

Fall 2018: ENG 4900: Frankenstein's Legacy 44711 (4 credits)

Oakland University, College of Arts and Science, Department of English

Instructor: Robert Anderson

Class Meeting: 268 SFH

O'Dowd 544 D

T-H: 10-11:47

248-370-2266

Office Hours: T-H: 12-1:00

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-From Oakland University's Undergraduate Catalog:

Prerequisites/Comments: ENG 211 and the three required 300-level British and American literary history courses; or permission of the instructor. Satisfies the university general education requirement for the capstone experience. Satisfies the university general education requirement for a writing intensive course in the major. Prerequisite for writing intensive: completion of the university writing foundation requirement. Students registered for English courses are expected to attend the first class meeting of the semester. Students who fail to attend the first class meeting may be dropped from the class. **COURSE DESCRIPTION:** For lovers of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, 2018 is a banner year. In honor of the 200th anniversary of the novel's publication, festivals, conferences, news articles, adaptations, and courses (like this one) are popping up all over the cultural landscape. It is hard to think of a novel that has generated more cultural products than *Frankenstein*: more theatrical and film adaptations and parodies than you could count (from *Frankenweenie* to *Abbot and Costello Meet Frankenstein*), action figures, memes, cartoons, breakfast cereals, Supreme Court decisions and discussions of race and campaign finance. In this course, we look at that legacy to understand the source of that influence.

-This course satisfies the general education requirements for the capstone experience. The students will demonstrate:

- **appropriate uses of a variety of methods of inquiry and a recognition of ethical considerations that arise.** We will do this by reading primary (literary) and secondary (critical) texts; engaging in historical and critical research; and writing essays that incorporate close reading with historical and critical contextualization.
- **the ability to integrate knowledge learned in general education and its relevance to the student's life and career.** We will accomplish this by exploring the ways scientific discourses shape—and are shaped by—literature, and by examining how these discourses inform our sense of our humanity.

-As a capstone, this course will demonstrate the relevance of the general education knowledge area of Literature and the relevance of the cross-cutting capacities of effective communication and critical thinking by building upon our knowledge of literary analysis and developing our understanding of literature's place in (historical) cultures, and by providing a variety of opportunities for written and oral communication (papers, discussions, presentations).

This course fulfills the requirements for a writing intensive course in the major by requiring writing assignments of various lengths and formats, with opportunities for comments and revision that will account for 80% of the grade.

Few books have cast longer shadows than *Frankenstein*. It has generated breakfast cereals, countless cartoons, perhaps all of science fiction, art films, social criticism, memes, popular movies, Supreme Court rulings, protests, plays, and on and on. As we look at some of the novel's offspring, we will explore the source of that influence—and even formulate theories about how

to trace the novel's DNA in later productions. Along the way, we will explore narrative form, genre, discourse and the way texts use other texts to intervene in their own culture.

Grading:

Although there are 5 papers for this course, your grade will be determined on the basis of 4 papers and your participation.

1: One paragraph close reading of a passage from Volume 1 of *Frankenstein*. Analyze the language or formal features of a brief passage (a sentence or two). Introduce your analysis with a brief sentence identifying the novel and situating your passage, then jump in and discuss the way the language and the form work. Cite small chunks (a few words) of the passage at a time and then analyze them. You don't need to cover the whole passage. Your task is to say something smart and insightful. I will give more specific guidelines shortly. This won't be graded, but you have to turn it in to get credit for the class.

2: A three-page close reading of a passage from *Frankenstein*. This paper should follow the same guidelines as the first paper, except it should be 3 pages. This is one of the most important things you will do in this class. Think of yourself as an intellectual with important things to say. More details later. **15%** of your final grade.

3. Research Report. I am excited to see what you come up with for this assignment. Your task is to discover some cool *Frankenstein* progeny lurking around in our culture. This can be a novel, a film, or anything else you can discover. For example, one of the exciting things I want to show you this semester is how *Frankenstein* has entered our political and judicial conversations about campaign finance law. To do this, you are going to need to formulate some criteria for what makes something a descendent of *Frankenstein*. We will read some versions of this—but you can formulate **and** defend your own criteria. 3-4 pages. **15%** of your final grade

4. Draft of seminar paper. The requirements for your final/seminar paper are pretty open—at least as far as what you choose to write about. Your final paper needs to be 10-12 pages long. It should consult recent criticism. It should have something to say about the connection between the text(s) you are discussing and history/culture. While you may write a straightforward essay on *Frankenstein*, I'd like you to address the course topic—some connection between *Frankenstein* and another cultural production. The draft need not be 10-12 pages, but it should be a substantial start towards that goal (say 5 pages?). The draft is worth **20%** of your grade.

5. The seminar paper: See the description of the draft. It will be worth **30%** of your grade.

6. Participation. This is a seminar. Participation is essential to making the course work—for all of us. I expect you to engage in our conversations on a daily basis. **20%** of your final grade.

Attendance: On Tuesdays and Thursdays at 10 am, the place for you to be is in class. If you miss more than 3 or 4 classes, it will hurt your grade.

Academic Conduct. Don't plagiarize. Do your own work. Acknowledge when you use outside sources (which you can on every assignment, except the close readings). If you have a question, ask me. If I suspect you of cheating or plagiarizing, I will report you to the Dean of Students. Bad things will happen to you. We will both be miserable (but I'll get over it more quickly). Don't do it. Consult OU's academic conduct policy:

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<http://catalog.oakland.edu/content.php?catoid=3&navoid=150>

Students with Disabilities:

All students with disabilities that require accommodations should let me know and contact the Office of Disability and Support Services (121 North Foundation Hall, (248) 370-3266) during the first week of classes. For more information, visit <http://www.oakland.edu/dss>.

Class culture, respect, dignity. Let's treat each other with respect. One of the great things about college is that it provides a forum for all of us to experiment and shape who we are. If I can do something in class to help you in those efforts—pronouns, names, atmosphere, dialogue, let me know.

General Rules:

Don't mess with your phones or laptops or whatever devices during class. If you like to take notes on a laptop, that is fine. Just don't do your shopping, Instagramming or Snapchatting during class. Try not to be late. Turn in all your papers on time.

Finally, I'd like you to think of yourself as an intellectual, a writer, someone who has important things to say. That means, when you write a paper, take it seriously. Think of it as a way of engaging with the world. That means, don't slack off. Don't settle for sloppy thinking or sloppy prose. Push yourself. Write good sentences.

Many of you will have read *Frankenstein* before. So have I. That does not mean you can get by without reading it again.

Texts:

Robinson, *The Original Frankenstein*: 9780307474421

Norton *Frankenstein* 9780393927931

Frankenstein in Baghdad: 9780143128793

Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep: 9780345404473

Many of you will have other editions of *Frankenstein*. Use the ones I list here. Otherwise, you will be lost when we talk about it.

Course Schedule

September

6 H Intro, EDISON, Snowflake Students, Trump, Facebook.

11 T *Frankenstein*, volume I (Norton)

13 H Guillermo del Toro, *The Shape of Water* (watch before class)

Del Toro, BAFTA Acceptance Speech

Linnaeus, "Primates" pdf

Elizabeth Young, *Black Frankenstein*, Introduction, pdf.

Paper 1: 1 paragraph close reading of a passage from *Frankenstein*, volume 1.

18 T *Frankenstein*, vol. II (Norton)

20 H *Frankenstein*, vol. III (Norton)

Garber, "When Beauty is a Troll" pdf

25 T Peake, *Presumption, or the Fate of Frankenstein*, pdf;

Hoffman, "Automata" pdf

Paper 2: 3 page close-reading of a passage from *Frankenstein*

27 H Robinson, *The Original Frankenstein* (258-309)

Elizabeth Young, *Black Frankenstein*, ch. 1, "The United States of *Frankenstein*"

October

2 T Hoffmann, "The Sandman" pdf

Freud, "The Uncanny" pdf

- Robinson, *The Original Frankenstein* (309-76)
- 4 H Melville, "The Bell-Tower"
Young, *Black Frankenstein* (ch. 1, "United States of Frankenstein") pdf
Robinson, *The Original Frankenstein* (376-429)
- 9 T Stephen Crane, "The Monster"
Young, *Black Frankenstein* (ch. 2, "Black Monsters, Dead Metaphors") pdf
- 11 H Spielberg, *AI* (watch before class)
Balfour, *Allegories of Origins: Frankenstein after the Enlightenment*" pdf
Paper 3: research and report on some contemporary *Frankenstein* reincarnation.
- 16 T Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (through ch. 5; 3-57)
- 18 H Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (through ch. 10; 58-111)
Maureen McLane, "Literate Species: populations, "humanities, and the specific failure of literature in *Frankenstein*"
- 23 T Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (through ch. 15; 115-168)
Vint, "Speciesism and Species Being in "Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?" (pdf)
- 25 H Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (to the end; 169-224)
- 30 T *Blade Runner* (watch outside of class)
Despina Kakoudaki, "Unmaking People: The Politics of Negation in *Frankenstein* and *Ex Machina*."
- 1 H *Blade Runner 2049* (watch outside of class)
Paper 4: Draft of Seminar paper due.
- NOV
- 6 T Ahmad Saadawi, *Frankenstein in Baghdad* (through ch.6, pt 1; 1-71)
- 8 H Ahmad Saadawi, *Frankenstein in Baghdad* (through ch. 9; 71-141)
- 13 T Ahmad Saadawi, *Frankenstein in Baghdad* (through ch. 13; 142-208)
- 15 H Ahmad Saadawi, *Frankenstein in Baghdad* (through the end; 209-281)
Sinéad Murphy, "*Frankenstein in Baghdad*: Human Conditions, or Conditions of Being Human"
- 20 T SCOTUS, *Citizens United*
- 22 H THANKSGIVING
- 27 T Adam Winkler, *We the Corporations* (Introduction: "Are Corporations People?"; Ch. 1 "In the Beginning, America Was a Corporation" (pdf)
Frankenstein (Universal Studios, James Whale) watch before class
- 29 H Winkler, *We the Corporations* (ch. 10, "The Triumph of Corporate Rights"
Mitchell Dawson, "Frankenstein, Inc." pdf.
- DECEMBER
- 4 T Wormser, *Frankenstein, Incorporated*, ch. 1 ch. 8 (pdf)
- 6 H TBD
Paper 5 (Seminar Paper) due.