

Fall 2019
M 6-8:50pm (CAC 333)
Th 2-2:50pm (CAC 333)

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COMM 363: Topics in Film: Haunted Cinema

Course Description

The relationship between media technologies and ghosts, as many scholars have pointed out, can be traced back to cinema's earliest days. Since the first apocryphal moment when audiences of the Lumière brothers' *Arrival of a Train at la Ciotat* (allegedly) confused the play of shadow and light for a real train on the screen, film has traded in the uncanny. And even earlier, proto-cinematic entertainment like the Phantasmagoria was associated with its ability to make the spirit world "visible," as was, of course, photography—spirit photographers insured that the link between media technologies and death was never far from people's minds. The presence of ghosts in cinema has persisted ever since, and although the relationship cinema has to the spirit world has manifested in a number of different ways, filmmakers' fascination with medium's ability to replay a simulacrum of life long after it's gone hasn't abated. This class will explore the ghostliness of cinema and the myriad issues associated with it:

- Death, mourning, melancholy, and memorialization, on an individual and a public scale
- How traces of film history appear within narratives and through the ontology of the medium itself
- Traces of the past and "stains" on reality: the visualization of memory/affect and challenges to "official" history
- Haunted spaces and the disruption of the norm: houses, portals, and burial grounds
- Early special effects: doubling, disappearance, and transparency
- Uncanny objects: animation, commodity fetishism, and CGI
- Ghost-busting: policing the boundaries between this world and the next
- The relationship between children and the spirit world: children in western (especially Latin American) and non-western (especially Japanese) horror/animation
- Haunted media: possessed televisions, videotapes, and communication with the dead

Course Goals

By the end of this course, students should:

- Understand, identify, and contextualize social, political, cultural, technological, historical, and economic factors that shape the genre of haunted cinema.
- Identify and analyze the aesthetic (formal and stylistic), narrative, and thematic characteristics of haunted cinema.
- Develop critical reading and writing skills by engaging with a variety of readings, screenings, and class discussions.

Requirements (total of 100 points)

Participation/attendance	15 points
Weekly journals (total of 5, 5 points each)	25 points
Midterm paper	25 points
Final paper	35 points

Grading Scale

A: 94-100	B-: 80-83	D+: 67-69
A-: 90-93	C+: 77-79	D: 64-66
B+: 87-89	C: 74-76	F: 0-63
B: 84-86	C-: 70-73	

Readings and Weekly Journal Assignments

Readings: All readings will be posted on Canvas, and should be completed by class time on the day they are listed. Each week, a question for your journal assignment will be available on Canvas; this question might address the readings, the screenings, or something we've discussed in class. During the semester, you are expected to turn in **FIVE** journal responses of 300-400 words each; these will be due to me in Canvas on Thursdays at 2pm.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is mandatory, and will be taken at the beginning of class. **If you are late, it is your responsibility to come up and make sure I've marked you down as present.** If you need to miss class for an emergency, let me know *in advance*. Absences will be excused on a case-by-case basis. You are allowed one unexcused absence, then after that each unexcused absence reduces your participation grade by a point.

Midterm & Final papers

Guidelines for the midterm paper will be handed out and discussed in more detail on week 3. Your final research paper will be due during our final exam period. More details on the final paper will be provided after the midterm.

Papers must be:

Typed, and in 12-point font, double-spaced, pages numbered, and stapled. Late papers drop by 10% for each 24 hours it's late, whether it's the weekend or a weekday. Extensions may be granted on a case-by-case basis for personal emergencies, but **ONLY** if you ask me **IN ADVANCE** of the actual due date. This goes for the weekly journal assignments, as well.

Class Environment

Students are expected to contribute to a respectful, productive learning environment. This includes being on time, being attentive, participating in class discussions, and being nice to everyone, regardless of their views. Rest assured that it's pretty easy to tell whether a student is actually taking notes on a laptop or playing Fortnite. If you're going to use a laptop or tablet, please use it for class purposes, and please switch cell phones to silent. Also, no texting in class, please. Any violation of the above will impact your grade.

Guidelines for Assessing Participation Grades

- Tardiness; degree and frequency
- Not just frequency, but quality of comments. Is it evident that the student has done the readings and engaged with the material?
- Consideration and respect for other students and their points of view
- Engagement with the class (i.e., sleeping or excessive talking to others while someone has the floor)
- Technology use: disrespectful or reasonable?

Disability Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal law requiring educational institutions to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information about UWSP's policies, check here: <http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/ADA/rightsADAPolicyInfo.pdf> If you require classroom and/or exam accommodations, please register with the Disability and Assistive Technology Center and then contact me at the beginning of the course. I am happy to help in any way that I can. For more information, please visit the Disability and Assistive Technology Center, located on the 6th floor of the Learning Resource Center (the Library). You can also find more information here: <http://www4.uwsp.edu/special/disability/>

Statement of Academic Integrity

UW-Stevens Point values a safe, honest, respectful, and inviting learning environment. In order to ensure that each student has the opportunity to succeed, we have developed a set of expectations for all students and instructors. This set of expectations is known as the Rights and Responsibilities document, and it is intended to help establish a positive living and learning environment at UWSP. Click here for more information: <http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Pages/rightsandresponsibilities.aspx>

Academic integrity is central to the mission of higher education in general and UWSP in particular. Academic dishonesty (cheating, plagiarism, etc.) is taken very seriously. Don't do it! The minimum penalty for a violation of academic integrity is a failure (zero) for the assignment. For more information, see the UWSP "Student Academic Standards and Disciplinary Procedures" section of the Rights and Responsibilities document, Chapter 14, which can be accessed here: <http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/SRR-2010/rightsChap14.pdf>

Also: if you use Wikipedia, or anything online, you have to CITE IT. I don't care whether you use MLA or Chicago style citations, but please be consistent. When in doubt, CITE THE SOURCE. Consequences for plagiarism are severe: again, see the above link to your Rights and Responsibilities document.

Terms of Enrollment

This syllabus is a contract. By taking this class, you agree to the policies listed here. I reserve the right to change the syllabus, but only within reason, and with timely notification to students.

Course Schedule

Week One: Do You Believe in Ghosts?

Thursday, 9/5: Introductions



Week Two: The Evanescent and the Abject: Introduction to Hauntings Onscreen

Monday, 9/9: Screening: *Poltergeist* (Hooper, 1982, 114m)

Thursday, 9/12 Discussion section meets

Readings: Leeder, *The Fall of the House of Meaning: Between Static and Slime in Poltergeist*
Kellner, "Poltergeist: Suburban Ideology"



Week Three: Spiritualism, the Phantasmagoria, and Ghosts at the Dawn of Cinema

Monday, 9/16: Short films TBA

Thursday, 9/19 Discussion section meets

Readings: Gunning, "Phantom Images and Modern Manifestations"
Gorky, "Lumière"
Castle, "Phantasmagoria and the Metaphorics of Modern Reverie" (OPTIONAL)
Cholodenko, "The Crypt, the Haunted House, of Cinema" (OPTIONAL)
Todorov, Tzvetan. "Definition of the Fantastic" (OPTIONAL)



Week Four: Old Dark Houses and the Uncanny

Monday, 9/23: Screening: *The Cat and the Canary* (Leni, 1927, 82m)

Thursday, 9/26 Discussion section meets

Readings: Natale, "Specters of the Mind: Ghosts, Illusion, and Exposure in Paul Leni's *The Cat and the Canary*

Horak, "Sauerkraut & Sausages with a Little Goulash: Germans in Hollywood, 1927"

Week Five: Postwar Hauntings, Part 1

Monday, 9/30: Screening: *Dead of Night* (Ealing, 1945, 102m) or *The Innocents* (Clayton, 1961, 100m)

Thursday, 10/3 Discussion section meets

Readings: Tibbetts, "The Old Dark House"

Ruffles, "A Thematic Approach to Cinematic Ghosts"

Week Six: Postwar Hauntings, Part 2

Monday, 10/7: Screening: *13 Ghosts* (Castle, 1960, 85 min)

Thursday, 10/10 Discussion section meets

Readings: Clepper, "Death by Fright"

Baird, "The Startle Effect" (OPTIONAL)

Week Seven: Haunted Houses, Possessions, and Literary Pedigrees

Monday, 10/14 Screening: *The Haunting* (Wise, 1963, 114m)

Thursday, 10/17 **Guests for Comm Week**; Discussion section meets

Readings: Curtis, "The Haunted House"

Keeseey, "*The Haunting* and the Power of Suggestion"

White, "Female Spectator, Lesbian Specter: *The Haunting*"

Jackson, *The Haunting of Hill House* (OPTIONAL)

Week Eight: The Shining/Room 237

Monday, 10/21 Screening: *The Shining* (Kubrick, 1980, 144m)

Thursday, 10/24 Discussion section meets

Readings: Leibowitz and Jeffress, "The Shining"

Mancel, "What About Jack?"

Smith, "Real Horrorshow" (OPTIONAL)

*** Required outside screening: <i>Room 237</i> (Rodney Ascher, 2012, on Swank)

Week Nine: Japanese Horror

Monday, 10/28 Screening: *House* (Obayashi, 1977, 88m)

Thursday, 10/31 Discussion section meets

Readings: Stephens, “*House: The Housemaidens*”
McRoy, “Spectral Reminders and Transcultural Hauntings”
Lury, *The Child in Film*, “Hide and Seek” (OPTIONAL)

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Week Ten: Animated Ghosts

Monday, 11/4 Screening: *Spirited Away* (Miyazaki, 2001, 124m)

Thursday, 11/7 Discussion section meets

Readings: Boyd and Nishimura, “Shinto Perspectives in Miyazaki’s Anime Film ‘Spirited Away,’”
Reider, “*Spirited Away: Film of the Fantastic and Evolving Japanese Folk Symbols*”

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Week Eleven: The Legacy of the Past, Part I: War and Other Traumas

Monday, 11/11 Screening: *The Devil’s Backbone* (del Toro, 2001, 107m)

Thursday, 11/14 Discussion section meets

Readings: Ellis and Sanchez-Arce, “The Unquiet Dead”
Powell, *Derrida for Beginners*, “Specters of Marx” (OPTIONAL)

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Week Twelve: The Legacy of the Past, Part II: Injustice and Oppression

Monday, 11/18 Screening: *Candyman* (Rose, 1992, 99m)

Thursday, 11/21 Discussion section meets

Readings: Briefel and Ngai, “‘How much did you pay for this place?’: Fear, Entitlement, and Urban Space in Bernard Rose’s *Candyman*”
Parry, “Death Denial”

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Week Thirteen: Mediums and Grief

Monday, 11/25 Screening: *Blithe Spirit* (Lean, 1945, 96 min) OR *Ghost* (Zucker, 1990, 126 min)

Thursday, 11/28 THANKSGIVING (Grab your cousins & contact a dead relative with a Ouija board)

Readings: Sconce, “Mediums and Media”
Kubler-Ross, “On the Fear of Death” and “Five Stages” handout
Kovacs, chapter on *Ghost*

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Week Fourteen: Ghostbusters and Family Demons

Monday, 12/2 Screening: *The Conjuring* (Wan, 2013, 112m)

Thursday, 12/5 Discussion section meets

Readings: Murphy, "It's Not the House that's Haunted"
Wessel, "A Lesson Concerning Technology"

Week Fifteen (12/15): Found Footage Films, Ghost Hunting, and Ghosts on TV

Monday, 12/9 Screening: TBA (possibly *Unfriended*, Gabriadze, 2014, 83m)

Thursday, 12/12 Discussion section meets

Readings: Williams, "The Liveness of Ghosts"
Burger, "*Ghost Hunters*"
Potts, John. "The Idea of the Ghost"
Webb, "Dead or Alive" (OPTIONAL)

FINAL EXAM PERIOD, Monday, 12/16, 7:15-9:15pm
