participation. So,



In Closing,

This is an ambitious course with difficult material. For many of you, it is also your first foray into collegiate level literary analysis. So, please don't hesitate to come talk to me if you start to feel overwhelmed by the material. I am always happy to help you find your way through this material and make this a class where you can achieve your goals. Once again, my office hours are: Monday 2:30-4:00; Thursday 4:30-5:30; and Friday 12:30-2:00.

SYLLABUS

*(Tentative: syllabus subject to change depending upon needs of the course.)*

Week I

January 8

Introduction; begin "My Own Personal Demon" Paper

Eighteenth -Century Revolutions,  
Monstrous Selves

January 10

Historical Overview: The Glorious Revolution and the Glare of Enlightenment (Contextual materials on Moodle: "A Modest Proposal," from "Essay on Human Understanding," and from B1cC16 (t)1.A8(h)-50.4 (e)0.5 (G)-23.2 (

Moodle)

Week VII

February 14

Romantic Incarnations and Victorian Specters: "Christabel" and "Goblin Market"  
Final draft of paper #1 due

ATTENDANCE OF THEATER PRODUCTION OF FRANKENSTEIN AT CLARK STATE PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

February 19

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Turn of the Century Nightmares: (Gothic Horror) (Victorian Gothic) (19th Century Gothic) (20th Century Gothic) (presentation)

Week VI

February

Postmodern R... ANrn 9p27.6 w.1er R

April 4	Psychodiscussion—Personal Demon Part II Draft due
	American Monster, American Hero?
Week XII I	
April 9	Monster Rx (3 presentations)
April 11	Historical Context: American Violence and Personal Revolution; In Cold Blood (sections TBA)
Week XIV	
April 16	In Cold Blood (complete book)—Response Paper #5 due
April 18	Monster Rx (3 presentations)
	Meta-reflection: Monstrous Readers and Monstrous Writers
Week XV	
April 23	<b><i>Pillowman</i></b>
April 25	Monster Rx (3 presentations)
Week XVI	
April 30	Final Reflections—Draft of Part III of Personal Demon paper due
May 6 (finals week)	Final Draft of Personal Demon paper due by 5 pm