

Spring 2025
English 3850: 002
Seminar in Literary Studies (3 credits)

Professor Jessica Straley
Tues and Thurs 12:25-1:45pm
WEB 1450

HAUNTED HOUSES



Film still from Alfred Hitchcock, *Psycho* (1960)

Course Objectives

This seminar explores the literary and cultural fascination with the haunted house. More than a convenient setting for spooky tales, the haunted house provokes questions about the persistence of memory, the vulnerability of family, the links between the living and the dead, the fetishization of home ownership, our psychological attachments to place, and our affective relationships with seemingly inanimate objects. We will trace literary conventions of the genre (ghostly apparitions, gothic mansions, unreliable narrators) as we interrogate the anxieties and obsessions probed in each text. Do houses have personalities? Do objects preserve psychic traces of previous owners? Does physical space define the potential of individuals or the contours of family? What does the haunted house reveal about human psychology, family dynamics, and national history? Through class discussions and written assignments, we will use tales of domestic hauntings to introduce us to the methods of literary study, including close reading literary and cinematic texts, identifying interpretive problems, constructing analytical arguments based on textual evidence, evaluating and integrating secondary sources, and drafting, editing, and revising polished scholarly essays.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, you will be able to

- Apply sustained close attention to the details of literary and other creative works and grapple with the interpretive complexities that are the building blocks of literary analysis
- Articulate how formal and structural features, compositional elements, and/or literary techniques generate thematically and symbolically meaningful relationships
- Craft a nuanced argument that integrates and analyzes formal and textual evidence, moves beyond the 5-paragraph essay, and achieves professional presentation

Texts for Purchase

Please buy only THESE editions of the following:

Shirley Jackson, *The Haunting of Hill House* (Penguin: ISBN 978-0143039983)

Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw* (Penguin: ISBN 978-0141441351)

Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (Vintage: ISBN 978-1400033416)

Shorter works are available in Canvas, and instructions for viewing films will be provided

Grading & Requirements

Class Participation: 20%

Close Reading Presentation and Essay: 15%

Critical Engagement Draft and Essay: 15%

Spooky Spaces Blog and Responses: 10%

Peer Reviews: 10%

Final Research Drafting Steps and Essay: 30%

A >93%; A- 90-93%; B+ 87-89%; B 83-86%; B- 80-82%; C+ 77-79%; C 73-76%; C- 70-72%; D+ 67-69%; D 63-66%; D- 60-62%; E <59%. Participation points deducted for routinely missing class.

University Policies and Resources

Academic Misconduct

It is expected that students comply with University of Utah policies regarding academic honesty, including but not limited to refraining from cheating, plagiarizing, misrepresenting one's work, and/or inappropriately collaborating. This includes the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools without citation, documentation, or authorization. Students are expected to adhere to the prescribed professional and ethical standards of the profession/discipline for which they are preparing. Any student who engages in academic dishonesty or who violates the professional and ethical standards for their profession/discipline may be subject to academic sanctions as per the University of Utah's Student Code: [Policy 6-410: Student Academic Performance, Academic Conduct, and Professional and Ethical Conduct](#).

Plagiarism and cheating are serious offenses and may be punished by failure on an individual assignment, and/or failure in the course. Academic misconduct, according to the University of Utah Student Code: *"...Includes, but is not limited to, cheating, misrepresenting one's work, inappropriately collaborating, plagiarism, and fabrication or falsification of information...It also includes facilitating academic misconduct by intentionally helping or attempting to help another to commit an act of academic misconduct."*

For details on plagiarism and other important course conduct issues, see the U's [Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#).

Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. All written information in this course can be made available in an alternative format with prior notification to the [Center for Disability & Access](#) (CDA). CDA will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. Prior notice is appreciated. To read the full accommodations policy for the University of Utah, please see Section Q of the [Instruction & Evaluation regulations](#). In compliance with ADA requirements, some students may need to record course content. Any recordings of course content are for personal use only, should not be shared, and should never be made publicly available. In addition, recordings must be destroyed at the conclusion of the course. If you will need accommodations in this class, or for more information about what support they provide, contact:

Center for Disability & Access

801-581-5020

disability.utah.edu

65 Student Services Building

201 S 1460 E

Salt Lake City, UT 84112

Safety at the U

The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding campus safety via text message. For more safety information and to view available training resources, including helpful videos, visit safeu.utah.edu. To report suspicious activity or to request a courtesy escort, contact:

Campus Police & Department of Public Safety

801-585-COPS (801-585-2677)

dps.utah.edu

1735 E. S. Campus Dr.

Salt Lake City, UT 84112

Addressing Sexual Misconduct

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status, or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to university officials:

Title IX Coordinator & Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action

801-581-8365

oeo.utah.edu

135 Park Building

201 Presidents' Cir.

Salt Lake City, UT 84112

Office of the Dean of Students

801-581-7066

deanofstudents.utah.edu

270 Union Building

200 S. Central Campus Dr.

Salt Lake City, UT 84112

To file a police report, contact:

Campus Police & Department of Public Safety

801-585-COPS (801-585-2677)

dps.utah.edu

1735 E. S. Campus Dr.

Salt Lake City, UT 84112

If you do not feel comfortable reporting to authorities, the U's Victim-Survivor Advocates provide free, confidential, and trauma-informed support services to students, faculty, and staff who have experienced interpersonal violence. To privately explore options and resources available to you with an advocate, contact the Center for Student Wellness; see more information below.

Student Wellness

Your personal health and wellness are essential to your success as a student. Personal concerns like stress, anxiety, relationship difficulties, depression, or cross-cultural differences can interfere with a student's ability to succeed and thrive in this course and at the University of Utah. Please feel welcome to reach out to your instructor or TA to handle issues regarding your coursework. For helpful resources to manage your personal wellness and counseling options, contact:

Counseling Services

801-581-6826

counselingcenter.utah.edu

Student Services Building

201 South 1460 East, Rm 426

Salt Lake City, UT 84112

Center for Student Wellness

801-581-7776

wellness.utah.edu

2100 Eccles Student Life Center

1836 Student Life Way

Salt Lake City, UT 84112

Preliminary Reading and Assignment Schedule

Week One

1/7 – Introduction

1/9 – Poe, “The Fall of the House of Usher” (1839)

Week Two

1/14 – Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper” (1892)

Perrault, “Bluebeard” (1697)

1/16 – Wharton, “Afterward” (1910)

Wharton, Excerpt from *The Decoration of Houses* (1897)

Week Three

1/21 – James, *The Turn of the Screw* (1897)

1/23 – James, *The Turn of the Screw*

Week Four

1/28 – Freud, “The Uncanny” (1919)

1/30 – Lovecraft, “The Shunned House” (1937)

Week Five

2/6 – Jackson, *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959)

2/8 – Jackson, *The Haunting of Hill House*

2/9 – Close Reading Due

Week Six

2/13 – Jackson, *The Haunting of Hill House*

2/15 – Jackson, *The Haunting of Hill House*

Week Seven

2/20 – Butterworth-McDermitt, “James’s Fractured Fairy Tale” (2007)

2/22 – Weisheng, “Edgar Allan Poe’s Gothic Aesthetics of Things” (2015)

Week Eight

- 2/27 – Library Workshop (Exact date TBD)
- 2/29 – Clayton (dir), *The Innocents* (1961)
Flanagan (dir), *The Haunting of Hill House* (2018)
- 3/1 – Critical Engagement Drafts Due to Peer Reviewers

Week Nine

- 3/5 – Critical Engagement Workshop In Class
- 3/7 – Bradbury, “There Will Come Soft Rains” and “The Veldt” (1950)
- 3/8 – Critical Engagement Due

Week Ten: Spring Break

Week Eleven

- 3/19 – Miles, “Madame Lalaurie” (2015)
- 3/21 – Morrison, *Beloved* (1987)

Week Twelve

- 3/26 – Morrison, *Beloved*
- 3/28 – Morrison, *Beloved*

Week Thirteen

- 4/2 – Morrison, *Beloved*
- 4/4 – Ford, “Claiming, Killing, and Haunting in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*” (2020)
- 4/5 – Spooky Spaces Blog Due

Week Fourteen

- 4/9 – Spielberg (dir), *Poltergeist* (1982)
- 4/9 – Spooky Spaces Blog Responses Due
- 4/11 – Rose (dir), *Candyman* (1992)
- 4/12 – Final Essay Proposals and Annotated Bibliographies Due

Week Fifteen

- 4/16 – King, “1408” (1999)
- 4/18 – Link, “Two Houses” (2016)
- 4/19 – Final Essay Draft Due to Peer Reviewers

Week Sixteen

- 4/22 – Final Essay Draft Workshop In Class

Finals Week

- 4/29 – Final Essay Due