

HNRS 201

Exploring and Defending the Value of Horror Comic Books

Pennoni Honors College
Drexel University
Fall 2024

COURSE AND INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor Name: Anyun Chatterjee
Instructor Email: tuo91168@temple.edu
Office Hours: By Appointment
Class Days/Times: Tuesday, 6 PM
Class Location: Bentley Seminar Room 156

STUDENT LEARNING INFORMATION

Course Description: As long as we've made up stories, we've had stories to scare, thrill, and mystify the audience. Every time we've come up with a new medium to convey stories, we've inevitably come up with ways to make horror with them. Why do people like horror? What does a comic book add to this genre that we don't get from traditional books or film? What is the value of studying a niche genre in the context of a niche medium?

In this course we will dive into the fantastic world of horror comic books. Together, we will explore the narratives, historical contexts, and unique storytelling mechanisms of horror comic books. We will read and discuss seminal works in horror comic books together, watch selections from horror movies, and read scholarly analyses. By the end of this course, you'll have been exposed to some fantastic art and built valuable reading, analysis, argument, and writing skills in the process!

Course Purpose:

- Students will engage with seminal works in horror comic books and critical scholarship on those works
- Students will write three papers articulating their stances with well developed thought and evidence
- Students will engage in debates on contentious points surrounding horror comic books and build ability to engage in stimulating and respectful intellectual discussions

Course Credit: 1 credit

Upon Completion of this Course, students will be able to:

- Develop persuasive arguments

- Write analytically
- Properly reference scholarly sources
- Appreciate horror as a genre
- Appreciate comic books as a medium
- Articulate concepts related to taste, aesthetics, and genre
- Debate the merits of transgressive media

Honors Program Learning Objectives:

1. Create and defend an idea through dialogue (both written and spoken) and the implementation of constructive feedback.
2. Analyze, interpret, and synthesize information outside one's area of study to create broader, deeper, and more complex learning experiences.
3. Demonstrate critical thinking with an emphasis on appreciating ambiguity in the process of developing knowledge.
4. Develop greater empathy and perspective by participating in discourse with students across multiple disciplines and majors.
5. Gain insight into how others have been shaped by perspectives and conditions different from one's own.

COURSE MATERIALS

Required Texts and Materials: No textbook required. All articles will be provided on BBLearn.

ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENTS

Position Statement

This 1-2 page paper is due in the second week of class and is an opportunity for you to share your opinions and beliefs about horror and comic books. Cited sources are not required but encouraged if relevant. This paper should answer the following questions:

1. What do you think of horror and comic books? Do you like one and not the other? Why or why not?
2. Why did you choose to take this class?
3. What are you hoping to gain from this class?

This paper is an opportunity for me to assess your writing ability as well as your interests, so take it seriously! I will be using these papers to tweak the course and identify areas for growth for you all.

Response Paper

These 2-4 page papers are due throughout the semester and are opportunities for you to sum up what you have learned in class thus far, or what you are struggling with. Cited sources are required as I expect you to cite books or papers we have read in class. External sources are also encouraged but not required. This paper should answer the following questions:

1. What have you learned so far in class? What has been most interesting to you?
2. Are there any topics or ideas that have been confusing or tricky for you? What questions do you have that we haven't addressed yet?
3. Have we covered anything in class that you've found objectionable? Why do you think this is?
4. Are you enjoying the class? What can I do to make the course better for you?

This paper is an opportunity for me to assess what you are getting out of the class so be honest! You will not lose points for admitting that something is confusing or objectionable. I will be using these papers to tweak the course as needed, and also to assess whether you are getting anything from the class.

In-class Debates

There are four debate days in this course. All debates are in-class and meant to be an opportunity for you to engage critically with the text and your classmates. You do not need to do any additional preparation for these debates, but it may be helpful to review and revise your notes from class beforehand.

Grading Matrix:

Assignment	Percent of Final Grade
Position Statement	5%
Response Paper 1	15%
Response Paper 2	15%
Response Paper 3	15%
Debate Day 1	5%
Debate Day 2	10%
Debate Day 3	15%
Debate Day 4	20%

TOTAL	100%
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Grading Scale:

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

COURSE SCHEDULE

Course Schedule				
Week #	Class Date	Topic	Read Prior to Class Session	Assignment (Due Monday at 5pm!)
1	9/24/24	Introductions and Syllabus		
2	10/1/24	Horror: what are its characteristics	King, S. (1981). <i>Why we crave horror movies</i> . Short Essays for Composition, 524.	Position statements

		and what is its value?	<p><i>Tomb of Dracula</i> by Rob Rodi CW: depictions of murder, gratuitous bloodloss, sexualization and objectification of women</p> <p><i>The Window Next Door</i> by Junji Ito CW: disturbing imagery of disfigured body</p>	
3	10/8/24	A brief history of horror and comic books	<p><i>Crossed</i> by Garth Ennis CW: depictions of murder, sexual assault, and mutilation</p> <p><i>Preface: Before Life</i>, from <i>Phenomenology of Horror</i> by Dylan Trigg</p>	
4	10/15/24	Physical, social, and psychological impacts of horror	<p><i>Creepshow</i> - Volume 1 CW: graphic imagery of blood and gut, murder, mild sexual imagery</p> <p>Martin, G. N. (2019). <i>(Why) do you like scary movies? A review of the empirical research on psychological responses to horror films</i>. <i>Frontiers in psychology</i>, 10, 2298.</p>	Response Paper 1
5	10/22/24	Debate Day: Gore		
6	10/29/24	How does society treat horror?	<p><i>Neonomicon</i> by Alan Moore CW: depictions of rape and violence</p> <p><i>Killadelphia</i> by Rodney Barnes CW: depictions of murder, gratuitous bloodloss, racist slurs</p> <p>Foucault, M. (1977). <i>A Preface to Transgression</i>. In <i>Language counter-memory practice</i> (pp. 29–32). Cornell University Press.</p> <p>Yugas, A. (2021, March 31). <i>It's time to revisit the satanic panic</i>. <i>The New York Times</i>. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/31/us/satanic-panic.html</p>	
7	11/5/24	What does horror teach us about ourselves?	<p><i>The Long Dream</i> by Junji Ito CW: potentially disturbing imagery of disfiguring body</p> <p><i>Nameless</i> by Grant Morrison CW: potentially disturbing imagery of disfiguring body</p>	Response Paper 2

8	11/12/24	Debate Day: Occultism		
9	11/19/24	Revisiting the “why” of horror and horror comic books	<i>Red Room</i> by Ed Piskor CW: highly disturbing imagery of the act of murder <i>A Brief History of Horror Comic Books</i> from Asgard Press	
10	11/26/24	Debate Day: Topic TBD		
11	12/3/24	Debate Day: Censorship	<i>No Longer Human</i> by Junji Ito CW: depictions of rape, child molestation, and interpersonal violence	Response Paper 3

COURSE POLICIES (optional)

Attendance and Late Arrivals Policy: Excessive and habitual tardiness, or failure to show up to class consistently will result in third-grade deductions (ex. A → A-) at the discretion of the instructor. There are precisely 11 class meetings during the semester and you are expected to be in attendance and on time for at least 8 class meetings before grade deductions are made. If you miss more than 3 classes, documented excuses are required to prevent grade deductions. If you feel that you will be unable to meet this expectation, please reach out to the instructor as soon as possible. If you miss a class session where we have an in-class exercise, you have the option to submit a makeup reflection paper **ONLY** with a documented reason for an excused absence.

Assignment due dates and late policy: All assignments are due at 5PM EST on Monday of the week they are listed under, i.e. 30 minutes before class time. Late assignments are accepted at the instructor’s discretion only if they are notified by the preceding Friday by 12:30PM EST.

Professionalism

College education should prepare you for a fulfilling professional life. Your ability to maintain a work life balance is crucial for that goal. For this reason, you are encouraged to read, write, and communicate with classmates and the instructor only between 9am and 5pm, Monday through Friday. The instructor will only read and respond to emails during these hours, and may take, at minimum, 3 business days before responding.

Respect and Maturity

The reading material for this course can be considered inflammatory, disturbing, and offensive along many dimensions. This course is built on the foundation that studying these works will

enrich your academic, professional, and personal lives. The ability to discuss such works is a protected activity vis a vis academic freedom.

You are encouraged to take personal inventory before committing to this course. It is your responsibility to ensure that you will be able to engage with these works meaningfully. Content warnings are provided, but it is unreasonable to expect that you will be allowed to forgo a substantial number of readings due to personal objections or triggers.

Discussions around these works may bring up emotional responses. Learning to hold mature forums in spite of these feelings is a key skill. You are expected to, at all times, critique only ideas, never people. Personal attacks, harassment, and insinuations will never be tolerated in this course, and are cause for referral to Student Conduct.

EXPECTATIONS OF CIVILITY

Diversity and Inclusion: The Drexel University Pennoni Honors College is committed to offering a safe, welcoming environment for all students regardless of their racial or ethnic identity, culture, nationality, socioeconomic status, religious or spiritual beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, and/or physical ability. We highly value diversity and aspire to create a respectful, safe space for all students.

To view further information from the Office for Institutional Equity and Inclusive Culture (EIC), please visit: <https://drexel.edu/equity-inclusive-culture/>

Office for Institutional Equity and Inclusive Culture (EIC)

James E. Marks Intercultural Center
3225 Arch Street, Suite 011
Philadelphia, PA 19104

Religious Observances: https://drexel.edu/provost/policies/religious_observances_calendar/

Embodying a culturally and spiritually diverse community, Drexel University recognizes that on the occasion of important or solemn religious days, certain of its members will observe practices that preclude them from attending to their regular duties whether as faculty members or students. On such days, it is important for all who do not share in these same practices to accommodate their colleagues and peers.

Behavior Befitting of an Honors Student (Drexel's Conduct Creed):

Student Conduct has established, in accordance with its mission, vision, and values, a code of high standards of behavior to include the following expectations for Students and Student Organizations to:

- Accept responsibility when their choices or actions have negatively impacted themselves, others, or the community at large.
- Engage in constant learning, practice self-reflection, and develop resilience to maintain academic, personal, and professional integrity.

- Foster positive relationships with others.
- Ensure the health, wellness, and safety of themselves and their communities.
- Demonstrate mutual respect and equity within the bounds of the Code of Conduct.

To view Drexel's Student Code of Conduct, please visit:

<https://drexel.edu/studentlife/community-standards/code-of-conduct>

UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC POLICIES

Academic Calendar: <https://drexel.edu/provost/calendars/academic-calendars/>

Disability Access:

<https://drexel.edu/disability-resources/support-accommodations/student-family-resources/>.

Students who seek accommodations for a documented disability will first need to complete an Online Intake Form. For instructions on how to complete the Online Intake Form or for further information on disability services are provided by the university, please visit

<https://drexel.edu/disability-resources/support-accommodations/forms/>.

Students who are eligible for accommodations may email disability@drexel.edu to request their Accommodations Verification Letter (AVL). This letter lists the student's approved accommodations and is submitted to instructors once they are requested by the student.

Accommodations cannot be granted by instructors until an AVL is submitted to that instructor. The AVL must be renewed at the beginning of every term because the student's courses and instructors will change, and this may necessitate changes in the student's accommodations.

You may also contact the Disability Resources department within the Office of Equality and Diversity directly at:

Disability Resources Office

Main Building

3141 Chestnut Street, Suite 2281

Philadelphia, PA 19104

Phone: 215.895.1401

Email: disability@drexel.edu

Academic Integrity, Plagiarism, Dishonesty, and Cheating:

<https://drexel.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/>

Drexel University expects all members of its community to uphold the highest values of academic integrity. In upholding these values, the University is committed to investigating any allegation of violations of academic integrity against a student. Violations include, but are not limited to: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, and academic misconduct.

Sanctions for violations of academic integrity are administered through the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards in conjunction with the Office of the Provost and other University offices as deemed appropriate. It is generally the responsibility of the faculty member overseeing the academic activity to report the violation to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards and to determine the appropriate sanction. A student who believes he/she has been wrongly sanctioned has a right to an appeals process.

In addition to any other sanction, the University reserves the right in its sole discretion to withdraw an earned degree even though it has been granted should it be discovered at any time that the work upon which the degree was based, or the academic records in support of such degree, have been falsified. In that situation, the degree will be withdrawn promptly upon discovery of the falsification and the academic record will be updated to reflect the withdrawal of degree.

Course Add/Drop: <http://www.drexel.edu/provost/policies/course-add-drop>

The course registration adjustment period for adding or dropping courses begins with the opening of a student's time ticket assignment for course registration through Sunday at midnight of the end of Week 1 (Sunday, 11:59 p.m. via the web)

Course Withdraw: <http://drexel.edu/provost/policies/course-withdrawal>

Students may withdraw from a course during the withdrawal period beginning at the end of the course Add/Drop Period through Friday of Week 7. A withdrawal from a course will result in a grade of "W" being reflected on a student's transcript with no impact to the student's term and cumulative grade point average (GPA).

A course withdrawal is not permitted in situations involving academic dishonesty. A course withdrawal that was processed before a final sanction of academic dishonesty is applied will revert to the grade assigned by the instructor in accordance with the Academic Integrity Policy.

Course Change Policy: This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor based on student feedback. Any changes will be communicated in class.

Artificial Intelligence Policy: There are no approved use cases for Artificial Intelligence in this course. It will not help you as this is a discussion and reflection based course.

Grades of "Incomplete":

https://drexel.edu/provost/policies-calendars/policies/incomplete_grades/

Appropriate Use of Course Materials:

<https://drexel.edu/it/about/policies/policies/01-Acceptable-Use/>.

It is important to recognize that some or all of the course materials provided to you may be the intellectual property of Drexel University, the course instructor, or others. Briefly, this policy states that course materials, including recordings, provided by the course instructor may not be copied, reproduced, distributed or re-posted. Doing so may be considered a breach of this policy and will be investigated and addressed as possible academic dishonesty, among other potential violations. Improper use of such materials may also constitute a violation of the

University's Code of Conduct found here: <https://drexel.edu/cpo/policies/cpo-1/> and will be investigated as such.

Complete list of University policies:

<https://drexel.edu/compliance-privacy-audit/policy/policy-directory/>

DREXEL RESOURCES

Drexel Library: <https://www.library.drexel.edu/>

Drexel Writing Center:

<https://drexel.edu/coas/academics/departments-centers/english-philosophy/university-writing-program/drexel-writing-center/>

Office of Counseling and Health Services Counseling Center

Drexel Counseling Center

201 Creese Student Center,
3210 Chestnut St., Philadelphia PA 19104

Phone: 215.895.1415

Appointment Hours: Monday - Friday: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

After-Hours Emergency On-Call Counseling Center: 215.416.3337

Public Safety: 215.895.2222; or Dial 9-1-1.

The Counseling Center offers a range of free, confidential counseling services to currently enrolled full-time undergraduate and graduate students in an atmosphere that is welcoming and comfortable for all students.

The Counseling Center takes a goal-focused and collaborative approach to counseling and mental health treatment. We strive to provide immediate, meaningful care focused on the change each student wants to make to improve their lives from their first contact with our office, and we have a range of follow up options available based on individual needs. We help students reduce psychological symptoms, cope with painful life events and developmental tasks, improve interpersonal skills, increase self-knowledge and develop a resiliency so they are better able to respond to problems and concerns as they arise.

For more information, please visit:

<https://drexel.edu/counselingandhealth/counseling-center/overview/>

Nondiscrimination and Sexual Misconduct: Drexel University is committed to providing a working and learning environment free from sexual harassment and it is the policy of the University that sexual harassment in any form is unacceptable behavior and will not be tolerated.

Management and supervisory personnel, at all levels, are responsible for taking reasonable and necessary action to prevent sexual harassment. All members of the University community, faculty, staff and students, are required to promptly report any and all conduct which might be in violation of this policy.

The University will:

- respond to all complaints of sexual harassment pursuant to the published Discrimination and Harassment Complaint Resolution Procedure;
- take action to provide remedies when sexual harassment is discovered;
- impose appropriate sanctions upon individuals who have been found to be in violation of the University's policy; and
- protect the privacy of those involved in sexual harassment complaints, to the extent possible.

The above actions will apply to the extent permitted by law.

FOR EMERGENCY REPORTS CALL:

Drexel University Police Department
3219 Arch Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104
Phone: 215-895-2222 (or Philadelphia Police: 911)

FOR ALL OTHER REPORTS: Submit an EIC report directly through this [form](#) or contact the Drexel [Title IX Coordinator](#).