

Supernatural Folklore FLK 275

Instructor

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Course Description

Ghosts, vampires, werewolves and other supernatural beings are immensely popular and appear in contemporary novels, video games, films, and other media. Belief in the supernatural is explored in television shows that detail the exploits of “ghost hunters” or probe the possibility of extraterrestrial encounters. Statistics gathered by Gallop Poll indicate that an extremely large percentage of North Americans not only believe in the supernatural, but in fact believe that they themselves have had a supernatural or paranormal experience. “Evidence” of the supernatural is, in this sense, all around us. What do people find so compelling about the supernatural? And why, as folklorists, should we concern ourselves with the study of supernatural tradition? This course examines the many forms of supernatural belief traditions that people express through traditional genres and through popular media. We will explore the forms supernatural tradition and belief take in everyday life, and develop models for understanding how supernatural belief relates to other aspects of worldview and culture.

Course Objectives

- Define folklore and differentiate it from popular culture
- Identify and give examples of supernatural traditions in cultures around the world
- Describe predominant scholarly, scientific, and popular attitudes about supernatural phenomena
- Interpret supernatural experiences in a manner respectful of personal belief and cultural contexts

Required Texts

Goldstein, Diane, Sylvia Grider, and Jeannie Banks Thomas. *Haunting Experiences: Ghosts in Contemporary Folklore*. Logan: Utah State UP, 2007.

(at bookstore or free e-book: http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/usupress_pubs/18/).

Additional required readings are posted on Blackboard.

Assignments

20% Discussion Board Posts: click [this link](#) for post requirements

20% Reading Quizzes: click [this link](#) for quiz requirements

30% Research Project: click [this link](#) for project requirements

30% Final Exam: click [this link](#) for exam description

Policies & Resources

Academic Integrity: From the WKU Office of Counseling and Student Affairs: “Violations of academic integrity include cheating, plagiarism, or lying about academic matters. Plagiarism is defined as any use of another writer's words, concepts, or sequence of ideas without acknowledging that writer properly. This includes not only direct quotations of another writer's words, but also paraphrases or summaries of another writer's concepts or ideas without acknowledging the writer properly (i.e., citing them). Cheating includes behaviors such as giving or receiving data or information under any circumstances not permitted by the instructor. Lying about academic matters includes falsification of data or information as part of an academic exercise, or knowingly providing false information to a faculty member. Students who have plagiarized an assignment or otherwise cheated in their academic work or examination may expect an ‘F’ for the assignment in question or ‘F’ for the course, at the instructor's discretion.”

Accessibility and accommodations: I am happy to make accommodations for differing abilities in the classroom. In compliance with university policy, students with disabilities who require accommodations (academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids or services) for this course must contact the Office for Student Disability Services in DUC A-200 of the Student Success Center in Downing University Center (sds@wku.edu; 270-745-5004 or TDD 270-745-3030). Please do not request accommodations directly from me without a letter of accommodation from the Office for Student Disability Services.

Email: You are expected to read and respond to your WKU email regularly. Before emailing me, I ask that you check the syllabus and other course documents first for answers to questions regarding policies, assignments, grades, etc. You can usually expect a response from me within 24-48 hours during the workweek. Please use professional etiquette in your correspondence (salutation, full sentences, signature).

Extra credit: You can earn up to two percentage points of extra credit by completing a 1-page review of a film related to class. Please see [this link](#) for detailed instructions.

Late or missed work: This bi-term course will move quickly, and it is your responsibility to keep up with the material. Late Discussion Board posts or reading quizzes will not be accepted. Grades for your final project will decrease by one letter grade for each day beyond the due date (e.g., a B goes down to a C). Any make-up final exams will be scheduled at my discretion, dependent on adequate documentation of extraordinary circumstances (prior notice is always preferable).

Technological Support

Your success in this course depends on your ability to navigate Blackboard. Please inform me immediately if you have concerns about using this technology; technological issues will not be an excuse for late or missing work. Make use of the resources available for tech support: browse the “Help” menu on your Bb homepage, contact

WKU's IT Helpdesk (270-745-7000 or wku.edu/it/chat), or visit the Technical Support Services window (third floor of Mass Media and Technology Hall).

Weekly Schedule

Weekly Topics	Reading Due	Assignments Due
Week 1: 3/23 Introductions, overview, key concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sims and Stephens (Folklore: 1-20) ▪ <i>Haunting Experiences</i> (Introduction: 1-22) ▪ <i>Haunting Experiences</i> (Chapter 1: 25-59) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Quiz 1 • DB Post 1
Week 2: 3/30 Ghosts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Haunting Experiences</i> (Chapter 2: 60-78) ▪ <i>Haunting Experiences</i> (Chapter 6: 171-205) ▪ <i>Haunting Experiences</i> (Conclusion: 206-227) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Quiz 2 • DB Post 2
Week 3: 4/6 Belief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bennett (Belief and Disbelief: 9-38) ▪ Hufford (Beings Without Bodies: 11-40) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Quiz 3 • DB Post 3
Week 4: 4/13 Fairies, Project Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Arensberg (The Good People: 163-191) ▪ "Irish Fairy Legends" ▪ Research Project Requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Quiz 5 ▪ DB Post 5 ▪ Project Planning

Week 5: 4/20 Aliens, Project Check-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ellis (The Varieties of Alien Experience: 142-159) ▪ Dégh (UFO's and How Folklorists Should Look at Them: 242-248) ▪ Interview Checklist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Quiz 6 ▪ DB Post 6 ▪ Project Progress
Week 6: 4/27 Witchcraft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Kors and Peters (<i>Witchcraft in Europe</i> Introduction: 1-22) ▪ Rieti (<i>Making Witches</i> Triptych: 125-150) ▪ DeRosa (Selling the Story: 152-186) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Quiz 4 • DB Post 4
Week 7: 5/4 Monsters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Asma (<i>On Monsters</i> Introduction: 1-18) ▪ Tucker (Great New England Vampire Panic: 1-8) ▪ Senn (Romanian Werewolves: 206-215) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project Due
Week 8: 5/11 Final Exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review for Final Exam 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final exam (timed)