

ENG 374
THE GOTHIC: 1660-1800 AND BEYOND

SPRING 2008

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Office: Independence Hall 175, meetings by appointment.

Class Schedule: TR 11am-12:15pm, Quinn Hall 214

Course Page: http://www.uri.edu/artsci/english/jjj/courses/English_374_S08/index.html

WebCT Course: <http://www.uri.edu/webct>

Is the Gothic a genre, a form, or a mode? Is it a sub-genre contained within British Romanticism, or is British Romanticism essentially gothic? Canonical tradition has understood the Gothic as sideways to Romanticism, as frivolous in the face of high Romantic idealism and sincerity. And yet it is the case that the authors who make up the high Romantic canon read gothic fiction voraciously, including William Blake, William Godwin, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Mary Shelley, John Keats, and Jane Austen. In this course we will study gothic fiction as it emerges in the eighteenth century with “school of Terror” writers Horace Walpole, Monk Lewis, and Ann Radcliffe. We will then move forward to the period around 1800 to study debates about the relationship of Romanticism to the Gothic. As such, we will study the close but contentious relation between what we now recognize as a “major” literary movement (British Romanticism) and a minor one (Gothicism), with special attention to works that blur the boundaries in major writers, such as William Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, Coleridge, the Shelleys, Keats, and Emily Brontë. As a final move, we will look at contemporary texts associated with the Gothic, including Neil Gaiman's graphic novel *The Sandman* and Sofia Coppolla's film *The Virgin Suicides*. In what ways does contemporary culture employ and/or transform gothic conventions? To what end?

REQUIRED TEXTS

The Castle of Otranto and *The Mysterious Mother*. By Horace Walpole. Editor Frederick S. Frank. Broadview, 2003. ISBN: 155111304X

Vathek with Episodes of Vathek. By William Beckford. Editor Kenneth W. Graham. Broadview, 2001. ISBN: 1551112817

Caleb Williams. By William Godwin. Editors Gary Handwerk and A.A. Markley. Broadview, 2000. ISBN: 1551112493

The Italian. By Ann Radcliffe. Editor Robert Miles. Penguin, 2001. ISBN: 0140437541

The Monk. By Matthew Lewis. Editors D.L. Macdonald and Kathleen Scherf. Broadview, 2004. ISBN: 1551112272

Wuthering Heights. By Emily Brontë. Editor Beth Newman. Broadview, 2007. ISBN: 1551115320

The Sandman, Volume 3: "Dream Country." By Neil Gaiman. Vertigo, 1991.
ISBN: 156389016X

The Virgin Suicides. Director Sofia Coppola. With Danny DeVito and Kirsten Dunst. Paramount, 2000.

A Writer's Reference. By Diana Hacker. Bedford/St. Martin, 2003. ISBN: 0312412622

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Each member of English 374 will be responsible to perform in four principle ways -- class participation (including attending class, reading assigned texts, listening to and contributing to lectures and class discussion, participating in the creation of a Commonplace Book; the composition of essays (one short essay, one revision, and one long essay); and four substantial quizzes -- that, cumulatively, will enable each individual member both to learn from texts, peers, and professor as well as to share knowledge and insight of texts and ideas with this community.

Participation (15%)

Reading. Reading is a substantial part of the work of English 374. The reading schedule is dense; keeping abreast of it will require planning ahead and an on-going sense of responsibility. At minimum, students should have not merely read the texts but studied them carefully enough to have a working sense of their principle arguments and forms, as well as a sense of how form and content work together to produce the overall effects of the given texts. This level of preparedness often requires re-reading. Students are expected to come to class prepared to participate in general discussion and to respond both to peers and professor, to articulate specific aspects of the texts they find particularly interesting and/or troubling, and to bring questions, concerns, and critiques to the table. It is worth remembering in this regard that listening well to others is as valuable a part of participation in a group dynamic as any other component. Listening well will enable each student to be responsive to the thoughts of others as well as to push his/her own thinking further.

Note: Your readings will come from a variety of sources, including texts that you have purchased, which are listed on your syllabus and on the right-hand side of the course web site; online texts, the links for which are to be found on your online version of the syllabus (here); and electronic PDF files that you can download from our WebCT site. It is your responsibility to discern where the given readings below are to be found; if you have any questions, you can always email me or the group.

Attendance. Attendance at class meetings of English 374 are mandatory for all students. Please note that more than two absences from class is unacceptable and will have a severe effect on the participation grade overall.

Commonplace Book. Each member of the class is responsible to contribute two passages, along with commentary, to the English 374 Commonplace Book. Each member of the class will be assigned to two of the four "Units" of the class. At any time during the study of the given units to which the student has been assigned, s/he will post to the Commonplace Book, which is to

be found as a named threaded discussion under "Class Discussion" on WebCT. Once the given unit has been completed, posting will no longer be accepted. As such, students should be aware of the dates that begin and end the units to which they are assigned. Postings will be directed to our course WebCT space. At the end of each unit, I will publish contributions to the Commonplace Book online to our course web site.

What is a Commonplace Book? Commonplacing is the act of selecting important phrases, lines, and/or passages from texts and writing them down; the commonplace book is the notebook in which a reader has collected quotations from works s/he has read. Commonplace books can also include comments and notes from the reader; they are frequently indexed so that the reader can classify important themes and locate quotations related to particular topics or authors.

"Commonplacing is the practice of entering literary excerpts and personal comments into a private journal, that is, into a commonplace book or, to use a 17th century synonym, a *silva rerum* ("a forest of things"). Typically the excerpts were regarded as exceptionally insightful or beautiful or as applicable to a variety of situations, and so as such they are often especially quotable. . . . The practice of commonplacing can be traced back in the European tradition to the 5th century B.C.E. and the Sophist, Protagoras.

Historically commonplacing has played an important role in education, and it has served as a vital tool of erudition.

"Boys . . . had to keep notebooks or commonplace books in which to record, and then learn, idioms, quotations, or figures useful in composition or declamation. Not a little of that wide learning and impressive range of quotation adorning Elizabethan literature comes from these commonplace books." *Schools in Tudor England*, by Craig R. Thompson (Washington: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1958): p. 16, cf. 44.

"Students with literary tastes, in days when books were hard to come by, kept 'commonplace' or notebooks into which they copied out verses or prose extracts that particularly appealed to them." *The Intellectual Life of Colonial New England*, by Samuel Eliot Morison (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1965; reprint of the 2nd ed., 1956): p. 49.

The Short Essay (10%)

Students of English 374 will write a short essay of no less than 3 pages and no more than 5 pages, which is due in class on March 4. This essay, along with all formal essays you submit in this class, must be formatted according the standards of MLA documentation and must be polished arguments that include a thesis, relevant textual evidence to support the thesis, and analysis of that evidence as a means of demonstrating the significance of the evidence to the thesis and in turn the veracity of the thesis itself. No late work will be accepted.

Essay Revision (10%)

Each member of English 374 will be responsible to submit a revision of Essay 1, which is due April 8 in class. Please staple the copy of Essay 1 that includes marginal commentary to your Essay Revision, such that the revision is on top, thus submitting them as a single entity. This revision will be graded as a separate essay and will be judged according to the following:

- How substantially did the student take into consideration the grammatical, stylistic, and formatting commentary given on Essay 1? How much stronger is the essay in terms of grammar, style and format?
- How substantially did the student take into consideration commentary on Essay 1 pertaining to the introduction and thesis statement?
- How substantially did the student take into consideration commentary on Essay 1 pertaining to the articulation of a.) claims; b.) the offering of textual evidence to support claims; and c.) close reading / textual analysis of the evidence offered to support the validity of relationship between claim and evidence?
- How substantially did the student take into consideration commentary on Essay 1 pertaining to overall structure and logical progression?

Due in class on April 8: staple your revision to your original composition and commentary

Final Paper (25%)

The final paper is the culmination of each student's work in English 375. You may write on any topic you wish as long as it incorporates at least one text from the course. This paper should comprise original thought, by which I mean a position articulated through close reading, analysis, and argumentation. Your outside text can be historical, philosophical, theoretical, critical, or primary (by which I mean an art work of some kind, whether film, painting, novel, poem, etc.). Whether your research turns out to be critical, theoretical, historical, or a combination will be up to you and will be a matter of judging what is useful to your topic. In the spirit of this course, you may be as interdisciplinary as you like in your topic and your thinking as long as you bring scholarly integrity to the texts and concepts about which you choose to meditate and write.

Overview of Specifications:

- 5-8 pages
- Includes at least one text from our course readings
- Includes at least one text NOT on our course reading*
- Edited and polished to be the strongest essay the student is capable of writing where grammar/style; argumentation and structure; close reading; and formatting are concerned.

*If you wish, you may substitute for the "outside text" a second text from the course reading schedule.

Seminar Papers are due by 12pm on Tuesday, May 6. Hand in your paper at the English Office, Independence Hall 114.

Quizzes (40%)

Students of English 374 will take a total of four quizzes during the spring semester. Each quiz will cover one unit of the course reading schedule. Students who read the assigned texts and participate in the class will have no problem with these quizzes.

OFFICIAL MATTERS

Disabilities in the English Classroom. If you have a documented disability, please contact me within the first week of the semester so that we may work out reasonable accommodations to support your success in this course. You will need to follow up your request for accommodation with an official letter from Disability Services, which can also offer you resources to help ensure your success in the college environment: Disability Services for Students, Office of Student Life, 330 Memorial Union, 874-2098.

URI Honor Code. All submitted written work must be your own; if you consult other sources (such as class readings, articles or books from the library, articles on internet databases or web sites, etc.) these sources MUST be properly documented, or you will be charged with plagiarism and receive an F on the assignment and possibly in the course as well. The required books of this course provide you with all the resources necessary to avoid plagiarism, including a text that properly explains plagiarism to you AND two texts that will ensure that you learn how to cite sources properly via MLA format. Use these resources. They will keep you safe from all charges of plagiarism and will help you to be/come the responsible, honorable student whom URI - and the world at large - expects you to be. I will only accept papers that are formatted according to MLA standards.

READING SCHEDULE

Note: Your readings will come from a variety of sources, including texts that you have purchased; online texts, the links for which are to be found on your online version of the syllabus; and electronic PDF files that you can download from our WebCT site. It is your responsibility to discern where the given readings below are to be found; if you have any questions, you can always email me or the group.

Unit I: Gothic Emergences

January 24: Introduction to course: Slide Show Lecture Presentation "The Gothic: Architecture, Gardens, Art"

William Collins, "Ode to Fear" (1746); Edmund Burke, "Of the Sublime", "Of Beauty" from *On the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757) ; Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Sonnet V. To the River Otter" (1796); Lord Byron, "She Walks in Beauty" (1815); Audio Recording; scenes from *The Virgin Suicides* (1999)

Suggested Reading: Edmund Burke, Part I and Part II of *On the Sublime and the Beautiful*

January 29: Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otronto* (1764-65): full text: pp. 57-165

January 31: *The Castle of Otronto*; Sigmund Freud, from *The Ego and the Id* (1923): "Consciousness and What is Unconscious"; "The Ego and the Id"; "The Ego and the Super-Ego (Ego Ideal)" (pp. 628-645 of *The Freud Reader*, Ed. Peter Gay).

February 5: William Beckford, *Vathek* (1786 / 1815-16): full text: pp. 45-148

February 7: *Vathek*; Episode I from *The Episodes of Vathek*: "The History of the Two Princes and Friends, Alasi and Firouz": pp. 151-196

Quiz 1

Unit II: Gothic Revolutions

February 12: The Revolution Controversy: Edmund Burke, from *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790); Mary Wollstonecraft, from *Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790); Thomas Paine, from *Rights of Man* (1791); William Godwin, from *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and Its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness*.

February 14: William Godwin, "On History and Romance" [Appendix A.4 of the Broadview edition of *Caleb Williams*] (1797); William Godwin, *Things as They Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794): Volume I (pp. 57-175)

February 19: *Caleb Williams*: Volume II (pp. 179-294)

February 21: *Caleb Williams*: Volume III (pp. 297-434); William Godwin, Original Manuscript Ending of the Novel from *Caleb Williams*: Appendix A.1 of the Broadview edition of *Caleb Williams*

February 26: Samuel Taylor Coleridge, from *Biographia Literaria* (1817): Chapter XIV; "Christabel" (1798 / p.1816)

February 28: Mary Wollstonecraft, *Maria; or The Wrongs of Woman* (1798)

Quiz 2

Unit III: Gothic Terror / Gothic Horror

March 4: Ann Radcliffe, *The Italian; or, The Confessional of the Black Penitents: A Romance* (1796): pp 1-120

Essay 1 Due in class.

March 6: *The Italian*: pp 121-240

March 11: *The Italian*: pp 240-360

March 13: *The Italian*: pp 360-end

March 18: Spring Break

March 20: Spring Break

March 25: Matthew Lewis, *The Monk: A Romance* (1796) Volume I (pp 33-131)

March 27: *The Monk*, Volume II (133-245)

April 1: *The Monk*, Volume III (247-end)

April 3: *The Monk*; Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "The Character in the Veil: Imagery of the Surface in the Gothic Novel"

Quiz 3

Unit IV: Gothic Revisioning

April 8: Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* (1847): Chapter 1 through 11 (pp. 37-135)

Revision of Essay 1 Due in class: staple your revision to your original composition and commentary

April 10: *Wuthering Heights*, Chapter 12-23 (pp. 135-229)

April 15: *Wuthering Heights*, full text: Chapter 23-34 (pp. 229-312);

April 17: *Wuthering Heights*; Lord Byron, "She Walks in Beauty" (1815); "Darkness" (1816)

Quiz 4

April 22: Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny" (1917) ; E.T.A. Hoffman, "The Sandman" (1817)

April 24: Neil Gaiman, *The Sandman*, Volume III: "Dream Country" (1989 / 1995); Sigmund Freud, from *Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (1910): "On Dreams" (pp. 142-172 of *The Freud Reader*, Ed. Peter Gay)

Prospectus for Final Paper Due

April 29: Sofia Coppola, *The Virgin Suicides*; Conclusion and Review

May 6: Final Paper Due by 12pm at the English Office, Independence Hall 114.