

HSS 404 – Monsters: Humanity’s Hidden Face  
Section: 049  
Time: Tuesdays & Fridays, 4—5:20pm  
Room: CKB 315  
Fall 2024

Instructor: Dr. Drew Ciccolo  
Email: via Canvas or [djc85@njit.edu](mailto:djc85@njit.edu)\*  
Office: Cullimore 115F  
(first office on the right once you enter the 115 suite)  
Office Hours: Fridays 10am–12pm and by  
appointment at mutually convenient times

Been chasing people in their dreams  
so long I forgot to chase my own



\*Please note that you can email me through our course’s Canvas page (recommended) or by using the email address listed above. If you do email me outside of Canvas, though, you want to include in your email the section number of the course you are in. (I teach multiple courses, so I won’t automatically know which one you’re in.)

### **A Note on AI usage**

This gets repeated later in the syllabus, but it’s worth foregrounding here: This course follows the guidelines from the NJIT University Code of Academic Integrity:

“Artificial intelligence usage is not permitted in this course. The expectation of this course is for students to work through the course without assistance from any type of artificial intelligence to better develop their own skills in this content area. As such, artificial intelligence usage is not permitted throughout this course.”

Please note that it is my professional obligation and responsibility to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office.

### **Course Description**

This course investigates the ways myths, legends, literature, and other media have presented monsters from antiquity to the present. The content is divided chronologically into three general parts: ancient and medieval monsters, monsters of modernity, and contemporary monsters. We will also read a fair amount of what’s been termed “monster theory.” Over the course of the semester, we will ask questions like: What makes a monster? What do monsters tell us about our fears and desires at different points in history? How do monsters relate to taboos? Ultimately, we will consider the ways monsters allow us to read, analyze, and make sense of cultural values through time using ideas from the fields of history, literary studies, anthropology, and psychology.

Prerequisites: ENGL 102 with a grade of C or higher, and 6 credits at the 300-level History and Humanities GER with a grade of C or higher; 3 credits at the 300-level may be taken concurrently as a co-requisite.

Restrictions: Registration requires senior standing.

## Learning Outcomes

During this course you will:

- Become familiar with existing theory on monsters and their relationship to culture(s)
- Learn to navigate scholarly and historical literature on monsters and to think critically about that literature
- Analyze various monsters in fiction, film, and reality and their significance in larger contexts (antiquity, modernity, America, humanity at large, etc.)
- Gain research, writing, and communication experience
- Come away with a more informed, individualized definition of monsters and monstrosity
- Explore your major field from a new perspective (monstrosity)

## Required Texts and Materials

All course readings will be provided electronically via Canvas, but you will also be responsible for watching around seven films, and **you must access most of the films assigned on your own** – depending on the streaming services you have access to, most of the films may cost between 3 and 6 dollars to view – the total cost shouldn't be more than \$25 or so – you can also feel free to watch them together with classmates if you like (can split cost that way).

## Technology

You will be expected to bring an internet-capable computing device to every class in order to access Canvas, readings, and discussion questions. You must also be able to access the films on your own (see above), as we will not have time to watch them in class (though we may watch significant clips from them in class when we discuss them).

## Attendance and Participation

Attendance in class and participation in class discussions and activities will contribute to your knowledge. Show up on time, be prepared, and actively contribute to class discussions. Your engagement with the material will impact how much you take away from the class. Absences can only be excused via the Dean of Students. In terms of unexcused absences, you may miss up to two classes (one week of class) without penalty and you may be late to class twice without penalty. Every subsequent unexcused absence and late will affect the attendance and participation grade. Missing more than 6 class (three weeks of class) can result in failure of the course. Also, especially considering COVID is still lurking about, do not come to class sick.

## Information about Learning Structure

We will prepare for full-class discussions with readings. Submit discussion questions at the beginning of each class meeting in the discussion board on Canvas for full participation credit. Be prepared to take notes and participate. You must come to every class having read the text(s) assigned for that class. Particularly in September and October, we'll be reading a lot of scholarship and theory on monsters. This will pay dividends later in the semester. **Please do the reading.** All readings are on Canvas – be aware that some books are broken up by chapter and different chapters are located in different modules – make sure you're reading the assigned text(s).

We will also, toward the end of each class meeting, discover one new monster via PBS's *Monstrum*. We will sometimes (if time allows) begin assignments during the class period to help

you master and apply course concepts, and I hope to be able to check in with you individually on a semi-regular basis. Please come to office hours or arrange a meeting with me anytime. If you have questions, contact me via email. I will generally respond to your emails within 24 hours, except on weekends. Please plan accordingly. Remember to maintain an appropriate tone in all school-related correspondence. This means to include an appropriate subject line and your name in all emails, as well as specifying the class (HSS 404) (I'm teaching multiple classes, so I won't automatically know which one you're in unless you specify).

Please also be aware that, because this is the first time this course is running, as noted on the course schedule, we may make small changes during the semester as I gain a deeper understanding of your interests. You will always be alerted to any changes made both in class and via email.

## **Grading**

### **Attendance and active participation 15%**

- For an A (90-100), you will be expected to attend all classes (with no more than 2 unexcused absences), fully participate in most discussions and any classroom exercises, engage with your fellow students and the teacher throughout the semester, submit discussion questions (as assigned) before class meetings, and submit all assignments on time.
- We will be submitting either one or two discussion questions before most class meetings. These are important, as they will make for more productive discussion of the course material. Failure to submit these will result in deductions of points from the participation grade.
- You may miss up to two classes (equivalent to one week of class) without penalty. Every subsequent unexcused absence will result in the deduction of points. **In order for an absence to be excused, I must receive an Absence Excuse Letter from the Dean of Students.** After two unexcused absences,  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a point will be deducted from the participation grade. After two unexcused lates,  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a point will be deducted from the participation grade. More than six unexcused absences (three weeks of the course) can result in failure of the course. Students who expect to miss class for religious observances should contact their instructor about these dates at the beginning of the semester (per university policy).

### **7 reading tests (one every two weeks) 35%**

These are very straightforward tests with time limits to be taken on Canvas. One of the keys to success in this class is to read the material we'll be discussing in class, and these simple tests are designed to help ensure that you do that. All due dates are on Canvas.

### **5 writing assignments, some w/ multimedia options 50%**

These 5 assignments consist of: an investigation into a medieval monster of your choice drawing on course materials and outside research (10%), an essay and presentation on a monster of your choice that we haven't covered in class drawing on course materials and outside research (15%), an essay relating monstrosity to your major field drawing on course materials and outside research (10%), a design your own monster assignment

drawing on course materials (5%), an assignment that will demonstrate the evolution of your understanding of monsters and monstrosity drawing on course materials (10%), and, finally, a very simple assignment asking for your feedback and designed to help this class evolve in future semesters (5%). All due dates are on Canvas.

### Final Grade Calculations

Because all unsubmitted work eventually receives a 0, while all good-faith, original attempted work cannot receive a lower grade than 50%, it is in your best interest to submit every assignment on time, or at least close to on time, even if your submissions are flawed. At the end of the term, your total work will be evaluated according to the university's grading scale.

All assignments and other required work will be graded using the following scale:

A = 90— 100	B+ = 87— 89.99	B = 80— 86.99	C+ = 77— 79.99	C = 70— 76.99	F = 0 -- 69.99
----------------	----------------------	------------------	----------------------	------------------	-------------------

### NJIT University Code on Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating is strictly prohibited and devalues the degree that you are working on. As a member of the NJIT community, it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the academic code of integrity policy that is found at:

<http://www5.njit.edu/policies/sites/policies/files/academic-integrity-code.pdf>.

Please note that it is my professional obligation and responsibility to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office. Any student found in violation of the code by cheating, plagiarizing or using any online software inappropriately will result in disciplinary action. This may include a failing grade of F, and/or suspension or dismissal from the university. If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office at [dos@njit.edu](mailto:dos@njit.edu).

All assignments submitted shall be considered "graded work" and all aspects of your coursework are covered by the Code on Academic Integrity. All projects and homework assignments are to be completed individually unless otherwise specified.

### Chat GPT

This course follows the guidelines from the NJIT University Code of Academic Integrity:

“Artificial intelligence usage is not permitted in this course. The expectation of this course is for students to work through the course without assistance from any type of artificial intelligence to better develop their own skills in this content area. As such, artificial intelligence usage is not permitted throughout this course.”

**TurnItIn** evaluates all sorts of academic integrity violations. This tool detects unauthorized use of quotes and repurposed text (including borrowing of papers). **TurnItIn also flags AI-**

**generated text and use of “grammar” assistants that actually rewrite sentences.** None of these tools are acceptable in this course. Students in violation of the rules of academic integrity will be reported to the Dean of Students who will follow up with a meeting and a final determination of grade and status in the course.

### **Accessibility Needs**

If you need accommodations due to disability, please contact the Office of Accessibility Resources & Services (OARS), Kupfrian Hall 201, to discuss your specific needs. A Letter of Accommodation Eligibility from the OARS authorizing your accommodations will be required.

### **The Writing Center**

The Writing Center (in the basement of Central King Building and online) is available for one-hour individual and group appointments with professional writing tutors. This resource is intended to help you improve your communication and writing skills. Tutors can help with planning assignments, improving your writing, refining an essay or multimedia project, or other communication-based needs. For more information, please visit <http://humanities.njit.edu/writingcenter>.

**Important dates (add/drop, withdrawal, etc.):** <https://www.njit.edu/registrar/fall-2024-academic-calendar>

### **Course Schedule**

- **It is important to note that this schedule is subject to change – if it does change, you will always be alerted in class and/or via announcement/email. (TBA = to be announced.)**

#### **Week 1 (Sept. 3<sup>rd</sup> and Sept. 6<sup>th</sup>)**

Sept. 3<sup>rd</sup>: Introduction(s). Go over syllabus together, discuss semester to come. In-class activity: question exercise – post your question(s) to the Discussion Board. Introductory PowerPoint. Monstrum: Chimaera.

For Sept. 6<sup>th</sup>, have read: [Mythical Monsters in Classic Literature Front Matter and Introduction and “Monster Culture: Seven Theses” by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen \(approx. 20 pages total\)](#). Write at least one discussion question in Discussions (Sept. 6) on Canvas by class time. Monstrum: Tiamat.

#### **Week 2 (Sept. 10<sup>th</sup> and Sept. 13<sup>th</sup>)**

Sept. 10<sup>th</sup>: [Have read: \*Monsters in Greek Literature\* \(2021\) Front Matter and Introduction and Ch. 1: Hesiod \(approx. 40 pages total\)](#). Write at least one discussion question in Discussions (Sept. 10<sup>th</sup>) on Canvas by class time. Monstrum: Taotie.

Sept. 13<sup>th</sup>: Have read: MMICL Ch. 1 – Vampires, Werewolves, and the Living Dead and Ch. 8: Metamorphosed Monsters (approx. 31 pages total). Write at least one discussion question in Discussions (Sept. 13<sup>th</sup>) on Canvas by class time. Revisit JJC's seven theses on monster culture. Monstrum: The Grim Reaper. **First reading test must be taken on Canvas by Friday, Sept. 13<sup>th</sup> at midnight.**

### Week 3 (Sept. 17<sup>th</sup> and Sept. 20<sup>th</sup>)

Sept. 17<sup>th</sup>: Have read: *Monsters in Society: An Interdisciplinary Perspective* Front Matter and Introduction and Brian Burns's Synopsis of *Danse Macabre* by Stephen King (approx. 15 pages total) and have looked at: *Medieval Monsters Field Guide*. Write at least one discussion question in Discussions (Sept. 17<sup>th</sup>) on Canvas by class time. Look at in class: *Medieval Monsters Field Guide*. **Medieval monster investigation assignment introduced.** Monstrum: Cyclops.

Sept. 20<sup>th</sup>: Have read: *The Monster Theory Reader* Front Matter and Introduction: A Genealogy of Monster Theory and *On Monsters: An Unnatural History of Our Worst Fears* Front Matter and Introduction (approx. 45 pages total). Write at least one discussion question in Discussions (Sept. 20<sup>th</sup>) on Canvas by class time. Explore writing resources in Canvas. Monstrum: The Centaur.

### Week 4 (Sept. 24<sup>th</sup> and Sept. 27<sup>th</sup>)

Sept. 24<sup>th</sup>: Have read: *God's Monsters* Front Matter and Introduction, Ch. 3: The Adversary, and Ch. 10: The Monster of Monsters, The Wonder of Wonders (approx. 38 pages total). Write at least one discussion question in Discussions (Sept. 24<sup>th</sup>) on Canvas by class time. Monstrum: The Sirens.

Sept. 27<sup>th</sup>: Have read: *The Monster Theory Reader* Ch. 15: An Introduction to Religion and Its Monsters and *On Monsters: An Unnatural History of Our Worst Fears* Ch. 4: Monstrous Desire (approx. 17 pages total). Write at least one discussion question in Discussions (Sept. 27<sup>th</sup>) on Canvas by class time. Monstrum: Jinn. **Medieval monster investigation assignment due Friday, Sept. 27<sup>th</sup> at midnight. Second reading test must also be taken by Friday, Sept. 27<sup>th</sup> at midnight.**

### Week 5 (Oct. 1<sup>st</sup> and Oct. 4<sup>th</sup>)

Oct. 1<sup>st</sup>: Have read: *From Amazons to Zombies: Monsters in Latin America* Front Matter and Introduction, Ch. 1: The Immanence of Monsters, and "Chac Mool" by Carlos Fuentes (approx. 47 pages total). Write at least one discussion question in Discussions (Oct. 1<sup>st</sup>) on Canvas by class time. **Essay and Presentation on a Monster of Your Choice assignment introduced.** Take stock of where we are and where we're going as a class. Monstrum: TBA.

Oct. 4<sup>th</sup>: Have read: *From Amazons to Zombies: Monsters in Latin America* Ch. 2: The Caribbean Zombie Gothic and *Parasites and Perverts: An Introduction to Gothic Monstrosity*

(Ch. 7 from the *The Monster Theory Reader*) (approx.. 33 pages total). Write at least one discussion question in Discussions (Oct. 4<sup>th</sup>) on Canvas by class time. Watch opening scenes of *Frankenstein* (1994). Monstrum: TBA.

#### **Week 6 (Oct. 8<sup>th</sup> and Oct. 11<sup>th</sup>)**

Oct. 8<sup>th</sup>: Have watched over the weekend: *Frankenstein* (1994). Have read: *Frankenstein* (1818) Chapters 5, 17, and 20. Write at least one discussion question in Discussions (Oct. 8<sup>th</sup>) on Canvas by class time. Monstrum: Frankenstein's Monster.

Oct. 11<sup>th</sup>: Have read: Making Monsters: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (Ch. 2 from *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters*) (25 pages). Write at least one discussion question in Discussions (Oct. 11<sup>th</sup>) on Canvas by class time. Begin watching in class: *Dracula* (1992). Monstrum: TBA. **Third reading test must be taken on Canvas by Friday, Oct. 11<sup>th</sup> at midnight.**

#### **Week 7 (Oct. 15<sup>th</sup> and Oct. 18<sup>th</sup>)**

Oct. 15<sup>th</sup>: Have watched over weekend: *Dracula* (1992) and have read: short excerpt from *Danse Macabre* by Stephen King and "The (Mostly) Unseen World of Cryptids: Legendary Monsters in North America" by David J. Puglia (less than 20 pages total). Write at least one discussion question in Discussions on Canvas by class time. Monstrum: TBA.

Oct. 18<sup>th</sup>: Have read: *Monsters in America: Our Historical Obsession with the Hideous and Haunting* Front Matter and Introduction: The Bloody Chords of Memory (25 pages). Write at least one discussion question in Discussions on Canvas by class time. Monstrum: TBA. **Essay and Presentation on a Monster of Your Choice assignment due Friday, Oct. 18<sup>th</sup> at midnight.**

#### **Week 8 (Oct. 22<sup>nd</sup> and Oct. 25<sup>th</sup>)**

Oct. 22<sup>nd</sup>:. Have watched over the weekend: *Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1931) and have read: *Monsters in Society* Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde chapter (short) and "From Wonder to Error: A Genealogy of Freak Discourse in Modernity by Rosemarie Garland Thomson. Write at least one discussion question in Discussions on Canvas by class time. **Design your own monster assignment introduced.** Monstrum: TBA.

Oct. 25<sup>th</sup>: Have read: *Monsters in America* Ch. 1: Monstrous Beginnings and *Monsters in America* Ch. 2: Goth Americana. Write at least one discussion question in Discussions on Canvas by class time. Monstrum: TBA. **Fourth reading test must be taken on Canvas by Friday, Oct. 25<sup>th</sup> at midnight.**

#### **Week 9 (Oct. 29<sup>th</sup> and Nov. 1<sup>st</sup>)**

Oct. 29<sup>th</sup>: Have read: “The Thing on the Doorstep” by H.P. Lovecraft. Write at least one discussion question in Discussions on Canvas by class time. Monstrum: TBA.

Nov. 1<sup>st</sup>: Have read: An Introduction to the American Horror Film (Ch. 5 from *The Monster Theory Reader*). Write at least one discussion question in Discussions on Canvas by class time. Monstrum: TBA. Design your own monster assignment due by midnight on Nov. 1<sup>st</sup>.

#### Week 10 (Nov. 5<sup>th</sup> and Nov. 8<sup>th</sup>)

Nov. 5<sup>th</sup>: Have watched over the weekend: *The Wolfman* (1941). Have read: “Approaching Abjection” by Julia Kristeva (Ch. 4 from *The Monster Theory Reader*). Write at least one discussion question in Discussions on Canvas by class time. Monstrum: The Werewolf. Essay relating monstrosity to your major field assignment introduced.

Nov. 8<sup>th</sup>: Have read: *Monsters in America* Ch. 3: *Weird Science*. Write at least one discussion question in Discussions on Canvas by class time. Monstrum: TBA. Fifth reading test must be taken on Canvas by Friday, Nov. 8<sup>th</sup> at midnight.

#### Week 11 (Nov. 12<sup>th</sup> and Nov. 15<sup>th</sup>)

Nov. 12<sup>th</sup>: Have watched over the weekend: the original Japanese version of *Godzilla* (1954). Have read: “Why We Crave Horror Movies” by Stephen King. Write at least one discussion question in Discussions on Canvas by class time. Monstrum: TBA.

Nov. 15<sup>th</sup>: Have read: “I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream” (1967) by Harlan Ellison. Write at least one discussion question in Discussions on Canvas by class time. Monstrum: Cyborgs.

#### Week 12 (Nov. 19<sup>th</sup> and Nov. 22<sup>nd</sup>)

Nov. 19<sup>th</sup>: Have watched over the weekend: *Night of the Living Dead* (1968). Have read: *Invisible Monsters: Vision, Horror, and Contemporary Culture* (Ch. 18 from *The Monster Theory Reader*). Write at least one discussion question in Discussions on Canvas by class time. Monstrum: TBA.

Nov. 22<sup>nd</sup>: Have read: *Creating Cultural Monsters* Ch. 4: Existing Explanations for Serial Murder. Write at least one discussion question in Discussions on Canvas by class time. Potentially watch in class: *The Monsters are Due on Maple Street*. Monstrum: TBA. Essay relating monstrosity to your major field due Friday, Nov. 22<sup>nd</sup> at midnight. Sixth reading test must also be taken on Canvas by Friday, Nov. 22<sup>nd</sup> at midnight.

#### Week 13 (Nov. 27<sup>th</sup>)

Nov. 27<sup>th</sup>: Have watched over the weekend: *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984). Have read: *Creating Cultural Monsters* Ch. 5: Cultural Context of Serial Murder. Write at least one

discussion question in Discussions on Canvas by class time. [Assignment \(revealed in week 2\) \(re-\)introduced](#). **Monstrum: Backrooms/Internet.**

<b>Week 14 (Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup> and Dec. 6<sup>th</sup>)</b>
--

Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup>: [Have watched over the break: \*The Host\* \(2006\)](#). [Have read: On Monsters: An Unnatural History of Our Worst Fears Part 5: Monsters Today and Tomorrow \(Chs. 14 and 15, approx. 45 pages total\)](#). Write at least one discussion question in Discussions on Canvas by class time. Monstrum: Pokemon.

Dec. 6<sup>th</sup>: [Have read: \*Monsters in America\* Conclusion: Worse Things Waiting \(22 pages\)](#). Write at least one discussion question in Discussions on Canvas by class time. Monstrum: Slender Man. [Seventh \(and last\) reading test must be taken on Canvas by Dec. 6<sup>th</sup> at midnight](#). [Assignment \(revealed in week 2\) due Sunday, Dec. 8<sup>th</sup> at midnight](#).

<b>Week 15 (Dec. 10<sup>th</sup> – last class of semester)</b>
--

[Have watched over weekend: \*Godzilla Minus One\* \(2023\) or TBD \(vote?\)](#). [Help the course evolve assignment introduced](#). Wrapping up: What have we learned? What does the future have in store? Last Monstrum: chosen by class vote. [Help the course evolve assignment due by Weds., Dec. 11<sup>th</sup> at midnight \(we will also spend some time on these during our last class meeting\)](#). [I hope you all have peaceful and happy winter breaks! Happy holidays!](#)

## NEED HELP?

### KNOW WHO TO CALL

Please note following important numbers that will come in handy in case of emergency:

EXTERNAL RESOURCES	AVAILABILITY	CONTACT NUMBER
Suicide Prevention	24 hrs/ 7 days a week	(973) 623-2323 (University Hospital-Newark)
Drug/ Alcohol Addiction	24 hrs/ 7 days a week	(877) 630-8262
Crime Victim Compensation Office	Monday – Friday 8 AM – 8 PM	(877) 658-2221
Rape Care Center	24 hrs/ 7 days a week	(877) 733-2273 (Essex County)
Sexual Assault Hotline	24 hrs/ 7 days a week	(800) 656-HOPE (National)
Psychiatric Emergency	24 hrs/ 7 days a week	(973) 924-7416 (Newark Beth Israel Hospital)
NJIT RESOURCES	AVAILABILITY	CONTACT NUMBER
NJIT Public Safety	24 hrs/ 7 days a week	(973) 596-3111 (Emergency) (973) 596-3120 (Non-Emergency)
Dean of Students (TITLE IX – Sexual Misconduct Report/Response)	Monday – Friday 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM	(973) 596-3466
Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)	Monday – Friday 8:30 AM - 5 PM	(973) 596-3414
Student Health Services (SHS)	Monday – Friday 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM	(973) 596-3621