Spring 2009
English 468/568
Freaky Nineteenth-Century American Narratives
T/Th 2-3:15
Sara Reynolds Hall 102

Freaky Nineteenth-Century American Narratives

Office Hours: Th 3:30-4:30
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Required Texts
Brown, Edgar Huntly; Wharton, The Ghost Stories of Edith Wharton; Spofford, The Amber Gods and Other Stories; Chesnutt, Conjure Tales; Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl; Alemán and Streeby, Empire and the Literature of Sensation; Twain, Pudd’nhead Wilson. Other required and recommended readings are on e-reserves (Password: “freaky”).

E-reserves:
I have set up an electronic reserve account with the University of New Mexico’s Zimmerman library. This account contains PDF versions of required and recommended primary and secondary sources for the class and can be accessed from any computer with internet access and Acrobat Reader. Please bring printed or downloaded copies of required e-reserve materials to class.

Course Description
This is an advanced study of freaky nineteenth-century American narratives. The class begins with Charles Brockden Brown’s Edgar Huntly, a tale about a man who kills Indians while sleepwalking, and concludes with Henry James’s “Turn of a Screw,” a highbrow ghost tale. In-between, we’ll read pieces by Edgar Allan Poe, Washington Irving, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, George Lippard, Harriet Jacobs, Kate Chopin, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Mark Twain, Charles Chesnutt, and a variety of short stories and pulp narratives that revolve around strange, uncanny, odd, peculiar, or gothic events. The course will consider in particular how racial fears, sexual desires, and class anxieties during the U.S.’s national formation, expansion, and reconstruction manifest themselves in supernatural plotlines, gender trouble, and paranoid characters, so we’ll consider theories of the gothic and the uncanny alongside ideas of nationalism, American literary history, and popular narrative forms. While the reading material promises to be entertaining, the course will be rigorous: students will be expected to prepare for class diligently; research and read thoroughly; and engage in meaningful, critical class discussion.

Course Requirements
Considerable Reading: We’ll be covering a lot material throughout the semester as regular, required class reading. Mostly, the reading consists of novels or short stories, but there’s also theoretical and critical material on the syllabus. The class will be run as a seminar, which balances student discussion and interaction with lecture information, but for seminars to run well, students must attend prepared to discuss the material in-depth: we will spend very little time explaining what a text is about, for I assume that if you’ve read the material, you won’t need further summary of it. We will use our time to analyze how and why a text generates literary, historical, and cultural meaning. My most basic expectation, then, is that you complete all of the reading assignments, but considering our reading schedule, this requirement is a very demanding one. If the reading load looks too heavy for you, take another class.

Because the class will be structured around reading, discussion, and lecture, we will occasionally break up into discussion groups led by the cadre of graduate students enrolled in the class. These discussion groups are designed to give each student the chance to voice ideas, interests, and observations; the groups will then share their commentary with the rest of the class.

Undergraduate requirements include one 4-6 page research essay; a midterm; and a comprehensive final exam that test knowledge of the required material through identification and brief explanation responses.
Graduate students are required to lead undergraduate discussion groups; meet with me as a group occasionally beyond our scheduled class time; and complete all of the requirements for the final project. The final project is to write a 10-page conference paper to be considered for presentation at a national conference. This means students must produce and submit an abstract to a conference call for papers and write a conference paper related to the course’s focus on nineteenth-century American literature. Submission of the abstract or a panel proposal is a requirement; production of the 10-page paper is also required, but presentation of the paper, if it’s accepted, is up to you.

The entire class will be given five unannounced quizzes throughout the semester. Quizzes and exams cannot be “made up” or taken at alternative times.

**Grading Structure:**

**Undergraduates:**
- Quizzes: 25 points (5 points each)
- Midterm: 75 points
- Essay: 100 points
- Final exam: 100 points

**Graduates:**
- Quizzes: 25 points (5 points each)
- Abstract (submission required): 25 points
- Final Essay: 50 points

There are 300 or 100 points possible, respectively. All grades will be given a numerical mark and an equivalent letter grade, and final grades will be determined on a traditional percentage system, with the appropriate plus or minus sign: 100-90%=A; 89-80%=B; 79-70%=C; 69-60=D; 59% and below=F.

**Outcomes:**
By the end of the course, the class will have a comprehensive critical understanding regarding the relationship between literature, culture, and the manifestation of forms commonly connected with the “gothic.” This gives us a double understanding: we’ll have a solid foundation of American literary history but also have an even better understanding of how cultural forms such as the gothic are deeply social and historical. Undergraduate exams and essays are geared toward demonstrating comprehension and critical analysis of the material, while graduates will undergo a process of professionalization that requires them to produce scholarly work and submit it for conference presentation.

**Codettas:**
Any student in this course who has a disability that prevents the fullest expression of abilities should contact me as soon as possible so that we can discuss class requirements.

The English Department affirms its commitment to the joint responsibility of instructors and students to foster and maintain a positive learning environment.

All cell phone equipment must be placed in the “off” position during class time.

**Course Schedule**

1/20—Introductions
  - Freud, “The Uncanny” and “Screen Memories”; Todorov, The Fantastic (E-reserves)
1/27—Theoretical Considerations continued
  - Mussell, “Gothic Novels”; Cassuto, The Inhuman Race; Meindl, “Metaphysics of the Grotesque”
1/29-2/5—Brown’s Edgar Huntly and American Literary Studies
  “Charles Brockden Brown and the Invention of the American Gothic” (required e-reserve)
  Recommended: Gardner, “Alien Nation”; Krause, “Penn’s Elm”
2/10—Irving and the Republican Imagination (“Irving” e-reserves folder)
   · “Rip Van Winkle” and “Legend of Sleepy Hollow” (required)
   · Recommended: Samuels, Romances of the Republic; Takaki, Iron Cages
2/12—Poe’s Short Stories and Gothic Narrative (“Poe” e-reserves folder)
   · “The Cask of Amontillado”; “The Black Cat”; “The Tell-Tale Heart”
   · Goddu, “Gothic America and Poe” (Required e-reserves)
2/17—Poe stories continued
   · Recommended: Edwards, Gothic Passages: Introduction and “Poe’s Hybrid Bodies”
2/19—Hawthorne’s Short Stories (“Hawthorne” e-reserves folder)
2/24—Hawthorne’s stories, continued
   “Young Goodman Brown”; “Rappaccini’s Daughter”
   · Recommended: Haggerty, “Hawthorne’s Gothic Gardens”
2/26—The Specter of Expansion: Empire and the Literature of Sensation
   · Siddons, The Female Warrior and Delaplain, Thrilling and Exciting Account (Empire)
   · Harrison, “Thrilling Narrative” (Required e-reserves)
   · Recommended: Garber, “Vested Interests”; Butler, “Bodies that Matter”
3/3—Empire and the Literature of Sensation, continued
   · Lippard, ‘Bel of Prairie Eden
   · “Introduction” to Empire (recommended)
3/10—The Specter of Race: Melville’s Benito Cereno
   · Recommended: Cassuto, “Racial Freak”; Edwards, “Gothic Travels in Benito Cereno”
3/12—Midterm exam
3/15-3/22—Spring Break
3/24-3/26—Slavery’s Haunting Presence: Jacobs’ Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl
   · Recommended: Wardrop, “Gothic Families”; Greeson, “Mysteries and Miseries”
3/31—Some short stories on race, slavery, and the Civil War (e-reserves)
4/7—Chesnutt’s Conjure Tales.
   · “Goophered Grapevine”; “Po’ Sandy”; “Mars Jeems’s Nightmare”
4/9—Chesnutt, continued. Undergraduate Essay Due. Graduate Abstract Due.
   · “The Conjurer’s Revenge”; “Sis’ Becky’s Pickaninny”; “The Sheriff’s Children”
   · Recommended: White, “Baring Slavery’s Darkest Secrets”
4/14-4/21—Twain’s twins: Pudd’nhead Wilson
4/23—Domestic Nightmares: Spofford’s The Amber Gods and Other Stories
   · Bendixon “Introduction” (recommended)
4/28—Domestic Nightmares, continued
   · Spofford stories
   · Gilman’s, “The Yellow Wall-Paper” and “The Giant Wisteria” (Required e-reserves)
4/30—James’s Turn of the Screw (Required e-reserves)
   · Recommended: Haggerty, “James’s Ghostly Impressions”
5/5-5/7—Wharton’s Ghost Stories
   · Recommended: Jacobson, “Economic Hauntings”
5/12—Undergraduate Final Exam from 10am-12pm; Graduate Final Paper Due at 12pm.