

**English 1500-24**  
**Experiences in Literature: Monsters and Haunted Houses**  
**Spring 2015 Syllabus**

**Part 1: General Information**

Professor: Chris Weaver

Office: Atrium 246

Office Phone: 973-720-2913

Office Hours: Wednesdays 5:00 - 6:00, Thursdays 10:00 – 12:00, and by appointment.

Email: weaverc@wpunj.edu

Course Meeting Times: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:00 – 3:15 in Raubinger Hall 213

English Department Office: Atrium 242

English Department Phone: 973-720-2254

Textbooks:

Tentatively, we'll be reading these in the following order:

1. *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson.
2. *The Shining* by Stephen King.
3. *Dracula* by Bram Stoker. (We'll probably only read the first four chapters).
4. *Fight Club* by Chuck Palahniuk.

There will also be some additional material including poetry and short stories-- posted on line and/or given out in class as handouts.

Course Description:

As you can probably figure out from the reading list, this is a special "themed" section of Experiences in Literature that deals with horror fiction. Otherwise, though, it's like other sections of this course. We'll read and discuss the works on the list above, and do some thinking about the horror genre--what elements it uses, why many people love being scared, and what these works say about us as readers. I'll expect you to do the readings for the course, and, of course, I will require you to write about them, posting short writing assignments and drafts of papers to the website, and, eventually, turning in revised drafts to me for my comments.

This is not a course where I will teach you to write like future English majors; but it *is* a writing intensive course, and I will require you to do quite a bit of writing over the semester. I will ask you to do some analysis of the works on the reading list, but I'm most concerned that you learn to write your reactions to the readings, to explain where these reactions come from, and to think more deeply about them. To a large

extent, this will be a course about extending, developing, and editing your ideas about the readings.

### Course Objectives:

- That you read some literature that's new to you and, hopefully that you enjoy at least some of it.
- That you share your ideas with others and use their ideas to spark your own.
- That you work together to give and get feedback that helps you improve your writing.
- That you get some basic understanding of the academic conventions of writing about literature--things like how to quote passages from literary works in order to illustrate or support what you are saying.
- That you discover more about other people's ideas and reactions to the readings and that you are able to incorporate them into your own writing.
- That you learn how to take your written reactions to a reading and, learn how to develop and revise them into thoughtful and engaging pieces of writing.

### Course Outcomes:

By the end of the course, you will be asked to--

- Write clear and readable essays in which you examine and explain your reactions to a literary work so that your own process of reading and interpretation is clear to readers.
- Write clear and readable essays in which you demonstrate that you understand other people's reactions to a literary work.
- Demonstrate, through various activities and through the reflective letters to your essays, that you have critically reflected on your continuing growth as a writer and a reader.
- Demonstrate through activities engaged in over the semester, that you are able to give and get feedback to each other's writing and to analyze that feedback for what it tells you about your writing process.

## **Part 2: Assignments**

Checking The Assignments Section: There will be some kind of homework assignment for every class. To find out exactly what is due, please check the *Assignments* section of Blackboard before each class. If there is no assignment listed, one should be posted shortly. If you cannot find what the assignment is, please contact me well before the next class.

In the unlikely event that there is no homework assignment, I will post that there is NO HOMEWORK. If you do not see that message, then expect an assignment to be posted shortly. You are responsible for all of the assignments, whether or not you were in class when they were given.

Posting to the Discussion Board: For most classes, I will ask you to write about one page (300 words) and post your writing to the *Discussion Board*. I may ask you to print out copies of these pieces and have you share them in small groups in class. While these homework assignments will not be graded, you will get credit for completing them and penalized for not posting them on time, so this is a really important part of your grade. (See *Grades* section below.)

Living Writers Events: Each semester, the University presents a number of these presentations where writers read their work, talk about their writing, and answer questions from the audience. You are required to attend one of these events over the semester. You'll also be asked to post your thoughts and reactions to this event on the web site. I'll give you a list of events and more detailed instructions once the semester begins. You will also be presenting at your own Living Writers event later in the semester! (More on this below.)

Writing Circles: Four times over the semester, I will ask you to develop short (3 page) papers. I'll ask you to post them on line and to bring copies to share in class. These papers won't be graded, but you'll get some feedback to them and you'll choose two of them to develop into larger papers for your final portfolio.

There will also be two "Revision Circles" where you will get a second chance to further develop papers that you've already shared. Dates for these papers are listed in the *Dates and Deadlines* section below.

Developed Drafts: Three times over the semester, I will ask you to develop one of these shorter drafts into a more fully developed 4-6-page paper. The first two times, you will hand these in to me for feedback. The third time, you will bring your draft to me in my office, and we will discuss it at a writing conference.

Video Project: Early in the semester, I will assign you to groups of three or four and have each group pick from a number of topics. Right now, I think these topics will include:

1. Vampires
2. Zombies, Contagion, and The Uncanny
3. The Beast Within
4. Deals with the Devil
5. Horror and the Gothic
6. Haunted House Stories (or the Haunted Place)
7. Women and Horror

I'm open to other suggestions, though.

Your group will be required to create and edit a 7-10 minute video project on your subject and present it to the class near the middle of the semester. You'll get feedback to the project, and then you will be required to present it to the University community at a "Living Writers" forum at the end of the semester.

You'll have a chance to revise your video project by the end of the semester. It will be included as part of your final portfolio.

Each of you will also write an individual paper (5-7 pages) based on your video project. The paper will be due after you have a chance to complete the project and get feedback. This paper must be included in your final portfolio.

Final Portfolio: The last day of class, you will submit a final portfolio containing your video project, the paper developed from this project, and one or two additional papers. Your portfolio must total 12-16 pages. For this portfolio, I'll be evaluating two aspects of your writing. One is the quality of the writing itself, but another is your progress and your commitment to the writing process as demonstrated by your continued revision and your reflective writing. I will expect extensive revision as well as thoughtful commentary on your own writing process.

### **Part 3: Grades**

Attendance: This course is part workshop (sharing ideas and writing in small groups) and part discussion. For this reason, the course will only work if people attend regularly. You may not miss more than five classes and still pass the course. On the sixth absence you will either be asked to withdraw from the course (if the deadline hasn't passed) or get an "F." There are no excused absences, so please do not bring me doctors' notes.

Homework Assignments: I don't grade these assignments because I want you to use them as a place to test out ideas without worrying about the quality of your writing. But make sure that you complete them because they have a big affect on your grade! (See "Calculating Your Course Grade" below.)

Reading Quizzes: There will be regular reading quizzes over the semester. They won't be difficult. If you've done the reading, then you should be able to get all of the questions right. They will be given within five minutes of the beginning of class, so it's important for you to get to class on time!

If you're absent, you may make up the reading quiz by making arrangements with me the next class. If you are late and miss the quiz, you may not make it up.

Quizzes will be graded pass/fail. At the end of the semester, I will calculate this grade along with your record of posting homework assignments on time to come up with your quiz/homework grade. (See "Calculating Your Course Grade" below.)

Drafts of Papers: There are three times over the semester where I want to give you feedback before your paper has to be submitted for a grade in the final portfolio. I don't grade the drafts you turn in or bring to me for your conference, since I assume that they are not finished yet at this point. But I will give you a rough estimate of where you stand by sorting them into one of three categories:

1. Not acceptable - The draft is too short, is undeveloped, or has serious flaws. You will need to resubmit it.
2. In Progress - The draft is promising, but it needs more work. It is not yet ready for the final portfolio. (If you submitted it "as is," it would get lower than a "B.")
3. Portfolio Ready - With minor changes or no changes at all, it could be submitted to the final portfolio. This doesn't mean that it can't be improved upon, but it does mean that it is a good, solid paper. It would get at least a "B."

I will also use your conference as a chance to talk with you about which papers you should submit to your final portfolio.

Calculating Your Course Grade:

Final Portfolio: 80%  
 Quiz Grade: 20%  
 Homework: As follows –

Homework or Writing Assignments: Deadlines Missed	Modification to Your Grade
0-1 Assignments Missed	+2/3 (B becomes A-)
2 Assignments Missed	+1/3 (B becomes B+)
3 Assignments Missed	No change.
4 Assignments Missed	-2/3 (B becomes C+)
5 Assignments Missed	-1 1/3 (B becomes C-)
6 Assignments Missed	Automatic F

## Part 4: Dates and Deadlines

Here are some important dates for the semester:

Week 2 (Thurs, Jan 22)	First Writing Circle
Week 4 (Thurs, Feb 5)	Second Writing Circle
Week 5 (Thurs, Feb 12)	Developed Draft #1 Due
Week 6 (Thurs, Feb 17)	No Class (Monday Schedule)
Week 7 (Thurs, Feb 26)	Third Writing Circle
Week 8 (Thurs, March 5)	Raw Footage of Video Due
Week 8 (Thurs, March 5)	Last Day to Withdraw from Classes
Week 9 (Thurs, March 12)	Fourth Writing Circle (Video Paper)
Week 9 (Thurs, March 12)	Developed Draft #2 Due
March 18 – March 22	SPRING BREAK
Week 10 (March 24,26)	Rough Cuts of Edited Videos Due
Week 12 (Thurs, April 9)	First Revision Circle
Week 13 (April 14-16)	CONFERENCES (Developed Draft #3 Due)
Week 14 (April 21, 23)	Video Presentations at Living Writers Series
Week 14 (Thurs, April 23)	Second Revision Circle
Week 15 (Thurs, May 1)	Final Portfolio Due

## Part 5: Ethical Issues

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is defined as the submission of work of any kind, which is not the work of the student and where there is no citation or explanation acknowledging the work of another person. In practice, there are generally two kinds of plagiarism:

- Unintentional Plagiarism - where a student because of carelessness or ignorance of conventions regarding the acknowledgment of outside sources unintentionally violates those conventions. Hopefully for graduate students this is not an issue. Unintentional plagiarism is a serious academic error and may result in a failing paper or project. Always acknowledge where you got your information, and contact me if you have any questions about how or when to do this.
- Intentional Plagiarism - where the student knowingly misrepresents all or a portion of his work as being his or her own. The most common offense is for a student to submit a paper written by someone else. Intentional plagiarism is a serious academic and ethical offense. Minimally it will result in a grade of "F" for the class. Additionally, students suspected of intentional plagiarism will be referred to the Department Executive Council, which may recommend disciplinary action up to and including expulsion from the University. (See the "Academic Integrity" section of the University Catalog.)

I'm sad to report that plagiarism has been a recurring issue in the classes I have taught. I use plagiarism-detection software, and I have had to fail at least one person almost every semester, and, in some cases, refer them to the Dean for disciplinary action. I can only imagine that people don't think that they will be caught. I just beg you not to be the next person to make this mistake.

Using Writing From Outside This Class: It is possible that you will have done writing in another course, which you may be able to use for this one. This is perfectly acceptable provided that you do substantial new work and revision. Students wishing to incorporate writing they have already finished or are working on outside of this course should consult me about what constitutes "substantial" revision and how this revision should be documented. Usually I will require that the original draft be submitted along with the revision and a brief explanation of how the two versions differ. Failure to go through this procedure, depending on the circumstances, may result in any of the penalties described in the section on plagiarism.