

RUSS 295: THE VAMPIRE IN LORE AND LITERATURE

SAMPLE SYLLABUS

Catalog Description

Comparative study of the vampire in various folk and literary traditions from ancient Greece to the 21st century: characteristics of vampires and their kith and kin in folklore and in classical antiquity; Eastern and West-European vampires in folklore and popular culture; their representation in literature and culture and various reasons for their popularity. Readings include J. Sheridan, Le Fanu, Bram Stoker, Nicolai Gogol, Aleksei K. Tolstoi, Anne Rice, and others. The vampire traditions in film, from Nurnau's *Nosferatu* to Coppola's *Dracula* and Hardwicke's *Twilight*.

Learning Objectives:

Through readings, lectures, film viewing, class discussion and written work, the course will introduce students to “comparative vampirology”—a comparative study of the vampire in various folk, literary, and mass-culture traditions from ancient Greece to the 21st century. The core issues, such as the role Vampire plays in popular imagination, the use of vampire as a projection of society's fears, prejudices, aspirations, desire and sexuality, beliefs, and established or subverted gender roles, through various cultures and many centuries are examined and compared, with widely ranging and often conflicting assessments.

In this writing intensive course students are trained to read primary texts and analyze visual materials closely and analytically; to make connections among narratives, authors, and cultural developments; and to improve their research and writing skills.

Through readings and discussions the course engages the students directly with the role popular and religious beliefs, ideology and gender play in cultural production and representation. By juxtaposing vampires to human beings and analyzing the distance between appearances, drives, and attributes of the vampire and humans, the course examines representations of desire—beauty, sexuality, success and money. On the other hand, this juxtaposition engages students in exploration of beliefs, including religious beliefs, of traditional values and rewards, including that of eternal life—ensured through evil for the vampire and through virtue for the humans; the issue of the sanctity of life and prohibition of murder; the dangerous allure and attractiveness of evil, etc. The course will explore representation of the vampire as a metaphor of sexual otherness, as well as investigate issues of desire and gender roles in their evolution and subversion, in particular, the evolution of women's role from a dangerous deviant and monster to a passive object of aggression, and eventually, again to the active agent of aggression and desire.

Course Requirements and Grading:

Your grade will be comprised of the following elements:

- Attendance and participation in discussion: 20%
- Midterm Exam (including a 2-3 page paper): 20%
- Final Exam (including 2-3 page paper): 40%
- Final paper 12 pages+: 20%
-

This is a writing intensive course. All assignments and examinations will include essay. There will be no multiple choice examinations. Reviewing and revising your work is an important part of mastering writing skills. You can submit drafts of writing assignments (other than the two essay examinations) for comments before your final submission.

Academic Integrity

Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g. plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The college is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures.

Required Readings:

Anne Rice, *Interview With the Vampire*,

Alan Ryan, *Vampire Stories*, ed. New York 1988

Bram Stoker, *Dracula*

McNally and Florescu, *In Search of Dracula*, Boston-New York, new updated edition, 1994

Stephenie Meyer, *Twilight*, 2005

Other required materials (including folklore pieces) are in the Reading package

SCHEDULE:

Week 1: Vampires and Vampirism: general discussion of the issues involved in the course

Discussion of the early folklore female vampiric personae: Striges (ancient Rome), lamiai (ancient Greek), Streghe (Italian), Strzygi (Polish), Navki (Russian). For a sharp contrast we will move fast forward to early American cinema and the “vamp” female protagonist.

Week 2: From Roman Strix to the American Vamp

The ghoul in Russian, Polish and Middle Eastern folklore, the African iron teeth Asasabonsam and the blood sucker Abayifo

Week 3: Goul

Discussion of the historicity of Vlad Tepes; his lineage, the origin of the name Dracula; his military exploits; his supposed cruelty and relationship with the Saxon community in Wallachia. Dracula in Romanian and Russian folklore and in Romanian and German medieval stories.

Week 4: Dracula

Bram Stoker, *Dracula*

Week 5: Other works by Stoker: *The Lady of the Shroud*. *The White Worm*

Close reading and discussion of *Dracula*

Week 6: *Dracula*, the novel

Dracula, the novel

Week 7: *Dracula*, the novel. Conclusions

“The Lady of the House of Love” by Angela Carter. Close reading and discussion

Week 8: Screening and discussion of excerpts from the films *A Fool There Was* (1915) with the original American Vamp Thada Bara, Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922), and *Dracula* (1931) with Bela Lugosi.

Discussion of the films

Week 9: 19th century Russian Gothic literature (lecture)

Reading and analysis of Turgenev's *Phantoms*, Gogol's *Terrible Vengeance*, Dostoyevsky's *Bobok*, Chekhov's *The Black Monk*

Week 10: Analysis and discussion of vampire short stories by Byron, John Polidori, J.M.Rymer, J.Sheridan fanu, Luella Miller, Algernon Blackwell, Ramsey Campbell

Week 11: Anne Rice

The Vampire Armand and *The Vampire Lestat*

The Claiming of the Sleeping Beauty

Week 12: Reading and analysis of Anne Rice's Interview with the Vampire

Consideration of such issues as alienation, impossibility of fitting into the traditional social context, impossibility of relating to others, ennui.

Screening of scenes from the film *Interview with the Vampire*. Discussion

Week 13: The novel *Twilight*, by Stephane Meyer, focus of the new "humanized" persona of the vampire.

Screening of the selected scenes from the film *Twilight*. Discussion.

Week 14: *Twilight*, the film. Discussion of the new "humanized" vampire who demonstrates greater capability of integrating into the traditional society. Focus on *Twilight*.

Consideration of Tim Kane's book *The Changing Vampire of Film and Television* (2006). Conclusions.