

# *English 180F/280F: Monster Theory*

*Beware that, when fighting monsters, you yourself do not become a monster... for when you gaze long into the abyss, the abyss gazes also into you.* Friedrich Nietzsche

## **Instructor Information**

Instructor: Dr. Diane Cady  
Email: [dcady@mills.edu](mailto:dcady@mills.edu)

Office: MH 314  
Phone: (510) 430-2218

## **Basic Course Information**

Room: MH 135  
Prerequisite (required): English 1

Meetings: Tuesdays, 6:45-9:15  
Prerequisite (recommended):  
English 10

## **Office Hours**

Mondays, 11-12:30; Tuesdays 5:30-6:30; Wednesdays 10-11 & by appt

- You can sign up for office hours on my google calendar at <https://calendar.google.com/calendar/selfsched?sstoken=UUJxcHFtUFh0cm9YfGRlZmF1bHR8NGQ0NjU4OTI0M2MwYWYxYzRIYTU2YzVkNGM0YzFiOTI>

If you'd like to make an appointment outside of regular office hours, please email me.

Note that the office hours are in 15 minute increments, but feel free to sign up for more than 15 minutes if you'd like. If you're noticing some strange times showing up (like in the middle of the night) make sure that your google calendar is set for PST. And if you cannot make your appointment for any reason, please cancel through the google calendar to make that time available for someone else.

## **Course Description:**

Why did early modern explorers genuinely believe that they saw monsters in the Americas? How did zombies, which began as a symbol of oppressed labor in Haiti, become a symbol of the supposed "dangers" of immigration in the United States? What can a story about a werewolf tell us about the demands of compulsory heterosexuality? In this class, we'll examine a wide range of texts—from medieval werewolf stories and early modern travel narratives to contemporary graphic novels and films—to explore what monsters can tell us about the fears, fantasies and preoccupations of the historical moments from which they emerge and reemerge. If Isidore of Seville is right that the word "monster" comes from the Latin, "monstrum," which means an omen or warning, what do monsters portend? What do they say about others and perhaps more accurately ourselves? Topics we will discuss include sexuality, colonialism and invasion, race, biopolitics, slavery, immigration, sexuality, disease, exploration, industrialization and capitalism, and gender.

**Learning Goals and Criteria:** Please find a list of the course’s learning goals and criteria for those goals at the end of the syllabus. This information can also be found at:

[https://inside.mills.edu/academics/undergraduate/eng/courses/course\\_description.php?courseid=eng180f#](https://inside.mills.edu/academics/undergraduate/eng/courses/course_description.php?courseid=eng180f#)

**Required Texts (all available at the campus bookstore):**

Ferris, Emil. *My Favorite Thing is Monsters*. Vol I. Seattle: Fantagraphics, 2017. ISBN 978-1606999592

Le Fanu, Joseph Sheridan. *Carmilla*. Ed. Kathleen Costello-Sullivan. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse UP, 2013. ISBN 978-0815633112.

Shakespeare, William. *The Tempest*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Ed. Gerald Graff and James Phelan. Bedford; St. Martin’s, 2015. ISBN 978-0312457525

Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Ed. Johanna M. Smith. Boston; New York: Bedford; St. Martin’s, 2016. ISBN 978-0312463182

Stoker, Bram. *Dracula*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Ed. John Paul Riqueline. Boston; New York: Bedford; St. Martin’s, 2015. ISBN 978-1457619328.

Additional texts will be available on Blackboard or on reserve.

**Recommended Texts:** *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research*. 8<sup>th</sup> Edition. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2016. ISBN 9781603292627. (Especially handy if you are an English major. Note that all work should follow MLA style and formatting).

**Course Expectations and Assignments:**

**Writing Responses:** Writing often is the best way to figure out what you think about a text and the synergies and conversations happening between texts. Over the course of the semester you will write 4, 3-3.5 page response papers. What you write about is completely up to you, and should come from your interests and inspirations. You are free to write on the literary texts or on the secondary readings. The only requirements that I have is that 1) you make a clear claim that is interesting and provocative and that is somehow connected to larger issues in the text or that we’ve been discussing in class; 2) you use textual evidence and analysis to support the claim you are making (that is, you show me what in the text led you to your conclusions); 3) the response is relatively free of grammatical and syntactical errors and 4) that you follow MLA formatting and style guidelines. (See the grading rubric at the end of the syllabus for how I will be evaluating these response papers).

Given that these papers are so short, there is no need for a formal introduction or conclusion. Just jump right into your claim. If you find that you need something to get you started, use this formulation: “In this response paper I claim that…” and then state your argument in two sentences or less.

Since you only need to write 4 response papers, you don't need to write every week. You can choose which weeks to write based on your interests and/or your schedule. For example, if you know that you are going to have a busy end of the semester, you might find it easier to frontload some of this writing. Or, if you are burning to write about *Dracula*, you might want to reserve a response or two for the weeks we discuss that text.

The only caveat is that you **need to have at least one paper done by 2/6, two by 3/6, three by 4/3, and four by 4/24**. Those deadlines ensure you aren't scrambling to write four responses at the end of a busy semester.

All written work should be typed, double-spaced, and written in Times Roman 12 or a similar font and the paper format should follow MLA guidelines. I've ordered copies of the MLA Handbook for our class. If you're an English major and you do not yet own a copy, I highly recommend purchasing one—you won't regret it! (If you would like more information on MLA guidelines, including how to format your papers and properly cite outside sources, see the helpful tips at: [http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/p04\\_c08\\_s2.html](http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/p04_c08_s2.html) ).

**Important Note:** These responses are intended to get you writing and thinking about the texts we'll be discussing on a particular day. Therefore, if you choose to write on a particular text listed on a particular day, you must be in class the day the response paper is due. You cannot email the response to me after class if you are not in class that day or forgot to print it out beforehand.

**Longer Paper:** Everyone will write a longer paper at the end of the semester inspired by (even if that inspiration is somewhat loose) one of their response papers.

Undergraduate will write an 8-10 page paper. Graduate students will write an 18-20 page paper, which makes use of secondary scholarship on the text or issue they are exploring.

I will give more guidelines for the final paper after spring break. A description of what you're writing on and (in the case of graduate students, the sources you're using) will be due on 4/17. I will give you instructions on what that prospectus should look like as we get closer to the due date.

**Please note:** If you have not written a longer paper before, don't worry: I am here to help you with that process. I encourage you to come speak to me so that I can give you some tips on how to approach this project.

**Reflective Paper:** It is always good to take stock at the end of the semester and reflect on one's intellectual work. The reflective paper, due the last day of class, will ask you to do that. It will be short (2 pages) and can take many different forms. I'll pass out some questions at the end of the semester to serve as a catalyst.

Participation and Attendance: Participation involves the active engagement in class discussion. Preparation for class (having completed the reading, having your book and the readings with you, etc.), as well as actively and respectfully listening to others, are also part of the participation grade.

You should come to class ready to discuss what you've read. Sometimes I will give you specific questions to think about as you read. You should also come to class with a question or idea generated by the texts we're reading and/or a passage or two that you would like the class to close read.

Please note that attendance is expected and required. You're allowed one absence no questions asked, which constitutes a week of the course. Please use this absence thoughtfully since each subsequent absence (**including excused absences**) may result in your attendance and participation grade dropping by one half a grade. For example, if you have a B+ in attendance and participation and miss three classes, your attendance grade would be lowered to a B-.

Grades will be determined as follows:

Response papers	35%
Paper Proposal:	10%
Final Paper:	30%
Reflective Paper:	10%
Attendance and Participation:	15%

### **The LAB and The Writing Center**

The Mills LAB (or [Center for Learning, Advisement, and Balance](#)) is housed on the first floor of Carnegie Hall and offers a variety of services to support students for academic success. The Writing Center, staffed by helpful graduate and undergraduate students approved by the Mills English department, provides free tutorial sessions in which you may receive help with a paper at any stage of the writing process from brainstorming ideas to working with thesis development and organization. For further information and/or to make an appointment, visit the [Writing Center online](#).

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** If you anticipate issues related to the format or requirements of the course, please meet with me. I would like us to discuss ways to ensure your full participation in the course. If you determine that formal, disability-related accommodations are necessary, it is important that you register with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities so that accommodations can be arranged for this course and your future classes here at Mills. Please call 430-3241 for an appointment or email [sass@mills.edu](mailto:sass@mills.edu). Go to [https://inside.mills.edu/student\\_services/disability\\_services/index.php](https://inside.mills.edu/student_services/disability_services/index.php) for a description of their services. I am committed to making sure that this class meets everyone's needs and learning styles. Please feel free to share with me any insights you have about how we can improve the class's pedagogy.

**Gender Identities:** I strive not to make assumptions about individuals' gender identities. Please let me know if there is a name other than the one listed on the registration roster that you wish to be known by, or if you wish to be referred to by a particular set of pronouns. I will honor that request in all interactions inside and outside the classroom and will ensure that the class does as well.

**A Special Note:** The study of monsters is an ugly business--perhaps not for the reasons we might imagine initially. This class will cover a lot of challenging topics, including racial, religious and sexual prejudice, national and sexual violence, colonialism, slavery, disease and biopolitics, to name a few. I will try to alert you to images and language that may be particularly triggering. I ask that we all be aware of the difficulty of this material and sensitive to the challenges that it presents for many of us. While the material can be difficult—indeed, because it is difficult—I feel strongly that it is important to critically engage with it. However, if you feel that this is not a good semester for you to do this work, please know that I completely support and honor that decision. Please feel free to come see me if you have questions or concerns about this issue or if I can provide you with further information about the nature of the texts we'll be reading.

### **Some Procedural Matters**

Most of this is commonsense. But, for the record:

- This classroom is a safe space for the exchange of ideas. You should know that I take intellectual freedom quite seriously and that I want to hear your ideas and opinions. Even if I do not agree with what you say, I will strive to listen to you respectfully. I expect everyone to afford each other the same courtesy.
- If you must or choose to miss class, you are responsible for what you missed. You should arrange to get notes and/or assignments from a friend or classmate. Work due on a day you missed class cannot be turned in during the next class unless you've cleared it with me first.
- Plagiarism is, of course, a serious offense. While I doubt anyone in this class would plagiarize, it is important that I'm clear to you about my policy. My policy is to assign an "F" to the plagiarized assignment and hand the matter over to the college judicial officer for review. Please keep in mind that plagiarism is as much about ideas as it is about words. That is, while copying words is plagiarism, words are themselves only a vehicle through which ideas are communicated. Thus, altering slightly (or even significantly) another person's words can constitute plagiarism if you don't give an author credit for his or her ideas. Other forms of plagiarism might include not crediting a text or website for information you obtain and/or making use of translations without proper citation. If at any point in the semester you have questions regarding what constitutes plagiarism, please don't hesitate to come and see me.

### **Reading Schedule**

Please bring your syllabus with you to class since we'll probably make adjustments throughout the semester.

BB= Blackboard (under content, "readings" organized alphabetically by author's last name)

Ebrary=Electronic book, available through Mills Library

OJ= Online journal, available through Mills Library

1/23 **WEEK ONE:** Introduction to the class and monster theory

**READ:** Ebrary Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses) from *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (Minnesota UP, 1996), pages 3-25.

**BB** Mittman, "The Impact of Monsters" from *The Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous*, edited by Asa Simon Mittman and Peter Dendle, (Ashgate, 2012).

**BB** Friedman, "The Plinian Races" from *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Syracuse UP, 2000).

Required for graduate students, optional for undergrads:

"Are the 'monstrous races' races?" *postmedieval* 6.1 (Spring 2016): 36-51.

1/30 **WEEK TWO:** *The Tempest*

**READ:** *The Tempest*, ACTS 1-3

In our edition of the *Tempest*: "Images of Caliban," pp. 161-168; Takaki, "The 'Tempest' in the Wilderness," pp. 180-212.

2/6 **WEEK THREE:** Continued discussion of the *Tempest*

**DUE:** by today you should have turned in at least 1 response paper

**READ:** *Tempest*, ACTS 4-5

In our edition of *The Tempest*: Brown, "'This thing of darkness I Acknowledge Mine': *The Tempest* and the Discourse of Colonialism," pp. 268-292; Willis, "Shakespeare's *Tempest* and the Discourse of Colonialism," pp. 321-333

Required for graduate students, optional for undergrads:

Bhabha, "Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree outside Delhi, May 1817." *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Autumn, 1985), pp. 144-165. Available at [http://art.yale.edu/file\\_columns/0000/7396/signswonders\\_bhabha.pdf](http://art.yale.edu/file_columns/0000/7396/signswonders_bhabha.pdf)

2/13 **WEEK FOUR:** *Frankenstein*

**READ:** *Frankenstein*, 19-189

In our edition of *Frankenstein*, "Frankenstein and Political Cartoons," pp.249-252

2/27 **WEEK FIVE:** Continued discussion of *Frankenstein*

\*Note: we will also be watching in class and discussing Edison Studio's silent film, *Frankenstein* (1910). If you'd like to watch it before class, you can find it on YOUTUBE at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TrbJehwzzD0>

**READ:** the articles below, all of which are in our edition of *Frankenstein*. **NOTE:** each article is preceded by a brief introduction to the critical approach the article takes (Psychoanalysis, Feminism, Postcolonial Criticism). I would recommend these introductions to you if you are new to literary criticism or would like a pithy review.

Collins, "The Monster and the Maternal Thing: Mary Shelley's Critique of Ideology," pp. 323-339.

Smith (Johanna M), "'Cooped Up' with 'Sad Trash': Domesticity and the Sciences in *Frankenstein*," pp. 360-380.

Smith (Lloyd Allen), "'This Thing of Darkness: Racial Discourse in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*," pp. 547-568.

Required for graduate students, optional for undergrads:

**BB** Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage." *GLQ* 1 (1994).

3/6 **WEEK SIX:** *Dracula*

**DUE:** By today you should have turned in at least 2 response papers

**READ:** *Dracula*, pp. 28-291

"Ireland and the Wider Empire," pp. 377-381 from our edition of *Dracula*

3/13 **WEEK SEVEN:** Continued discussion of *Dracula*

**READ:** *Dracula*, 291-371

**BB** Halberstram, "Technologies of Monstrosity: Bram Stoker's *Dracula*

Arata—"The Occidental Tourist" *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonialism

<http://vicnovel.qwriting.qc.cuny.edu/files/2012/01/Arata.pdf>

Eltis, "Corruption of the Blood and Degeneration of the Race: *Dracula* and Policing the Borders of Gender," pp. 565-580 in our edition of *Dracula*

Required for graduate students, optional for undergrads:

Valente, "Stoker's Vampire and the Vicissitudes of Biopower," 649-666 in our edition of *Dracula*.

3/20 **WEEK EIGHT:** Spring Break—Enjoy!!!

3/27 **WEEK NINE:** *Carmilla*

**READ:** *Carmilla*

Stoker, "Dracula's Guest" (1914), pp. 390-402 from our edition of *Dracula*

**BB:** 'Haefele-Thomas, "One does things abroad that one would not dream of doing in England': Miscegenation and Queer Female Vampirism in J. Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* and Florence Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire*"

Required for graduate students, optional for undergrads:

**BB** Saler and Ziegler, "*Dracula and Carmilla: Monsters and the Mind*"

4/3 **WEEK TEN** Zombies, Part I

**DUE:** By today you should have turned in at least 3 response papers

**NOTE:** We will watch in class and discuss the movie *I Walked with a Zombi* (1943).

We will also view a scene from the movie, *White Zombie* (1931)

**READ: BB** Wade, "The Haitian Zombie"

**BB** Hurbon, Laennec. "American Fantasy and Haitian Vodou"

4/10 **WEEK ELEVEN** Zombies, Part II

**NOTE:** We will also watch clips from *Dawn of the Dead* (Romero's second zombie film, 1978) and *World War Z* (2013)

**READ:** Come to class having watched at least once Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968). The film is available on Amazon Prime and may also be available on other platforms (it is a classic). I'll try to track down a copy to place on reserve, too. (Be sure to watch the original, black and white, 1968 version, vs. a remake).

**BB** McAlister, "Slaves, Cannibals, and Infected Hyper-Whites: The Race and Religion of Zombies"

**BB** Stratton, "Trouble with Zombies: Muselmänner, Bare Life and Displaced People"

Bailey, "Memory, Place and the Mall: George Romero and Consumerism"

[https://www.jstor.org/stable/23416337?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/23416337?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)

4/17 **WEEK TWELVE** Zombies, Part III (and werewolves!)

**READ:** Come to class having watched the movie *Get Out* (2017). (You can find this movie on a number of platforms. I will also try to track down a copy to place on reserve).

**BB** Ovid, "Lycaeon"

**BB** Marie de France, *Bisclavret*

Additional Reading TBA

4/24 **WEEK THIRTEEN**

**DUE:** by today you should have all 4 response papers in.

**READ:** BB Freud, "The Wolf Man"

Ferris, *My Favorite thing is Monsters*, up to the entry "March '68 Horrific: Hell  
Wenches of the Inferno.

Additional Reading TBA

5/1 *WEEK FOURTEEN*

**READ:** Remainder of MFTIM

Final thoughts/reflection