

## American Gothic

Senior Seminar  
ENGL 4399.001 Fall 2010 Syllabus  
TR 12:30-1:50 pm Preston 100  
Prof. Neill Matheson  
office: Carlisle 406  
office hours: TR 3:30-5:00, and by appointment  
email: [matheson@uta.edu](mailto:matheson@uta.edu)  
English Department main office: 817-272-2692

### Course Description:

Though the Gothic novel originated as a popular literary genre in eighteenth-century England, American writers after the Revolution quickly made it their own, adapting and transforming it to suit their purposes. This course will explore Gothic fiction as it takes shape in nineteenth-century America, investigating the cultural preoccupations and political fantasies which this literary mode expressed. From the nation's beginnings, American writers used Gothic literature to provide a darker counter-narrative to the official national story, asking scandalous questions and exploring transgressive meanings. Marked as a genre by the mixing of terror with pleasure, by excess and violation, Gothic enabled the expression of "unspeakable" cultural anxieties and desires. We will focus on Gothic writing that engages with a range of issues haunting the nineteenth-century American imagination, including race and slavery, gender and sexuality, and family life and domestic ideology, asking whether such Gothic tropes as monstrosity and boundary-crossing worked to contest or affirm prevailing norms and ideals. Though this course concentrates primarily on nineteenth-century literature and culture, we will view two films, in order to explore Gothic's twentieth-century afterlife.

### Course texts:

Louisa May Alcott, *Behind a Mask* (Hesperion)  
Charles Brockden Brown, *Edgar Huntly* (Hackett)  
Charles Chesnutt, *The Conjure Woman and Other Conjure Tales* (Duke UP)  
Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Young Goodman Brown & Other Tales* (Dover)  
Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw* (Bedford)  
Herman Melville, *Bartleby & Benito Cereno* (Dover)  
Edgar Allan Poe, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (Broadview)  
Edgar Allan Poe, *Selected Tales* (Penguin)  
Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (Bedford)

### Course Requirements:

1. Short paper (4-6 pages).
2. Research paper (12-15 pages) formatted according to latest MLA guidelines. You should turn in a prospectus for the research paper no later than Nov. 16. I will provide a handout with guidelines for the prospectus, as well as advice about and expectations for the research paper.
3. Oral presentation based on research for final paper.
4. Final exam.

## 5. Participation.

**Note:** All major assignments must be completed in order to pass the course.

### **Course Grade:**

Short paper	20%
Final paper	35%
Oral presentation	10%
Final exam	25%
Participation	10%

### **Attendance, Participation, Preparation:**

Student participation is an extremely important part of this course. This course will primarily be organized around discussion of the readings, rather than lectures; student interests will play a major role in shaping our discussions. I expect you to come to class having carefully read the texts for each day's meeting, prepared with questions, ideas, enthusiasms, or objections.

Because this course depends on your full involvement, regular attendance is also essential for its success. More than three absences will have a significant impact on your grade for the course. More than eight absences may result in failure for the course. Late arrivals (and early departures) are disruptive, and a pattern of tardiness will also affect your grade.

### **Drop Policy:**

Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance. Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. Contact the Financial Aid Office for more information.

### **Prerequisite:**

ENGL 2350 and completion of 18 hours of required 3000 – 4000 level English courses.

### **Student Learning Outcomes:**

Students should be able to:

- Demonstrate critical understanding of the specific authors and texts covered in the course, and identify connections synthetically between these texts.
- Demonstrate knowledge of major themes and issues relevant to Gothic literature.
- Identify the characteristics of Gothic literature as a genre; discuss its difference from and interconnections with other relevant literary genres; and provide an account of important historical changes in the generic characteristics of Gothic literature.

- Demonstrate a complex understanding of the relationship between Gothic literature and significant historical and cultural contexts, including analyzing the relevance of important historical events or topics to specific literary works.
- Explain and make use of analytical and theoretical concepts and literary critical terminology covered in the course.
- Express ideas and perform analysis in clear, concise, logical, and persuasive writing.
- Express ideas clearly through relevant oral contributions to class discussion, and respond substantially to the ideas of other students.

### **Academic Integrity:**

It is the philosophy of The University of Texas at Arlington that academic dishonesty is a completely unacceptable mode of conduct and will not be tolerated in any form. All persons involved in academic dishonesty will be disciplined in accordance with University regulations and procedures. Discipline may include suspension or expulsion from the University. “Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts” (*Regents Rules and Regulations*).

The policy for this course is that any assignment found to involve plagiarism or other significant academic dishonesty will receive a zero.

### **Americans with Disabilities Act:**

The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including the *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*. All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide “reasonable accommodations” to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Any student requiring an accommodation for this course must provide the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter certified by the staff in the Office for Students with Disabilities, University Hall 102. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at [www.uta.edu/disability](http://www.uta.edu/disability) or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

Let me know if you have a disability, and we can work together to ensure that you are able to participate fully in the course.

### **Student Support Services Available:**

The University of Texas at Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. These resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals to resources for any reason, students may contact the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107 or visit [www.uta.edu/resources](http://www.uta.edu/resources) for more information.

## Electronic Communication Policy:

The University of Texas at Arlington has adopted the University “MavMail” address as the sole official means of communication with students. MavMail is used to remind students of important deadlines, advertise events and activities, and permit the University to conduct official transactions exclusively by electronic means. For example, important information concerning registration, financial aid, payment of bills, and graduation are now sent to students through the MavMail system. All students are assigned a MavMail account. *Students are responsible for checking their MavMail regularly.* Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/email/>. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, and it remains active even after they graduate from UT Arlington.

To obtain your NetID or for logon assistance, visit <https://webapps.uta.edu/oit/selfservice/>. If you are unable to resolve your issue from the Self-Service website, contact the Helpdesk at [helpdesk@uta.edu](mailto:helpdesk@uta.edu).

I will use your UTA email address for course “handouts” (including this syllabus!) and announcements, as well as to contact you individually if necessary. So be sure to check your MavMail account frequently.

## Course Schedule:

**Note:** This schedule is provisional: I may make substitutions in readings or changes in the dates of assignments if necessary.

**Aug. 26** Introduction

**Aug. 31** Start Brown, *Edgar Huntly*; Fred Botting, “Introduction” from *Gothic* (handout)

**Sept. 2** *Edgar Huntly*

**Sept. 7** *Edgar Huntly*

**Sept. 9** *Edgar Huntly*; Jared Gardner, “Edgar Huntly’s Savage Awakening” (e-reserves)

**Sept. 14** Start Shelley, *Frankenstein*

**Sept. 16** *Frankenstein*

**Sept. 21** *Frankenstein*

**Sept. 23** *Frankenstein*; Fred Botting, “Reflections of Excess” (in Bedford *Frankenstein*)

**Sept. 28** Film: *Frankenstein* (1931); **first paper due**

**Sept. 30** Freud, “The Uncanny” (e-reserves); Poe, “The Imp of the Perverse”

**Oct. 5** Nicholas Royle, “The Uncanny: An Introduction” (e-reserves); begin Poe, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*

**Oct. 7** *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*

**Oct. 12** *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*

**Oct. 14** *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*; Poe, “MS. Found in a Bottle”

**Oct. 19** Poe, “The Black Cat,” “The Cask of Amontillado,” “William Wilson,” “The Man of the Crowd,” “The Fall of the House of Usher,” “The Man that was Used Up,” “Hop-Frog”

**Oct. 21** Poe, “Ligeia,” “Berenice,” “Morella,” “Eleanora”; Joan Dayan, “Amorous Bondage: Poe, Ladies, Slaves” (e-reserves); Hawthorne, “The Birthmark,” “Rappaccini’s Daughter”

**Oct. 26** Melville, “Benito Cereno”

**Oct. 28** “Benito Cereno”; Eric Sundquist, “Melville, Delany, and New World Slavery” (e-reserves)

**Nov. 2** Alcott, *Behind a Mask*; Teresa Goddu, “(Un)Veiling the Marketplace” (e-reserve)

**Nov. 4** *Behind a Mask*

**Nov. 9** Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw*

**Nov. 11** *The Turn of the Screw*

**Nov. 16** James, “The Jolly Corner” (e-reserves); Wharton, “Afterwards,” “The Pomegranate Seed” (e-reserves)

**Nov. 18** Charles Chesnutt, *Conjure Tales*

**Nov. 23** Charles Chesnutt, *Conjure Tales*

**Nov. 25 Thanksgiving** — no class!

**Nov. 30** Film: *The Haunting* (1963)

**Dec. 2** *The Haunting* continued; begin presentations

**Dec. 7** Presentations; **final paper due**

**Dec. 9** Presentations

**Final exam: Thurs. Dec. 16 11:00 – 1:30 p.m.** (in our usual classroom)