

**ETHN 101 – ETHNIC IMAGES IN FILM:  
Race, Gender, and Monstrosity in U.S. Horror Films**

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**Instructor:** LeKeisha Hughes

**Email:** lhughes@ucsd.edu

**Room:** HSS, room 2154

**Office Hours:** Wed 12:00-12:50pm at Perks, Thurs by appt.

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### **Course Description**

How and when is something articulated as horror? In what ways and for whom? Scholars have utilized “horror” to name a genre that is intended to attract as it works to repulse – to elicit fear, disgust, and/or pleasure, most often with an explicit focus on the monstrous and wounded body (see Carroll 1990; Clover 1992; Creed 1993; Freeland 1996; Halberstam 1995). But how does horror and the monstrous bodies it turns to register in relation to race and gender? And what of those moments when it exceeds the strictures of genre? Understanding horror as an aesthetic rendering and genre, while, also acknowledging horror as experiential in ways that act beyond intentional desires to attract and simultaneously repulse, this course turns to U.S. films to ask how modalities of horror, race, and nationhood operate together. What are these modalities doing to make sense (or not) of the racialized, gendered, and sexualized logics of monstrosity that are converging in the American horror film? And can horror be productive?

This upper-division course is intended to help students develop analytical skills to think critically about the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, class, and nation by asking them to consider: racial tropes and representations, ethnic images as narrative devices, the social implication of ethnic images, and the role of film in shaping and reflecting societal power relations. This course will focus on ethnic and racial representations in horror films, television shows, and various other media. We will screen many of these films in class, while others you will be expected to view in small groups. We will use Ethnic Studies vocabulary to critically 'read' these cultural texts to understand the historical and ongoing structures of chattel slavery, settler colonialism, and immigration. Assignments will include collaborative in-class presentations and creative media productions that engage the horror genre.

### **Requirements:**

**\*NOTE:** This is an upper-division course and will be treated as such. Therefore, expectations will be high, assignments will be challenging, and workload will be moderately high. Students who complete all assignments satisfactorily will earn a “B” range grade. “A” range grades are intended to recognize work that displays strong promise for future critical research or film practice. You can demonstrate this through strong analytical writing, particularly insightful creative work, or extra commitments to the class.

### **Attendance and Participation: 30%**

As in any good seminar, engaged participation will be a key component of our meetings

throughout this short course. With this in mind, students should 1) attend all sessions 2) be sure to complete and bring all readings required for the particular day we meet, and 3) be prepared to take an active role in discussion of the materials. Because this course is only five weeks, absences and tardiness will not be tolerated – any absence without proper documentation will affect your grade.

### **Critical Film Analyses 15%**

Students will be responsible for completing **three** 1-2page single-spaced **critical film analyses** in relation to the weekly readings and films, due in class on Monday for the prior week's texts. These responses will serve as platforms for students to develop their critical engagement with our texts and, as such, should be analytical/theoretical in nature. While students should engage the central argument and main point of the texts, **these responses are not meant to be merely summaries of the readings**. Rather they should engage key discussions and suggestive questions that emerge across the readings and films, engage with their theoretical/epistemic/historical interventions, and/or assess what the particular film/scene is attempting (and/or how it is doing so) in terms of key elements such as content, racial and gender codings, argumentation, cultural significance, aesthetics, and/or method.

### **Weekly Film Reviews 5%**

Each week, students will write a **1paragraph review** decoding the week's film. Differing from the Critical Film Analysis assignment, which asks students to think like a film critic and scholar, this assignment asks you to think like a filmmaker. Therefore, you have more flexibility and creativity with the review. For instance, you may reflect on what was 'good,' or satisfying (or was meant to be) about the film, the archetypes and racial tropes and the 'work' they did in the film and for you as a viewer, moments of (mis)recognition you had with a character, a particular scene that has stuck with you and why, possibilities of transgression/disruption to the cultural codes that you saw or hoped to see, etc. These reviews will help students to begin generating ideas for the final project. These will be posted to TritonEd **due by 11:59pm Friday** (except for week 5, due Wed).

### **Presentations: 15%**

Beginning Monday of week 2, students will conduct film discussions in groups of 3-4. These presentations are expected to be about 40min (including discussion time) and will be based on the readings for both the prior and current week, the week prior's film, and another film selected from the "presentations options" given on the syllabus. Further details will be given in class.

### **Final Project: 25%**

#### **Diorama/Photography Project**

Students will complete a critically creative project (re)imagining and 'counter-narrating' a horror scene as a diorama or staged photograph. The project will consist of three parts due throughout the course – the first two will be completed individually with the final project being a collaborative effort.

- Part 1: Storyboarding...5%
- Part 2: A 2-page 'treatment' of the scene and characters...5%
- Part 3: final Project...15%

**Final Paper: 10%**

In addition to the final project, students will write a 5-7 page double-spaced paper. This is not meant to be a research paper; it is an essay that is to be developed in relation to the course texts. Therefore, you should not use any outside sources for your essay. The paper should extend students' critical engagement with the course materials and themes.

**Required Texts:**

All course readings will be available on TritonEd and a selection of films will be available on dvd for group viewings outside of class. Though you are not required to purchase texts for this course, you are required to print and bring course readings. **Please complete all course readings before each class to prepare for discussion and possible quizzes.**

\*Students will be responsible for gathering/purchasing/printing supplies for their final group projects.

**SCHEDULE:**

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**Week 1 – Introduction: Horror in the USA**

Mon:

1. Introductions –  
Syllabus Overview  
Genre and Representation  
Premises and Archetypes  
Tropes and Racial Coding  
Why Horror?: Genre, Aesthetic, Experience

Wed:

1. Wood, Robin. 'The American Nightmare: Horror in the 70s (1986) *Horror: The Film Reader*. Mark Jancovich, ed. New York: Routledge, 2002: 25-32.
2. Tudor, Andrew. "Why Horror? The Peculiar Pleasures of a Popular Genre." (1997) *Horror: The Film Reader*. Mark Jancovich, ed. New York: Routledge, 2002: 47-55.
3. Shohat, Ella and Robert Stam. "From Eurocentrism to Polycentrism" in *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. New York: Routledge, 2014: 13-49
4. Tuck, Eve and K. Wayne Yang. "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor." *Decolonization, Education & Society* 1.1 (2012): 1-23 (stop at pg23)
5. **In class viewing:** *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* (2012)  
(Presentation film options: *The Burrowers* (2008); *Ravenous* (1999)\*; *Exit Humanity* (2012); *12 Years a Slave* (2013); *American Horror Story: The Coven* (2013, eps 1, 9, 11, 12)\*)

**Week 2 – Dispossession and Horror: Slavery, “Voodoo,” and Zombies**

Mon:

1. Hartman, Saidiya V. “Innocent Amusements: The Stage of Sufferance” and “Redressing the Pained Body” in *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997: (selections) 17-23 and 49-59.
2. Shohat & Stam, “Stereotype, Realism, and the Struggle Over Representation” in *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. New York: Routledge, 2014. just the following sections:  
The Question of Realism, pp. 178-182  
Burden of representation, pp. 182-188  
Racial politics of casting, pp.189-191  
An Orchestration of Discourses, pp.214-215
3. Paravisini-Gebert, Lizbeth. “Colonial and postcolonial Gothic: The Caribbean.” *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed. Jerrold E. Hogle. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002: 229-257.
4. Cussans, John. “Voodoo Terror: (Mis)Representations of Vodou and Western Cultural Anxieties.” lecture presented at “Feels Like Voodoo Spirit—Haitian Art, Culture, Religion,” *The October Gallery*, (2014): <https://codeless88.wordpress.com/voodoo-terror/>
5. Paskin, Willa. “Has *American Horror Story* Taken Its Tastelessness Too Far?” *Slate’s Culture Blog* (Dec 2012):  
[http://www.slate.com/blogs/browbeat/2013/12/11/american\\_horror\\_story\\_racist\\_coven\\_episode\\_9\\_with\\_roots\\_and\\_oh\\_freedom\\_raises.html](http://www.slate.com/blogs/browbeat/2013/12/11/american_horror_story_racist_coven_episode_9_with_roots_and_oh_freedom_raises.html)
6. **In class viewing:** *American Horror Story: The Coven*, (2013) – select scenes
7. Presentation #1
8. Critical Film Analysis Due: \_\_\_\_ of 3

Wed:

1. Halberstam, Judith “Jack.” “Parasites and Perverts: An Introduction to Gothic Monstrosity,” in *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters*. Durham: Duke University Press (1995): 1-27.
2. Paravisini-Gebert, Lizbeth. “Women Possessed: Eroticism and Exoticism in the Representation of Woman as Zombie.” *Sacred Possessions: Vodou, Santería, Obeah and the Caribbean*. eds. Margarite Fernández Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997: 37-58.
3. Coleman, Robin R. Means. “Jungle Fever—A Horror Romance,” in *Horror Noire: Blacks in American Horror Films from the 1890s to Present*. New York: Routledge, 2011: 36-64.
4. Dayan, Joan “Colin.” “Dismemberment, Naming, and Divinity,” in *Haiti, History, and the Gods*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998: selection, 36-39.

5. Renda, Mary A. "The Commodification of Haiti" and "Murderous Women and Soulless Men," in *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation & the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001: 212-228.
6. **In class viewing:** *Night of the Living Dead* (1968)
7. **In class exercise:** From *White Zombie* to *The Walking Dead*, the racial and historical persistence of the zombie.  
(Presentation Options: *Serpent and the Rainbow* (1988); *The Skeleton Key* (2005); *Dawn of the Dead* (1978 or 2004); *The Walking Dead* (instructor will select episodes)\*; *White Zombie* (1932))

### **Week 3 – Racialized and Gendered Monstrosities**

Mon:

1. Clover, Carol. J. "Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film." (1987) *Horror: The Film Reader*. Mark Jancovich, ed. New York: Routledge, 2002: 77-89.
2. Halberstam, Judith "Jack." "Bodies that Splatter: Queers and Chain Saws" in *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1995: 138-160.
3. Spillers, Hortense. "Mama's Baby, Poppa's Maybe." *Black, White and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003: 203-229.
4. **In class viewing:** *Ethnic Notions* (1986)
5. **In class exercise:** Racial and Gendered Monstrosities in *Scream 2* (1997)
6. Presentation # 2
7. Critical Film Analysis Due: \_\_\_\_ of 3
8. **In class:** Storyboard drafting and peer review

Wed:

1. Snead, James. "Spectatorship and Capture in *King Kong*: The Guilty Look," in *White Screens/Black Images: Hollywood from the Dark Side*: 1-27.
2. Coleman, Robin R. Means. "Black is Back! Retribution and the Urban Terrain," in *Horror Noire: Blacks in American Horror Films from the 1890s to Present*. New York: Routledge, 2011: 169-197.
3. Keating, Robert and Barry Michael Cooper. "Atlanta Child Murders: SPIN's 1986 Feature, 'A Question of Justice.'" *Spin* (2015):  
<http://www.spin.com/featured/atlanta-child-murders-wayne-williams-1986-feature/>
4. **In class viewing:** *Candyman* (1992)  
(Presentation Options: *Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984); *People Under the Stairs* (1991); *Bones* (2001); *Tales from the Hood* (1995); *Scream 2* (1997))
5. **Storyboards due**

### **Week 4 - Where Nightmares Live – Spatializing Horror – Nationalism, Security, and Terror from Suburbia to the Border**

Mon:

1. Lowe, Lisa. *Immigrant Acts*, chapter TBD
2. *RACE: The Power of an Illusion*, ep. 3 “The House We Live in” [58min, available on Youtube]
3. Espiritu, Yen Le. “Toward a Critical Refugee Study: The Vietnamese Refugee Subject in US Scholarship.” *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 1.1-2 (2006): 410-433.
4. Doyle, Larry. “Medical Experts Seek Clues to ‘Nightmare Deaths’ that Strike Male Asian Refugees” *The LA Times* (1987)
5. King, Wayne. “Nightmares Suspected in Bed Deaths of 18 Laotians.” *The New York Times* (1981)
6. **In class viewing:** *Crush the Skull* (2015)  
(Presentation options: *Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984); *People Under the Stairs* (1991); *Afflicted* (2013))
7. Presentation #3
8. Critical Film Analysis Due: \_\_\_\_ of 3
9. **Scene Treatments Due**
10. **In class:** Pitch treatments to groups

Wed:

11. Deliofsky, Katarina and Tamari Kitossa, “Beyond Black and White: When Going Beyond May Take Us Out of Bounds.” *Journal of Black Studies* 44.2 (2013): 158-181.
12. Alemán, Jesse. “Days of the (Un)Dead: Vampires, Zombies, and Other Forms of Chicano/a Horror in Film.” *Latinos and Narrative Media: Participation and Portrayal*. ed, F. Aldama. New York: Palgrave Macmillan: 49-69.
13. **In class viewing:** *From Dusk till Dawn* (1996)

## **Week 5 – Potentialities of Horror, Queer Monstrosities**

Mon:

1. Shohat & Stam (2014). “Tropes of Empire” pp. 137-177. And “The linguistics of Domination” pp. 191-194.
2. Freeland, Cynthia A. “Feminist Frameworks for Horror Films.” In Noël Carroll and David Borwell, eds. *Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996: 195-218.
3. **In class viewing:** *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night* (2014)
4. Presentation #4
5. Critical Film Analysis Due: \_\_\_\_ of 3

Wed:

1. Project Presentations  
Final Projects Due in Class

Friday:

**Final Papers, Hard Copy Due by 3pm, and electronic copies due by 6pm**

**Majoring or Minor in Ethnic Studies**

Many students take an Ethnic Studies course because the topic is of great interest or because of a need to fulfill a college general education requirement. Often students have taken many ETHN courses out of interest, yet do not realize how close they are to a major, a minor, or even a double major. An Ethnic Studies major is excellent preparation for a career in law, education, medicine, public health, social work, counseling, public policy, and many other careers. If you would like information about the Ethnic Studies major or minor, please contact:

Daisy Rodríguez, Ethnic Studies Department Undergraduate Advisor

858-534-3277 or [d1rodriguez@ucsd.edu](mailto:d1rodriguez@ucsd.edu) or visit [www.ethnicstudies.ucsd.edu](http://www.ethnicstudies.ucsd.edu)