

# The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

## Subject Description Form

Please read the notes at the end of the table carefully before completing the form.

<b>Subject Code</b>	ELC1C05
<b>Subject Title</b>	<b>Horror in English Literature and Film</b>
<b>Credit Value</b>	3
<b>Level</b>	1
<b>Pre-requisite / Co-requisite/ Exclusion</b>	Nil
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>Horror fiction (and later films and computer games) have a long history and have become an established study area in universities in the UK and the USA. By nature non-realist and non-elitist, horror has captured a large audience and has morphed and evolved in many surprising and striking ways.</p> <p>The genre of horror examines relations between the individual and extreme situations.. Horror reflects the changing fears and challenges societies and cultures have faced over time as well as innate, eternal and instinctual fears inherent in the human experience.</p> <p>During this course you will enhance your</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Knowledge of history, cultures and world views</b> Lectures will introduce historical and cultural dimensions in horror. You will consider art as an enquiry into the human condition, the meaning of life and how humans view themselves in relation to each other, the natural world and the spiritual world.</li><li>• <b>Literacy and expression</b> You will receive feedback and guidelines to help you develop your communication skills through writing, presenting, analyzing and discussing the many facets of the horror genre.</li><li>• <b>Higher-order thinking</b> You will practice and develop critical analysis of storytelling, writing, image, direction, symbolism, film technique and more</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Life-long learning</b> (incorporating learning to learn activities) You will develop critical thinking, problem-solving, analytical approaches and skills that have wide and lifelong applications.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Intended Learning Outcomes</b> (Note 1)</p>	<p>Upon completion of the subject, you will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>explore and understand horror writings and films in terms of history, culture, psychology and world views.</li> <li>read and understand important horror works in English.</li> <li>write and develop an extensive analytical essay on your chosen aspect</li> <li>research and critically read horror fiction and film analysis and commentary.</li> <li>deliver a small group presentation on your chosen horror works</li> </ol> <p><i>Outcome a) will improve understanding of the relevance of history, cultures and development through a number of approaches, including biographical, religious and political approaches. (Bloom's taxonomy: Analysis level).</i></p> <p><i>Outcome b) will enhance literacy by requiring extensive reading of horror works. There will be instruction on reading strategies relevant to the horror tale, for instance, ways of decoding vocabulary relevant to historical settings. (Bloom's taxonomy: Comprehension level).</i></p> <p><i>Outcome c) will develop the writing aspects of literacy, by requiring students to individually research and note, plan and write extensively, using appropriate organization, grammar and academic style on a selection of the texts studied.</i></p> <p><i>Outcome d) will further your research practice: this will entail both literacy and higher-order thinking: you will demonstrate and justify your views on the texts and critical accounts of the texts, particularly with reference to actual textual wordings (Bloom's Application category).</i></p> <p><i>Outcome e) will involve you in giving an oral presentation to demonstrate the products of your learning to learn activities from the EDC website. (See Outcome c above).</i></p>

## Subject Synopsis/ Indicative Syllabus

(Note 2)

### Synopsis

This subject introduces how horror reflects cultures, psychology, spiritualism, history, social development and world views. It will cover the reasons for identifying horror as a relevant aspect of literature and art and the value of studying it establishing the horror sub-genre as an enquiry in to the human condition and its importance beyond mere entertainment.

Characteristic features of horror as a sub-genre will be examined, notably its explorations of the individual and societal relationships with fear, and the questions raised about the justifications of such fear in terms of the institutional (e.g. political, cultural or religious) status quo. Study methodologies and critical theories such as thematic, feminist, Freudian will be introduced and applied. Symbolism, psychology, artistic techniques, common themes, clichés, sub genres and the effects of sound and image will be explored.

You will read short stories and excerpts from literature as well as watch relevant films and clips to prepare for two hour lectures, followed by small group tutorials, with input, discussion, activities and mini-presentations on the themes of the session.

In the assessments you will:

- write a book review on a horror story of your choice approved by your tutor
- deliver a group presentation on a chosen horror theme, technique(s) sub-genre, author/director or collection of horror works approved by your tutor
- produce an out of class extended essay on your chosen horror theme, technique(s), sub-genre, author/director or collection of horror works approved by your tutor. This extended writing will fulfill the Writing Requirement.

### Indicative Syllabus

*Topics:* include: social and gender based entrapment and constraint; abuses of religion; revenge; cannibalism; vampirism; science out of human control; comedy horror and black humour; competition and retaliation from non-human species; madness; pandemics and apocalyptic scenarios.

**Week 1: Course Overview:** An introduction to the course and horror sub-genres and themes.

**Week 2: Serial Killer and Slasher Horror:** techniques, appeal and effects with exploration of the themes of individualism, power, madness, cannibalism, incest and dysfunctional families.

Week 3: **Zombie Horror:** historical development and changing reflections of societal, cultural and elemental human fears. Themes explored include slavery, the afterlife, possession and magic, totalitarianism, individualism versus conformism, pandemics, survivalism and the apocalypse.

Week 4: **Modern Horror's American Roots:** how Poe and Lovecraft's short stories introduced new and enduringly influential perspectives on horror such as fears of unknown powers of nature ('A descent into the maelstrom', 'MS found in a bottle'), from revenge (The cask of Amontillado') psychological tortures ('The Pit and the Pendulum') ancient knowledge and witchcraft (Dreams in the Witch House)

Week 5: **Science out of Control:** how horror reflects technological and scientific change and advances with a focus on Robert Louis Stevenson's Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. Additional themes explored include psychological duality, individual and group morality, scientific advances versus religious ethics, narrative voice, symbolism and foreshadowing.

Week 6: **Madness, Serial Killers and Possession:** explored through an analysis of Steven King's 'The Shining'. Cinematic horror techniques are analysed as well as narrative structure.

Week 7: **Vampire Horror:** from ancient folk tales to Bram Stoker and Anne Rice Dracula to Buffy. Themes include sexual repression, totalitarianism, sin and physical/spiritual pollution, mortality and immortality as well as Nietzsche's theories of the Ubermensch. Comparisons of

Week 8: **Comedy Horror:** gallows and black humour from Wilde's 'The Canterville Ghost' to 'Shaun of the Dead' is explored through discussion of the purpose of satire and parody as tools for social commentary and how formatted and clichéd horror techniques, themes and motifs can be highlighted and exaggerated.

Week 9: **Sci-fi Horror:** How horror reflects modernity is investigated through its origins in the works of HP Lovecraft (At the mountains of Madness) and Shelley (Frankenstein) to modern classics such as Alien and Monsters. Themes include fear of the unknown, the insignificance of Earth/mankind, artificial and non-human intelligence, technology and capitalism versus morality. Also explored will be audio and image effects.

	<p>Week10: <b>Supernatural Horror:</b> madness, hauntings, possession and spiritualism are explored through classic horror works The Omen, Poltergeist, the Ring. Music and cinematic techniques as well as reflections on culture, religion and society are investigated.</p> <p>Week 11: In-class writing: Assignment 1: <b>Book reviews</b></p> <p>Week 12: Assignment 2: <b>Oral presentations</b> (groups)</p> <p>Week 13: Assignment 2: <b>Oral presentations</b> (groups) Assignment 3: <b>Extensive Writing</b></p>
<p><b>Teaching/Learning Methodology</b> <i>(Note 3)</i></p>	<p>Students will develop and use critical theories and analytical skills for deep study of literature and art through activities conducted in lectures, seminars and tutorials. Students will be exposed to and assess a range of critical approaches and will be encouraged to explain the reasons for adopting their chosen methods.</p> <p>In both lectures and tutorials, a mixed approach will include instruction, interaction, short presentations and discussions, in-class quizzes and guided discovery activities.</p>

<b>Assessment Methods in Alignment with Intended Learning Outcomes</b> <i>(Note 4)</i>	Specific assessment methods/tasks	% weighting	Intended subject learning outcomes to be assessed (Please tick as appropriate)				
			a	b	c	d	e
	1. Oral presentation	30%	√	√		√	√
	2. Book report Includes the Reading Requirement	30%	√	√			
	3. Extensive Writing Includes the Writing Requirement	40%			√		
Total	100 %						
<p>Explanation of the appropriateness of the assessment methods in assessing the intended learning outcomes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The oral presentation will facilitate assessment of the mastery of history, cultures and world view, indicate the degree of understanding of texts and show how far research has been conducted and effectively used.</li> <li>2. The book report will reveal to what extent the reading of the three major texts has been accomplished and how far students have produced a relevant, in-depth appraisal of the works and their significance.</li> <li>3. The extensive writing will provide a lengthy account of selected horror writings and the quality of content, organization and language will be evident.</li> </ol>							
<b>Student Study Effort Expected</b>	Class contact:						
	▪ class work		33Hrs.				
	▪ assessments		6Hrs.				
	Other student study effort:						
	▪ outside class work		78Hrs.				
	Total student study effort		117Hrs.				

**Reading List and  
References**

Crain, C. (ed.) (2002). *Wieland, or, The transformation: an American tale and other stories*, Charles Brockden Brown. New York: Modern Library.

Day, W. (1985). *In the circles of fear and desire: a study of Gothic fantasy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Luckhurst, R. (ed.) *Robert Louis Stevenson: Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and other tales*. Oxford: Oxford World's Classics.

Morrow, P. & McGrath, P. (eds.) (1991). *The New Gothic: a collection of contemporary Gothic fiction*. London: Pan Books.

Oates, J.C. (1996). *First love: a Gothic tale*. New Jersey: The Ecco Press.

Punter, D. (ed.) (2012). *A new companion to the Gothic*. Blackwell Reference Online: Wiley-Blackwell

Richetti, J. (ed.) (1996). *The Cambridge companion to the eighteenth-century novel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sage, V. & Lloyd Smith, A. (eds.) (1996). *Modern gothic: a reader*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Tracy, R. (ed.) (1999). *Sheridan Le Fanu: In a Glass Darkly*. Oxford: Oxford World's Classics.

Vieira, M. (2003). *Hollywood horror: from gothic to cosmic*. New York: Abrams.