

Fall 2019

HSS 403-003: Spirits, Specters - The Haunted Text!

Jon Curley

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HSS403(003) Literature Seminar:

Spirits, Specters: The Haunted Text!

W. 11:30-2:20
CKB206

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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 4-6pm or by appointment

Course Description

Something is haunting this classroom...

That *thing* is what haunting is and what constitutes its presence.

Over the course of the semester, we shall embark on an inquiry into the happening of haunting, both in relation normative conceptions (paranormal/supernatural) and various divergent representations of its occurrence. In doing so, we shall encounter political, theological, psychological, and cultural examples and notions of what haunting is and the function it serves. Multiple representations, stylistic techniques, governing practices, and thematic and philosophical underpinnings of haunting in contemporary literature will be taken into consideration. No mere literature survey, this course will investigate and interrogate a variety of texts in order to assess, understand, and historically ground the tensions and unease of the social landscape through literature. In doing so, we will acquire a sense of how trauma, transgression, recollection, and art shape consciousness and the character of society, past and present. Moreover, we will be able to explore narrative conventions documenting the crisis of identity and how haunting conjoins the unknown and the known, the extraordinary, and the ordinary.

Requirements

You are expected to keep up with the reading and complete all assigned exercises *on time*. All books should be obtained at the beginning of the semester; lagging will be costly. **This is an intensive reading-oriented class and only seriously committed students should consider attending it.** Classroom participation is essential. I will assign in class and through Canvas (canvas.njit.edu) specific writing assignments as our discussion and learning evolve. All of these requisites are designed so we can share an intellectually vital, enjoyable, and immersive experience with these stories and the issues they address.

Additionally:

Two Essays (4-5 pages; 6-8 pages)	50 points
Weekly writings & Journal	20 points
Class Participation (includes attendance)	15 points
Oral Presentation	15 points

Required Texts (in alphabetical order by author, not order of reading assignments):

Roberto Bolano, *Distant Star*

Roberto Bolano, *By Night in Chile*

Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*

accessible at:

<https://libcom.org/files/Derrida%20-%20Specters%20of%20Marx%20-%20The%20State%20of%20the%20Debt,%20the%20Work%20of%20Mourning%20and%20the%20New%20International.pdf>

Lydie Salvayre, *The Company of Ghosts*

[Note Bene: In addition to the above titles, there will be many sources available for free online. Also, you will generate and adopt several secondary sources relevant to the scope of this class and ideally suited for use for your essays. I will assist you in creating a list and vetting the sources you find.]

Week 1

9/4 Introduction
Ghosts in the Machine: The Varieties of Haunting in Literature

Week 2

9/11 Introduction (con't)
Book of Revelations; The Communist Manifesto

Week 3

9/18 Edgar Allan Poe, "The Black Cat," "The Tell-Tale Heart," "Fall of the House of Usher," (www.poestories.com)

Week 4

9/25 "Ligeia," "The Masque of the Red Death," "Berenice," "The Cask of Amontillado"
(www.poestories.com)

Week 5

10/2 Roberto Bolaño, *Distant Star*

Week 6

10/9 Roberto Bolaño, *Distant Star*

Week 7

10/16 *Zodiac* (film)

ESSAY ONE DUE

Week 8

10/23 Lydie Salvayre, *Company of Ghosts*

Week 9

10/30 Lydie Salvayre, *Company of Ghosts*

Week 10

11/6 PTSD/abreaction/trauma (readings to be announced)

Week 11

11/13 Ghosts, Haunting, History & Philosophy:

Derrida, *Specters of Marx* (Exordium; Chapter 5)

Week 12

11/20 Group Roundtable Discussion
Oral Presentations

Week 13

** Thanksgiving Recess—November 28 - December 1** NO CLASS

Week 14

12/4 Oral Presentations

Week 15

12/11 Oral Presentations

LAST DAY OF CLASS!!

ESSAY 2 Due at 5pm on Friday, December 13th (Friday the 13th!)