ANG1755: Vampires in Films and Literature

Winter 2020
Dr. Michael E. Sinatra

Week 1

- About me
- Description
- Requirements
- Works Studied
- Schedule
- Viewing: Dracula

About me

Office hours: by appointment only
Email: michael.eberle.sinatra@umontreal.ca

Description

This course will consider the development of Vampire literature, from its early manifestations in the nineteenth century, most notably Bram Stoker's 1897 Dracula, to Stephen King's 1975 Salem's Lot, and Justin Cronin's 2012 The Passage. Students will be introduced to a diverse array of texts, films, and TV episodes which will allow for a wide-ranging discussion of issues at play in Vampire literature.

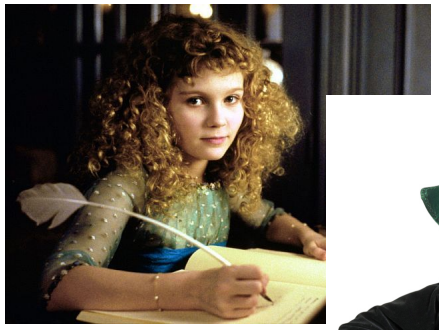
Indeed, Vampire lore offers a rich and varied focus for textual analysis, including themes surrounding sexuality, race, disease, social class, and death. The spectrum of works under consideration will broaden the students' perspective on the Vampire theme and its literary and sociological influence on other works and on contemporary society at large.

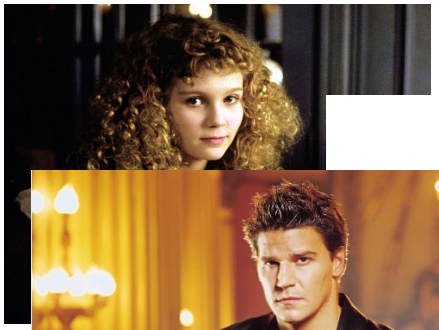
As the title of this course indicates, students will be required to attend screenings of several films and TV episodes during the semester. Examinations will cover both literary texts, films, and TV episodes. Students should note that the works under consideration in this class contain explicit scenes of violence and sexuality.

"Popular culture is not just easy and accessible. The best popular culture works on a number of levels, is easy and accessible, but also rewards detailed study and appreciation."

John Frow, Cultural Studies and Cultural Values
(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) 208

Why are vampires so popular?





O.E.D. definition (first appearance in 1734): "These Vampyres are supposed to be the Bodies of deceased Persons, animated by evil Spirits, which come out of the Graves, in the Night-time, suck the Blood of many of the Living, and thereby destroy them."

- Folklore (Vampire tradition exists all over the world before 1800)
- German writers (Ossenfelder's 1748 Der Vampir; Burger's 1773 Lenore; Goethe's 1797 The Bride of Corinth) [cf. Charlotte Brontë's 1847 Jane Eyre: "the foul German Spectre -- the Vampyre"]

- Historical relevance
- Political relevance
- Theoretical relevance
- All those sexy people
- All those funny people

Themes

- Violence
- Sex
- Race
- Humour
- Environment

There is no such creatures as 'The Vampire'; there are only vampires.

Nina Auerbach, Our Vampires, Ourselves
(Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 1995) 5

Requirements

- Two exams, both taking place over two class meetings;
- Midterm exam: 40% (Film question on 17 February: 15% and literature questions on 24 February: 25%);
- Final exam: 60% (Film question on 20 April: 25% and literature questions on 27 April: 35%).

Students not enrolled in a program in the English department are allowed to submit their written works in French.
(Les étudiants non inscrits dans un programme du département d'études anglaises sont autorisés à soumettre leurs travaux en français.)

Film question

- Viewing of a new film in class;
- 2 questions on the film and one of the films and/or TV episodes previously viewed in class;
- You chose one to be answered in class (400-600 words);
- No books or prepared notes allowed;
- Answers are to be written on exam booklets.

Literature questions

- 4 topics submitted 1 week in advance;
- The instructor chooses 2 to be answered in class (500-800 words each);
- No books or prepared notes allowed;
- Answers are to be written on exam booklets.

Works studied

- Bram Stoker, Dracula (1897)
- Richard Matheson, I am Legend (1954)
- Stephen King, Salem's Lot (1975)
- Ann Rice, Interview with the Vampire (1976)
- Laurel Hamilton, Guilty Pleasures (1993)
- Charlaine Harris, Dead until Dark (2001)
- Joss Whedon and Karl Moline, Fray: Future Slayer (2003)
- Justin Cronin, The Passage (2012)
- Terrence Fisher, Dracula (1958)
- Roman Polanski, The Fearless Vampire Killers (1967)
- Buffy the Vampire Slayer: 'Buffy vs Dracula' (5.1; 2000)
- Ultraviolet: 'Habeas Corpus' (1.1; 1998)
- Buffy the Vampire Slayer: 'Lie to Me' (2.7; 1997)

- Supernatural: 'Dead Man's Blood' (1.20; 2006)
- Stephen Norrington, Blade (1998)
- X-Files: 'Bad Blood' (5.12; 1998)
- Tomas Alfredson, Let the Right One In (2008)
- Jim Armusch, Only Lovers Left Alive (2013)

Schedule

- 6 January: Introduction / Film Dracula
- 13 January: Fisher / Film The Fearless Vampire Killers
- 20 January: TV 'Buffy vs Dracula' / Stoker
- 27 January: TV 'Habeas Corpus' / Matheson
- 3 February: TV 'Lie to Me' / King
- 10 February: TV 'Dead Man's Blood' / Rice
- 17 February: Midterm exam, Part I
- 24 February: Midterm exam, Part II

- 2 March: Reading Week
- 9 March: Hamilton / Film Blade (Part I)
- 16 March: Film Blade (Part II) / Harris
- 23 March: Whedon and Moline / Film Only Lovers Left Alive (Part I)
- 30 March: Film Only Lovers Left Alive (Part II) / Film Let the Right One In
- 6 April: TV 'Bad Blood'/ Cronin
- 13 April: Bank holiday
- 20 April: Final Exam, Part I
- 27 April: Final Exam, Part II

Next week

- Discussion of Fisher's Dracula
- Viewing: The Fearless Vampire Killers