



LIT 6934: American Gothic(s): Ghosts, Monsters, and the Abhuman/R 6-8 (12:50-3:50 in the seminar room)

Stephanie Smith/Office: 4012B Turlington Hall/Office Hours: Tues. 2-4 <http://www.stephanieasmith.net> and ssmith@ufl.edu

In our era of 'terrorism,' it should be no surprise that the Gothic underpinnings of the American literary tradition are being re-examined, as in Paul Huh's new book *American Terror: The Feeling of Thinking in Edwards, Poe and Melville* (Stanford: 2016). In 2016, peaceful civilian populations increasingly face various forms of violent destabilization, from armed ideological conflicts to brutal domestic policing tactics. Since fear and terror are the heart of the Gothic tradition, a re-examination of the labor done in that genre seems fitting. In Europe, the castle, the dungeon, hauntings and secret chambers were central features of Gothics, in other words, the architecture that supposedly denotes civilization where dread and horror reign instead. In the United States, Gothicism is rooted in a different history: a Puritan religious and capitalist heritage in which xenophobia, racism, sexism, slavery, servitude, and genocide all had (have?) a place. The secret chambers of the castle became the cave in the wilderness, the hold of the boat, the slave-auction, the prison and the closet, places where exploitation, discrimination and torture belied the rational Enlightenment theories upon which the nation was founded.

This course will start with three intertwined, non-U.S. texts that present a kind of feminist ur-text of the Gothic tradition: *Jane Eyre*, *The Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Rebecca* and then we will use various theories of the abject and the Gothic to examine several key texts in which the United States tradition began and continues into the 21st century; each text will feature ghoulish violence, a ghost, a monster, or some version of the abhuman.

We will also be taking part in an online blog with colleagues across the country with respect to a very early popular story, "Makandal, a true story or Account of a remarkable Conspiracy formed by a Negro in the Island of St. Domingo" (1787), which will be online, that underscores the global nature of American obsessions and/or fears during week six, see <http://jto.common-place.org/>

Useful websites: The Gothic Imagination at <http://www.gothic.stir.ac.uk/about/>

Required Readings:

First, a word about these texts. Many of these are available in electronic form, and in various hard-copy formats. Given that most students now use Kindles and such, I've given up trying to get us all "on the same page" even if I still think this is the most effective way of understanding literature in a classroom. In the case of individual short stories, I've provided a link to an online version; I shall be using the versions listed below by ISBN, and in the case of many of the stories, a collection (usually Penguin). Keep in mind that many online formats corrupt the original text; I've tried to provide reliably accurate links. Also, FYI not surprisingly perhaps, almost all of our texts have been 'translated' into a visual medium, either film, television, even graphic novel. So I am providing links and clips to some of these translations and will be using some of this visual material during class.

Otherwise, as I just said, I am listing below the versions I will be using in class, in case any of you want to literally be on the same page with me. Almost all are available at Amazon (even if I think their labor practices are abominable).

Bronte, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. Penguin. ISBN: 0141441143
Capote, Truman. *Other Voices, Other Rooms*. Vintage. ISBN: 978067974648
Chopin, Kate. "Désirée's Baby" <http://www.katechopin.org/pdfs/desirees-baby.pdf>
Du Maurier, Daphne. *Rebecca*. William Morrow. ISBN: 0380730405
Faulkner, William. *As I Lay Dying*. Vintage. ISBN: 067973225X
_____. "A Rose for Emily" http://resources.mhs.vic.edu.au/creating/downloads/A_Rose_for_Emily.pdf
Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *Hawthorne's Short Stories*. Vintage. ISBN: 0307741214
Jacobs, Harriet. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Norton. ISBN: 000A33V11Q
Jackson, Shirley. "The Lottery." See link below.
https://sites.middlebury.edu/individualandthesociety/files/2010/09/jackson_lottery.pdf
James, Henry. *The Portrait of a Lady*. Penguin. ISBN: 0141441267
_____. *Turn of the Screw and Other Short Fiction*. Bantam. ISBN: 0553210599
McCullers, Carson. "Ballad of the Sad Café." http://www.kameli.net/~raimu/rnd/carson_mccullers_-_the_ballad_of_the_sad_cafe_and_other_stories.pdf
Melville, Herman. "Benito Cereno." <http://pinkmonkey.com/dl/library1/benito.pdf>
Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. Vintage. ISBN: 1400033411
O'Connor, Flannery. "A Good Man is Hard to Find." <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~drbr/goodman.html>
Poe, Edgar Allan. *Complete Tales and Poems with Selected Essays*. CreateSpace. ISBN: 145150506X
Rhys, Jean. *The Wide Sargasso Sea*. Norton. ISBN: 0393960129
Spofford, Harriet. "Circumstance" <http://www.facstaff.bucknell.edu/gcarr/19cusww/HPS/C.html>
Wharton, Edith. *Ethan Frome*. Penguin. ISBN: 0142437808

And "Makandal, a true story or Account of a remarkable Conspiracy formed by a Negro in the Island of St. Domingo" (1787), which will be online, along with secondary materials provided by instructor.

Recommended Secondary readings:

Crow, Charles. *American Gothic*. Cardiff, UK: University of Wales Press, 2009. Print.
Drake, Sarah. "Race and Caribbean Culture as Thematics of Liberation in Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*." *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Ed. Judith L. Raiskin. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 1999. Print.
Fiedler, Leslie A. *Love and Death in the American Novel*. New York: Stein and Day, 1966. Print.
Foucault, Michel. "Des espaces autres" [Of Other Spaces]. Trans. Jay Miskowiec. In *Architecture / Mouvement / Continuité* 5 (1984): 46-49.
Gilbert, Sandra M, and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979. Print.
Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993. Print.
Goddu, Teresa A. *Gothic America: Narrative, History, and Nation*. New York: Columbia UP, 1997. Print.
Kaplan, Amy. *The Anarchy of Empire and the Making of U.S. Culture*. 2005.
Kaplan, Cora. *Victoriana: Histories, Fictions, Criticism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007. Print.
Lee, Sun-Joo Lee. "The (Slave) Narrative of *Jane Eyre*." *Victorian Literature and Culture* 36.2 (2008): 317-29. Print.
Michie, Elsie. "From Simianized Irish to Oriental Despots: Heathcliff, Rochester, the Brontes and Race." *Novel* (Winter 1992): 1-17. Print.
Perry, Benita. "Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse." *The Oxford Literary Review* 9.1-2 (1987): 27-58. Print.
Poovey, Mary. "The Anathematized Race: The Governess and *Jane Eyre*." *Uneven Developments*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988. 126-63. Print.

- Savoy, Eric. "The Rise of American Gothic." *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*. Ed. Jerrold E. Hogle. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002. 167-88. Print.
- Streeby, Shelly. *American Sensations*. University of California Press, 2002.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism." *Critical Inquiry* 12.1 (1985): 243-61. Print.
- Wester, Maisha L. *African American Gothic: Screams from Shadowed Places*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. Print.

Requirements: We shall be doing short reading question-responses, a mid-term assignment and a final seminar paper. Final grades will be assigned according to the following numerical breakdown: Attendance/class participation 20%; Class presentation, 10%; mid-term: 30% and final paper: 40%

1. Class participation: This is a graduate seminar, so this class should belong to you--this means active, responsible engagement during the class period. I expect you to teach this class as much, if not more, than I do. You will agree to answer and pose questions in class, with due respect to the class and your classmates. I know this is difficult for some of us. I ask for a good faith effort. Class participation includes:

a. **Attendance.** This should probably go without saying but you will agree to be in class, promptly, at the opening of the class period with the reading assignment. If you are 15 minutes late, you will be marked late; twenty, you are absent. You have **one (1)** day of grace to be absent—after that your grade will suffer. Only severe illness or injury will be allowed as exceptions. In such cases, phone me at home or in the office.

b. **Preparation.** You will agree to have PREPARED the assignment and will be ready to discuss it or write about it or ask questions about it.

Just showing up does not constitute good class participation. Please, no cell phone use in class (unless we are madly googling).

2. Class Presentations: There will be one presentation for each student. I ask you to choose one of the shorter texts that we shall be reading (unless you really want to do a longer one) and give a short presentation on that text, about some aspect of the text that interests you, and then lead class discussion. In other words, you will be introducing the text to the class, and then teaching that text.

3. Mid-Term: For your mid-term, I am asking you to write what is often called a 'critical crux' paper about one of the texts on our reading list; what does this mean? It means that most literary works have a critical history that will reveal a problem about that text (or problems) that critics return to, redefine, re-hash, re-visit over the course of the text's critical history. The job here is to review as much of the critical history of your chosen text as you can, and then write a critical narrative (12-15 pages at most) where you locate the critical crux of the novel, and detail some of the more important approaches to that crux.

An example: for my own critical crux paper, I chose Henry James' *Portrait of a Lady* (okay, so I was a crazy graduate student) and soon discovered one of the most vexing issues for critics was this: why does Isabel Archer go back to her nasty, greedy, controlling husband, Gilbert Osmond, when she really doesn't have to? I wrote a paper about that 'crux' which later turned into the final chapter of my first book, and my first published article.

Final Paper: for your final project, I ask that you write a seminar paper about some aspect of the Gothic that interests you (25 pages). A seminar paper is a critical argument in dialogue with the critical discourse

ongoing about some issue, topic, text etc. of the sort we shall examine across the semester. As noted above, you can use the critical crux mid-term as a way to get a leg up on your final. Why is this paper weighted so heavily (40%)? Because you are a graduate student, yes? These final papers often turn into convention papers and/or chapters and/or publishable essays.

And now for the obligatory UF stuff.

WARNING: I regret having to remind you that plagiarism is a serious offense. All students are required to abide by the Academic Honesty Guidelines, which have been accepted by the University. The academic community of students and faculty at the University of Florida strives to develop, sustain and protect an environment of honesty, trust and respect. Students are expected to pursue knowledge with integrity. Exhibiting honesty in academic pursuits and reporting violations of the Academic Honesty Guidelines will encourage others to act with integrity. Violations of the Academic Honesty Guidelines shall result in judicial action and a student being subject to the sanctions in paragraph XIV of the Student Conduct Code. The conduct set forth hereinafter constitutes a violation of the Academic Honesty Guidelines (University of Florida Rule 6C1_4.017). For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and collusion, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/academic.php>

Please turn off cell-phones during class time; if you need to leave the classroom during class, please be sure to and leave with discretion. You will be marked absent if you are gone more than 10 minutes; unless you have an official disability that requires laptop use in the class, please do not use laptops during class; if you need sleep, please stay home and sleep; please do not be rude, either to me, or to your fellow students. It is the policy of The University of Florida to provide an educational and working environment for its students, faculty and staff that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment. In accordance with federal and state law, the University prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, including sexual harassment. Sex discrimination and sexual harassment will not be tolerated, and individuals who engage in such conduct will be subject to disciplinary action. The University encourages students, faculty, staff and visitors to promptly report sex discrimination and sexual harassment. For more about the University of Florida policies regarding harrassment, see the University of Florida Student Conduct Code at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/conductcode.php> and policies regarding harassment at <http://www.whr.ufl.edu/eeo/sexharassment.html>

The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides students and faculty with information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities in the classroom. Staff at the Disability Resource Center will assist any student who registers as having a disability. Official documentation of a disability is required to determine eligibility for appropriate classroom accommodations. The professional employees at the Disability Resource Program serve as full-time advocates for students with disabilities ensuring students have physical and programmatic access to all college programs. For more information about Student Disability Services, see: <http://www.ufl.edu/disability/>

Unit One: "The Gothic Mirror"

week one: R Jan. 7 – Opening statements and some poetry to get us lubricated, as it were, see end of syllabus.

week two: R Jan. 14 – *Jane Eyre* & *The Wide Sargasso Sea*
Jane Eyre clip <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xVnAVgScKwY> (Timothy Dalton and Zelah Clarke, mini-series 1983)

- week three: R Jan. 21 – *Rebecca* and “The Gothic Mirror” online PDF at
http://www4.ncsu.edu/~leila/documents/ClaireKahane_TheGothicMirror_67561.pdf
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iBze4gStTcg>
 (i.e. a short clip from Alfred Hitchcock’s *Rebecca*)
- week four: R Jan. 28 – in the American context i.e. “Ligeia,” “The Black Cat,” “The Birthmark,”
 “Rappacini’s Daughter,” “The Beast in the Jungle,” “Circumstance” and Eve Sedgwick’s
 “The Beast in the Closet”
 online PDF at [http://academic.uprm.edu/sanderlini/Docs/07a-
 The%20Beast%20in%20the%20Closet.pdf](http://academic.uprm.edu/sanderlini/Docs/07a-The%20Beast%20in%20the%20Closet.pdf)
- week five: R Feb. 4 *Portrait of a Lady* as Gothic Revision

Unit Two: A Long Dark Legacy

- week six: R Feb 11 “Makandal, a true story or Account of a remarkable Conspiracy formed by a
 Negro in the Island of St. Domingo” (1787) and “Benito Cereno”
- week seven: R Feb 18 — *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*
- week eight: R Feb. 25 – “*Désirée’s Baby*” and *Beloved*
 Mid-term: over the break, work on your midterm. Due R. Mar. 10

week nine: Spring Break

Unit Three—Southern Gothic(s)

- week ten: R Mar. 10 – *As I Lay Dying*
- week eleven: R Mar. 17 – “A Good Man is Hard to Find,” “The Ballad of the Sad Café” “The Lottery”
 and “A Rose for Emily”
- week twelve: R Mar. 24 – *Other Voices, Other Rooms*

Unit Four—A few others, outcasts & outlaws

- week thirteen: R Mar. 31 – *The Turn of the Screw*
- week fourteen: R Apr. 7 – *Ethan Frome*
 clip from 1993 film Liam Neeson, Patricia Arquette and Joan Allen
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ky_ZXy4uAgo
- week fifteen: R Apr 14 – Wrap up; we don’t get a week 16.

Lenore

Edgar Allan Poe



Ah, broken is the golden bowl! the spirit flown forever!
Let the bell toll! -a saintly soul floats on the Stygian river -
And, Guy De Vere, hast thou no tear? -weep now or never more!
See! on yon drear and rigid bier low lies thy love, Lenore!
Come! let the burial rite be read -the funeral song be sung! -
An anthem for the queenliest dead that ever died so young -
A dirge for her, the doubly dead in that she died so young.

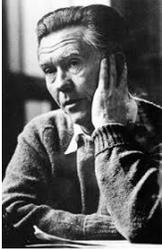
"Wretches! ye loved her for her wealth and hated her for her pride,
And when she fell in feeble health, ye blessed her -that she died!
How shall the ritual, then, be read? -the requiem how be sung
By you -by yours, the evil eye, -by yours, the slanderous tongue
That did to death the innocence that died, and died so young?"

Peccavimus; but rave not thus! and let a Sabbath song
Go up to God so solemnly the dead may feel no wrong!
The sweet Lenore hath "gone before," with Hope, that flew beside,
Leaving thee wild for the dear child that should have been thy bride -
For her, the fair and debonnaire, that now so lowly lies,
The life upon her yellow hair but not within her eyes -
The life still there, upon her hair -the death upon her eyes.

Avaunt! tonight my heart is light. No dirge will I upraise,
But waft the angel on her flight with a paeon of old days!
Let no bell toll! -lest her sweet soul, amid its hallowed mirth,
Should catch the note, as it doth float up from the damned Earth.
To friends above, from fiends below, the indignant ghost is riven -
From Hell unto a high estate far up within the Heaven -
From grief and groan to a golden throne beside the King of Heaven."

American Gothic

William Stafford



If we see better through tiny,
grim glasses, we like to wear
tiny, grim glasses.
Our parents willed us this
view. It's tundra? We love it.

We travel our kind of
Renaissance: barnfuls of hay,
whole voyages of corn, and
a book that flickers its
halo in the parlor.

Poverty plus confidence equals
pioneers. We never doubted.



Because I could not stop for Death – (479)
By [Emily Dickinson](#)

Because I could not stop for Death –
He kindly stopped for me –
The Carriage held but just Ourselves –
And Immortality.

We slowly drove – He knew no haste
And I had put away
My labor and my leisure too,
For His Civility –

We passed the School, where Children strove
At Recess – in the Ring –
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain –
We passed the Setting Sun –

Or rather – He passed Us –
The Dews drew quivering and Chill –
For only Gossamer, my Gown –
My Tippet – only Tulle –

We paused before a House that seemed
A Swelling of the Ground –
The Roof was scarcely visible –
The Cornice – in the Ground –

Since then – 'tis Centuries – and yet
Feels shorter than the Day
I first surmised the Horses' Heads
Were toward Eternity –