

CREATING MONSTERS

PRECEPTORIAL 107

FALL 2018



Still from *Frankenstein*, dir. James Whale (Universal Pictures, 1931).

Meeting Time & Location

MWF 9:20–10:30 a.m.

Old Main 301

Tu 1:00–3:50 p.m.

CFA 110 (Round Room)

Professor: Dr. Brandon Polite

Office: Old Main 304

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email: bpolite@knox.edu

Office Hours MWF 10:30–11:30 a.m.,
& by appointment

Co-Leader **Emilie Barrett**
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Peer Mentor **Eli Adams**
(eadams@knox.edu)

Course Description and Objectives

What is a “monster”? How does a monster come to be? And, what can a monster tell us about the society in which it dwells?

Through a variety of texts from various areas of study and films from different regions of the world, we will analyze the monster as a concept that is socially constructed and that reflects the anxieties, fears, and assumptions of a particular society. In this light, the monster is not an entity that simply exists in a vacuum or threatens us from the beyond, but something conceptualized and created within our own minds for a host of possible reasons. In this class we will pay particular attention to how the rhetoric of monstrosity is applied to human beings, especially marginalized social groups, and ask ourselves what purpose inflicting such “monstrous” language upon them has. To help us do this, we will draw from studies in anthropology, sociology, biology, and cognitive and social psychology that will allow us to evaluate and examine the many factors involved in the creation and interpretation of monsters. Ultimately, our study of monsters is really a study of ourselves and what it means to be human.

In this course we will focus on writing and strategies that you might use to move from informal writing to more advanced stages of academic writing. This course also serves as an introduction to a liberal arts education that will help you make connections between the different areas of study at the college level while you also develop the fundamental skills of **careful reading, precise writing, engaged listening, considered discussion, and critical thinking**. By these means, you will cultivate habits of mind central to the value of **academic integrity**, such as proper attribution and correct citation.

Website: Accessible via <https://classroom.google.com>

course details **Texts:** Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (Signet Classic, 2013).

William Shakespeare, *Othello* (Signet Classic, 1998).

Other readings are available as PDFs. I expect you to bring them with you to class, either electronically or printed out.

Classroom Courtesy: Cell phones should be turned off for the duration of the class. Because of their tendency to distract, I strongly prefer that you take notes by hand rather than with a laptop or tablet. I will ban such devices from the classroom if they become a problem.

accommodations

If you have a disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please see me and Stephanie Grimes (sgrimes@knox.edu) in the Office of Disability Support Services, which is located in the CTL, so that such accommodations may be arranged.

Course Requirements

Daily Writing Assignments (30%)

These assignments give you the opportunity to practice your writing skills in a less formal manner. Their goal is to help you think through the text you have just read or the film you have just watched so that you can generate ideas and questions that will allow you to contribute your thoughts to class discussions. You will have a considerable amount of reading to do each week, in addition to watching a film during several weeks. A good way to approach the assigned reading is to read it in its entirety one day and then carefully *re-read* some or all of the material the day before class. This will allow you to read passages that intrigue or trouble you as slowly and carefully as they demand.

Participation (25%) This class cannot function effectively without regular class attendance and participation from everyone. Thus, participation constitutes a significant portion of your course grade. Consider it your responsibility to contribute to creating a safe, intellectually stimu-

lating, and inclusive environment so that all of us can share our thoughts as we grapple with the material.

Essay 1 (5%) There will be one short formal essay of roughly 600–900 words (or 2–3 pages) in which you will articulate and defend a thesis on *Frankenstein*. Although we will not spend time revising this essay, the assignment will give you a chance to practice 1) developing an argument and 2) defending it with appropriate evidence and analysis.

Essays 2 & 3 (20% each) There will also be two longer formal essays of roughly 1500–1850 words (or 5–6 pages) each. You will develop them in two stages:

First-Stabs (5% each) After generating ideas from the daily assignments and class discussions, you will attempt to articulate a working thesis and organize an argument that support it. Though not an essay yet, a “first stab” gives you the opportunity to practice putting your thoughts onto paper in a more formal way, which will allow us to gauge where you are at in the thinking and writing process and

what you need to do to successfully write the essay.

Revisions (15% each) You will meet with me in small groups during writing conferences so that your classmates and I can help you identify what you are doing well in your first stab, where you could be doing better, and generally how you should develop your first stab into a final essay that provides a clear, concise, and compelling defense of an insightful thesis. In light of our comments, you will rework and expand your first stab into a final, polished essay.

Writing Resources

Emilie Barrett, the class’s co-leader, and **Eli Adams**, your LLC’s peer mentor, will be available to help you prepare your writing tasks before you turn them in and help you understand the revisions you need to make afterward.

Writer’s Workshop M–F, 12–4 p.m. in the Center for Teaching and Learning.

Red Room Tu–Th, 7–9 p.m. on the second floor of Seymour Library.

General Remarks on Writing

To help you become more comfortable with college-level writing, we will work through various steps of the writing process that will help you produce your best work possible—from your initial thoughts generated in the daily assignments and class discussions to the first-stabs and eventually the final version you turn in. The goal is to set a solid foundation onto which you will build the academic writing skills needed throughout your college career and beyond. This does not happen in one term! So, be patient with yourself and keep your expectations realistic. Be ready not only to write but also to rewrite your formal essays. I will meet with you during writing conferences to help you identify what you are doing well in addition to the elements of your essays that could be stronger. By the end of the term you should feel more confident as a writer as you walk into other classes.

written work

You will submit all written work on [Google Classroom](#). For each assignment, a new Google Doc will be created for you. You can choose to type directly into it or copy & paste your work from another word processor, such as Microsoft Word or Pages for Mac.

late assignments

If you need an extension on any of the [Essays](#) or [First Stabs](#), get in touch with me as far in advance as possible before the deadline to arrange it. Work turned in after the deadline without a prearranged extension will be docked 1/3 of a letter grade for each day late (an A- would become a B+, etc.). [After three mark-downs, you will most likely receive an automatic zero for the assignment.](#)

Note: [Daily Writing Assignments](#) are due prior to each class meeting. Any submitted after class has begun will receive zero credit.

Grades

Participation	25%
Daily Writing Assignments	30%
Short Essay	5%
First Stabs (x2)	10%
Revised Essays (x2)	30%

grading scale

A	4.00 – 3.85	C+	2.49 – 2.15
A-	3.84 – 3.50	C	2.14 – 1.85
B+	3.49 – 3.15	C-	1.84 – 1.50
B	3.14 – 2.85	D+	1.49 – 1.15
B-	2.84 – 2.50	D	1.14 – 0.85
		D-	0.84 – 0.50

Syllabus

1. OF MONSTERS AND MEN

9/14 E Read: Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)"

9/17 M Read: Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, Letter 1–ch. 7

9/18 Tu Staged reading: Euripides, *The Bacchae* (in Kresge Recital Hall)

9/19 W Read: Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, chs 8–17

9/21 F Read: Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, ch. 18–end

9/24 M Read: David D. Gilmore, *Monsters* (chs 1–2)

9/25 Tu Film screening: Bong Joon-Ho, *The Host* (2006)

9/26 W Discuss: *The Host*

(SHORT) ESSAY 1

9/28 F In-class activity: Thesis Workshop

10/1 M Discussion: How to Write an Essay

10/2 Tu Activity: Academic Integrity Workshop

10/3 W ***ESSAY 1 DUE* (No Class Meeting)**

2. MONSTROUS IMAGINATION

10/5 E Read: David Frankfurter, "Imputations of Perversion"

10/8 M Read: Stephen T. Asma, "Monsters on the Brain: An Evolutionary Epistemology of Horror" (chunks)

10/9 Tu Film screening: Guillermo del Toro, *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006)

10/10 W Read: Paul Bloom, "The Root of All Cruelty?"
Discuss: *Pan's Labyrinth*

3. MONSTROUS GENDER

10/12 F Read: Cynthia Freeland, "Seductive Vampires" (chunks)

10/15 M Read: Dana Oswald, "Monstrous Gender: Geographies of Ambiguity"

10/16 Tu Film screening: *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night*

10/17 W **Fall Institute & Day of Dialogue (No Class)**

10/19 F Discuss: *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night*

Readings

Most readings are in PDF form and can be accessed by clicking the links embedded in the M's, W's, and F's to the left of each on the syllabus. You can also access them via Google Drive, either in the shared "Monster Readings" folder or by searching for them in <https://drive.google.com>.

Note. You can access the readings only if you are logged in to your Knox email account, accessible here: <https://www.knox.edu/myknox>.

Expectations. I expect you to bring the readings with you to class, either electronically or printed out. I might not call on you if you don't have the reading in front of you during class discussion.



Mary Shelley (1797–1851) began writing *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, near Lake Geneva, Switzerland at the age of eighteen. The novel was published in three volumes, the first of which was released (anonymously) in January of 1818. To celebrate the novel's 200th anniversary, as well as Shelley's creation of the modern horror genre (without which this course would not exist!), we will be holding a screening and discussion of the classic 1931 film adaptation on **Halloween Night**, starting at 9 p.m. in Kresge Recital Hall.

ESSAY 2		
10/22	M	Writing conferences (*FIRST-STAB DUE* at time of conference)
10/23	Tu	Writing conferences (*FIRST-STAB DUE* at time of conference)
10/24	W	No Class
10/26	F	*ESSAY 2 DUE* (No Class Meeting)
4. MONSTROUS GENDER, SEX, AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION		
10/29	M	Read: Sally Lehrman, "When a Person Is Neither XX or XY: A Q&A with Geneticist Eric Vilain"
10/30	Tu	Film screening: Lucía Puenzo, <i>XXY</i> (2007)
10/31	W	Read: Begonya Enguix Grau, "XXY: Representing Intersex" Discuss: <i>XXY</i>
5. MONSTROUS RACE		
11/2	E	Read: James Baldwin, "A Stranger in the Village"
11/5	M	Read: William Shakespeare, <i>Othello</i> , Acts I & II
11/6	Tu	No Meeting
11/7	W	Read: William Shakespeare, <i>Othello</i> , Act III
11/9	F	Read: William Shakespeare, <i>Othello</i> , Act IV
5. MONSTROUS JUSTICE		
11/12	M	Read: William Shakespeare, <i>Othello</i> , Act V
11/13	Tu	Film screening: Fritz Lang, <i>M</i> (1931)
11/14	W	Discuss <i>M</i>
ESSAY 3		
11/16	F	Writing conferences (*FIRST-STAB DUE* at time of conference)
11/17	Sa	Writing conferences (*FIRST-STAB DUE* at time of conference)
11/20	Tu	*ESSAY 3 DUE* (No Class Meeting)

Honor Code

This course, as any other at Knox, operates within the parameters set by the Honor Code. Please note, in the everyday business of this course, students are encouraged to talk through all course material with one another and to function as interlocutors for one another. This extends to preparing to write your papers. However, each student is required to write their own work, to cite all sources fully, and to give explicit credit where particular formulations of claims, arguments, and examples are the product of cooperative work.

Participation

Before the start of each class meeting, you should be prepared to initiate discussion on the readings and films, as well as reflect and comment on your classmates' observations. Don't be afraid to ask questions! We will be discussing difficult concepts with difficult language at times, so seeking clarity is helpful for all of us. Moreover, some of the topics might be hot-button issues for some. Learning how to discuss controversial issues in a respectful manner and with a genuine interest in understanding the perspectives of those who disagree with you is a key skill for success at Knox. And it takes a lot of practice! So be patient with yourself and with others during this process, and remember that your questions demonstrate the level of your engagement with the text. The best questions will be those that open our minds to other perspectives that will lead us down new paths of discussion.

Daily participation will be graded on the following scale:

- 4 You arrive on time and participate voluntarily. You ask questions of your professor or classmates that are relevant to the topic being discussed or provide thoughtful and detailed comments on the readings, ideas, and issues raised during our discussion.
- 3 You arrive on time and participate voluntarily, asking questions or offering comments that are relevant to the issues raised during our discussion.
- 2 You might be late for class. Or you are on time, but your comments or questions may be irrelevant to the topic discussed. Or, although you might not voluntarily offer information, you nonetheless seem to be engaged with the discussion.
- 1 You might be very late to class. Or you seem disengaged or make irrelevant or distracting comments that do not enrich the discussion.
- 0 You are absent, fall asleep, or disrespect your professor or classmates.

Note. Monopolizing the discussion is not quality participation.

Films

We will watch several films during the Tuesday 5s-6 hour slot. DVD's of all films are on reserve in the library should you need to consult them later.



The Host

dir. Bong Joon-ho, 2006

Starring: Song Kong-ho, Byun Hee-bong, Park Hae-il, Bae Doona, Go Ah-sung

Screening: 9/25, CFA 110 @ 1 p.m.



Pan's Labyrinth

dir. Guillermo del Toro, 2006

Starring: Sergi López, Maribel Verdú, Ivana Baquero, Doug Jones

Screening: 10/9, CFA 110 @ 1 p.m.



A Girl Walks Home Alone At Night

dir. Ana Lily Amirpour, 2014

Starring: Sheila Vand, Arash Marandi, Mozhan Marnò, Marshall Manesh

Screening: 10/16, CFA 110 @ 1 p.m.



XXY

dir. Lucía Puenzo, 2007

Starring: Ricardo Darín, Inés Efron, Valeria Bertuccelli, Martin Piroyanski

Screening: 10/30, CFA 110 @ 1 p.m.



Frankenstein

dir. James Whale, 1931

Starring: Colin Clive, Mae Clark, John Boles, Boris Karloff

Screening: 10/31, Kresge @ 9 p.m.



M

dir. Fritz Lang, 1931

Starring: Peter Lorre, Otto Wernicke, Gustaf Gründgens

Screening: 11/13, CFA 110 @ 1 p.m.