Spring 2016
EXP 0053: Horror Film: Why We Make and Consume It (TuTh 6-7:15PM)
Olin 11

Instructor: Sam Kitchens ('17)
Phone: 704-930-9816 (For emergencies)
Email: samuel.Kitchens@tufts.edu

Course Description: In this course, we will be viewing a selection of twelve films and will be using them to discuss 1) why horror films are made and 2) why we view horror media. We will pay attention to the historical context and sociopolitical subtext of the films, as well as the interplay between creative auteurs and profit-driven studios. We will gain an appreciation of horror as a complex and multi-faceted medium, while garnering a respect for the different aesthetics and styles that make it unique for production and consumption. Throughout the entire process we will also look at who can make horror, and for who, and the way that non straight-white males are treated as producers, portrayed in horror film, and neglected in marketing.

Course Objectives: At the end of the course, each student will be in a position to provide thoughtful and informed answers to each of the following questions:
• Why would a filmmaker decide to make a horror film and not something else, like say a comedy or an action film?
• What makes a horror film horror and not something else?
• What is the prevalence of horror films on our culture?
• When would one make a horror film? When is horror made for profit?
• When would one choose to view a horror film?
• How is horror made as art? How is horror perceived as art?
• Does the horror genre persist and stay relevant MOST because it is profitable, because it is used to portray art, or because of it’s popularity among media consumer? Can it continue to stay relevant?
• Who makes horror films? Who consumes them?
• How do non straight white males fit into the areas of production and marketing for consumption, and what does this say about Horror Film overall?

Grading:
• Attendance and Participation: 25%
• Weekly Responses: 25%
• Final Project/Paper: 25%
• In-Class Activities: 25%

The course is a pass/fail course, meaning at the end of the course you will receive either a full credit or no credit based on your assessment in the criterion above and your ability to demonstrate that assessment to satisfy either passing or not. Each criteria above will be used to weight your ability to pass the class, and are given equal weight in
your assessment. You need to obtain a total of just a 60% from all four areas combined to receive a pass.

**Fail/Half Credit Policy:**
This course is NOT designed for failure- instead, it is meant to be an active learning experience in which your effort in the class results in a gain of critical thinking skills about Horror Film, it's production, and media production in general. However, there are technicalities that may result in either receiving a fail credit or a half credit. Failure to complete any of the grading criterion above at all will result in a failure. Not turning in a final project will result in a failure- the ExCollege requires a final project from each student in order to receive a non-failing grade. Plagiarism will result in a failure and worse. Half credit is determined case-by-case by myself and the ExCollege. These cases may look like: missing half or more of the classes, not participating in half or more of the in-class activities, failing to turn in 3 or more weekly assignments, or turning in a final project that does not meet the ExCollege standards of effort.

**Course Schedule:** First we will 1) briefly look at the horror genre in a nuanced way to get a feel for what it is. Once we get an idea of what horror is, we can then start to look at 2) what about horror films make them profitable and 3) therefore why filmmakers choose to make them. To compliment the logistical side of this, 4) we will analyze what about what makes them profitable also make films attractive to media viewers, or i.e. why we keep viewing certain trends as consumers of popular media. 5) next we will look at why filmmakers create horror as art, and 6) why consumers consume horror as art. We will finish up the class by 7) looking at foreign trends, 8) looking at the different demographics of actors, producers, and consumers of horror, and lastly 9) examine the relationship between horror as art vs. profit and consuming it as popular media vs art.

**Weekly Assignments:** Every week each student will be asked to submit a written assignment on Trunk to be specified based on what we are talking about that week. Generally, it will be a prompt based on what we are talking about in the class using the movie of the week as a medium for the response. You may skip completing no more than two weekly assignments for a full passing credit. I will make a note the first time you do not turn in an assignment, and will e-mail you personally if a second assignment is not turned in as a warning for your grade.

**Movie of the Week:** Every week you are required to watch a movie listed in the schedule below. Watching every movie is required for in-class participation. I will hold a movie showing for each movie for your convenience. I ask that you attend at least 6 of the showings.

**Horror Timeline:**
1930s - 60s: the beginning of American Horror, Creature Features/Supernatural
60s - Late 70s: Gothic Horror and Psychological Horror, the reign of Hitchcock
Late 70s - mid 80s: Slashers
Mid 80s- Late 80s: Splatter Films  
1990s: Psychological Thrillers and the Dark Age of Horror  
2000 - 2003: The Blair Witch Project and the Resurgence of Horror  
2004 - Present: Torture Porn, the New Splatter Films, and Exploitation Horror  
2007 - Present: Found Footage Films  

**Wk1: Introduction to the Course/First Week Of Classes**  
1) Th 01/21: Syllabus, description of course, course requirements. Shortened Class.

(1) *The Many Different Genres and Styles of Horror Film*  
**Wk2: “What is Horror film?”....and What Isn’t It?**  
1) Tu 01/26: Review of the “Horror Film Timeline,” Go over 5 classic horror genres  
(Supernatural Horror, Gothic Horror, Sci-Fi Horror, Apocalyptic Horror, Psychological Horror/Thriller)  
2) Th 01/28: Go over 7 more (Comedy in Horror, Exploitation Horror, Found-footage Film/Anthology Horror, Insanity Horror, Independent Film, Allegorical Horror). Discuss what horror can be.  
**Movie of the Week:** *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*(1975)

**Wk3: Analyze the Horror Genre/Discuss Profitability of Horror Films**  
3) Tu 01/26: Discuss the movie of the week; class genre activity: show various clips meant to challenge whether students have a grasp of what the difference b/w each genre is and whether something is horror or not.

(II) *Popular Trends in Horror Film*  
1) Th 01/28: What has made horror films profitable part 1: Cheap, easy to make, simple plots, unknown actors and actresses, Halloween(the Holiday).  
**Movie of the Week:** *Paranormal Activity*(2007)

**Wk4: Film Making Decisions: Cost vs Content**  
2) Tu 02/09: Discuss the movie of the week; why would filmmakers see these kinds of movies attractive? Look at the success of Paranormal Activity vs. its cost. Film making activity: assign dollar values to aspects of production(and have them work in groups to include different things, like actors, writing a script, etc. and give them a “budget”).  
-first movie: Friday the 13th  
-second movie: A comedy?  
3) Th 02/11: Discuss popular content and trends; not only how but what genre to use-look at Slashers and Exploitation Horror. What about these genres are attractive to producers? Simple plot vs. trends in content. Talk about the Slasher and its effect on the genre in making Horror a profitable media. Do “Whodunnit game;” show them the Scream clip that shows anyone could have done it.  
**Movie of the Week:** *The Evil Dead*(1981)

**Wk5: Sequels, Trilogies, and Marketing**
4) **Tu 02/16**: discuss MoW- what about this movie was attractive for film makers? The original was successful! Sequels and Trilogies can ride the formula of the original. Familiarity makes people want to watch- ask them what kinds of things they’d need to keep for the second film. About franchises? Show trailer for “The woman in Black 2.”

5) **Th 02/18**: What else do you need for marketing? Well, why do most people watch scary movies? Halloween(routine) and for the experience. Market your film.

**Movie of the Week**: *Sinister(2012)*

**Wk6: Experiencing Horror Films**

6) **Tu 02/23**: discuss - what about this film was an enjoyable experience? i.e. indicative of the horror movie experience? What did you learn about “the horror genre” from this experience? If this is the only horror movie you’ve ever seen, what do you think? We like movies with jump scares, menacing villains.

7) **Th 02/25**: Happy endings? Likeable characters? show videos to get them to contrast the two.

**Movie of the Week**: *Deadgirl(2008)*

**(III) Artistic Trends in Horror Film**

**Wk7: Film Makers As Artists**

1) **Tu 03/01**: discuss: how was this concept new? show two other inventive trends in zombie films. Show some Scream. Some artists try to break away from the genres, go against the grain. Assign each person a different genre, and make something about it go against the grain.

2) **Th 03/03**: Halloween acts as a stage for new ideas and political commentary - clip from *We Live*.

**Movie of the Week**: *Tusk(2014)*

**Wk8: Satire and Independent Horror Films**

3) **Tu 03/08**: movie discussion- satire. Describe satire; funny vs. serious. “Satire” Activity.

4) **Th 03/10**: Independent Horror films- all great independent horror films became classics. Talk about Indy Horror as the reason for the change in genres. Indy filmmakers become superstars, and their actors/actresses do to. It’s known for being more artsy, eccentric.

**Movie of the Week**: *Repo! The Genetic Opera(2008)*

**Wk9: Quality Over Cult Films**

5) **Tu 03/15**: Discuss film- importance of cult films. Darryn Lynn Bousman made Saw, became a mega success, went on to make Repo! People loved and hated it. What makes something a cult film? It’s eccentric in some way; shadowcasting, repeated viewings, etc. These are those interested in specifically underground films. Genres that work well with this: Sci-Fi, Body Horror, etc.
6) Th 03/17: More than eccentrics- good filmmaking. Cinematography, acting, etc. So why like horror films particularly? Dark aesthetic. Talk about the allure of the demented.  
Movie of the Week: The Loved Ones(2012)

Wk10: Spring Break 03/19 - 03/27

Wk11: Cultural Perspectives: Australian and Canadian Horror  
7) Tu 03/29: Well made film- foreign film. People view films based on a cultural preference. Australian Horror Film.

(IV) Analysis of Horror Film as Profit, Art, and Its Overall Consumption  
1) Th 03/31: Canadian Horror Films- bring up Tusk.  
Movie of the Week: The Ring(2002) or Ringu(1998) -split up class

Wk12: Japanese Horror and Western Remakes  
2) Tu 04/05: Movie discussion; Japan! Second movie discussion. Westernization of Japanese Horror and Western Horror  
3) Th 04/07: American remakes - what is different about them. Show clips of “The Evil Dead 2013”  
Movie of the Week: Starry Eyes(2014)

Wk13: Actors, Producers, Consumers, and Franchises  
4) Tu 04/12: Movie discussion; who is horror for, and who gets to be in it?  
5) Th 04/14: Franchises- artistic leeway and consumer dependence. Halloween, Saw, The Evil Dead; knowing why they do now, who is there franchise going to be for?  
Movie of the Week: The Cabin in the Woods(2012)

Wk14: Film Maker Vs. Consumer  
6) Tu 04/19: Movie discussion; what is the relationship between the film maker and the consumer?  
7) Th 04/21: Debate: Who should have more say in what determines the makeup of Horror Film: film makers, or consumers?  
Movie of the Week: It Follows(2014)

(V) Final Projects and the End of the Course  
Wk15: Last Week  
1) Tu 04/26: Project Presentations part 1  
2) Th 04/28: Project Presentations part 2  
Optional Movie: You’re Next(2011)

Wk16: Post Class Schedule  
05/02 Last Day of Classes/written Portion of Projects Due
05/03 Reading Period Begins
05/06 Final Exams Begin

Wk17: Final Exam week
05/13: Last day of Final Exams