Course Description: In this course, you will study horror films as cultural texts that support and/or challenge hierarchies of gender as it intersects with race, class, sexuality, age, and other identity markers. You will consider what horror films do, socially, in relation to other systems, and will learn and use feminist film theories to analyze the texts, including cultural, psychoanalytic, audience response, and queer feminist film studies. By the end of the course, you will show that you are able to interpret and analyze horror films within the matrix of feminist analysis and that you understand and can discuss the role that horror films play in the cultural reproduction of gender-linked hierarchies and oppressions. You will also be able to show how feminist-linked horror films challenge traditional tropes that define particular bodies (women, mothers, racialized people, feminized, and more) as uncanny, unnatural, abject, or just plain evil.

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My Availability: I am always available during my office hours on a first-come, first-served basis. I am also available by appointment if we can find a mutually convenient
time to meet. I check my work email during work hours: 8:30 – 4:30, Monday to Friday. I do not check my work email on weekends, holidays, or outside of regular office hours.

**Important Content Note:** We will be watching, discussing, and writing about horror films. They contain: assault (sexual and other); nudity; sex (consensual); murder; blood (lots of blood); brains; and more. If you will be seriously emotionally or psychologically affected (i.e. triggered) by watching horror films in class, please consider taking another course. All of the films are mandatory and we will watch them together in class. I have not included films that could be generally placed in the ‘torture-porn’ category, such as the *Saw* or *Hostel* series; however, we will be watching horror films and they are required.

**Required Course Materials:** All the materials listed weekly are required. Readings are provided on the course’s D2L site.

**Weekly Topics and Materials**

**Wk. 1, Jan 10 – Introduction**

1. **Horrifying Bodies: The Monstrous Feminine**

**Wk. 2, Jan 17 – Traditional Horror Tropes**

**Film:** *Friday the 13th*
**Reading:**

**Wk. 3, Jan 24 – Religiously Producing Abjection**

**Film:** *Carrie*
**Reading:**

**Wk. 4, Jan 31 – Monstrous Teen Years**

**Film:** *Ginger Snaps*
**Reading:**
Miller, April. “‘The Hair That Wasn't There Before’: Demystifying Monstrosity and Menstruation in Ginger Snaps and Ginger Snaps Unleashed.” *Western Folklore* 64.3/4 (2005): 281-303.

**Wk. 5, Feb. 7 – Biting Back**

**Film:** *Teeth*
**Reading:**


II. Our Zombies, Ourselves – Gender, Race, and Class in the Zombie Apocalypse

Wk. 6, Feb 14 – Racialized Class and Zombies
Film: Fido
Reading:

Wk. 7, Feb 21 – reading week

Wk. 8, Feb 28 – Zom-Rom-Com: Masculinity and Zombies
Film: Warm Bodies

Wk. 9, Mar 7 [last day to drop courses is Mar 8] – Transnational Feminism and Zombies
Film: The Rezort
Reading:
Evans, Susan. “Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus, and Zombies are from…: Feminist Theories of International Politics and Zombies.” Political Science & Politics 50.1 (2017): 554-557.

III. Postmodern Horror: Our World

Wk 10, Mar 14 – Racism and Horror
Film: Get Out
Readings:

Wk. 11, Mar 21 – “I purged, because staying in is un-American”: Horrifying Politics
Film: The Purge: Election Year
Reading:

**Wk. 12, Mar 28 – Beyond the Final Girl?**
**Film:** *The Descent*
**Reading:**

**Wk. 13, Apr 4 – Postmodern Horror and the Self-Reflexive Gaze**
**Film:** *The Cabin in the Woods*
**Reading:**

**Evaluation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Item</th>
<th>Marks</th>
<th>Dates/Restrictions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-Class: Discussion questions and weekly participation</td>
<td>30 (3 x 10)</td>
<td>Wks 2-6; 8-10; and 11-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Assignment: Horrifying Bodies</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Feb 14, before the start of class, in class. No exceptions without University-approved documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Assignment: Our Zombies, Ourselves</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>March 14, before the start of class, in class. No exceptions without University-approved documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take Home Final: Your choice, one of three options</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>April 15, by 4:00 pm. No exceptions without University-approved documentation. Hard copy handed in at RB-2014 between 9am and 4pm.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comments on Extensions/Lateness, Plagiarism, and Other Details:

Due dates and late penalties
You have all the assignment instructions and due dates from the first day of class, so there will be no extensions, except as directed by Student Accessibility Services via a formal email notice to me.

If assignments are late, your grade will be reduced by 5 marks including Saturdays and Sundays. This also includes handing in on the day. For example, if you hand in a short assignment after the start of class on the due date, you will have 5 late marks deducted as though it is a day late. Any work more than 7 days late will not be accepted without appropriate documentation.

Plan your term now, so that you won’t find yourself struggling to meet deadlines at the last minute.

Academic Misconduct and Disciplinary Procedures

Make yourself aware of the University’s policy on Academic Misconduct, and comply with the policy’s expectations: see “IX. Academic Misconduct in the Academic Calendar, http://csdc.lakeheadu.ca/Catalog/ViewCatalog.aspx?pageid=viewcatalog&catalogid=25 &chapterid=7015&loaduseredits=False

AND

“The Code of Student Behaviour and Disciplinary Procedures:”

Please ask me any questions in relation to plagiarism, if you’re unsure.

Remember to cite *all* information and ideas that you get from the readings, the films, and the discussions, including paraphrased information (non-directly-quoted ideas and concepts).

Assignment Logistics: word limits and formatting
I will stop marking assignments when I reach their word limit. Edit carefully.

Use one of the following citation styles. Online examples are available, so I expect to see no errors in the formatting and application of in-text citations, or your Works Cited / References page:

MLA: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/
APA: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/
Discussion questions and weekly participation
3 x 10% = 30%

It is your responsibility to be aware of appropriate classroom behaviour as set out in the University’s Student Code of Conduct and to follow it. I expect good quality, respectful, discussion that shows you have understood and can apply the ideas that appear in the required materials (readings and films), and in my brief lecture.

Marking rubric - Discussion

You can miss one class without documentation and not be penalized. More than one class will require University-approved documentation or you will receive a 0 for that week.

You receive up to 4 points each week, which are then averaged for the period to create the percentage that is applied to the 10 marks available for each third of the term.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>You initiate discussion and show that you have understood and can apply the ideas in the week’s materials and brief lecture in a professional and courteous way that respects your peers and supports discussion and ideas-sharing. This means coming to class thoroughly familiar with the assigned reading, being prepared to actively watch the film (taking notes throughout based on the discussion questions and in relation to the ideas presented in the reading[s]), and being prepared to identify topics of interest in the reading in relation to the film. This does not mean monopolizing a discussion or shutting others down, or taking up too much space by talking for its own sake rather than engaging in the week’s themes and materials. You work to allow everyone a chance to share their observations and ideas. You clearly connect anecdotal evidence to the week’s materials and topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>You participate regularly and productively. This means coming to class prepared and willing to engage. You differ from a 4-point discussant in that the latter are self-starters, who do not rely solely on the instructor’s questions to set the agenda for discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>You participate on a regular basis, though less frequently than a 3-point student. 2-point discussants’ participation may indicate that they are not well-prepared for class, or have not given thought to the assigned materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>You contribute only infrequently to the discussion. 1-point discussants reveal that they are not well-prepared for class, or that they have not given thought to the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Short Assignment: Horrifying Bodies
20% - Feb 14, before the start of class, in class. No exceptions without University-approved documentation.

Format: 1000-1300 words (ca. 4-5 pages) excluding any title page and Works Cited. Arial, 12 point font, double-spaced, 1-inch margins.

Based on readings, films, brief lectures, and in-class discussions for Weeks 1-5, choose one of the following themes:

- Monstrous mothers
- Final girls
- Menstruation
- Puberty / ‘Coming of age’
- Sexuality

Illustrate how traditional horror films support the dominant ideological assertion that social and/or physical boundaries between groups of people (or creatures) are “natural” and “necessary.”

Then consider how some films rewrite horror tropes to suggest that social boundaries (and cultural ideas about “appropriately” contained bodies and behaviours) are used to control feminine-linked bodies. How do these films challenge the idea that crossing boundaries is horrifying, and why might resistance matter or be important?

Remember to use a feminist lens when making your argument, because how bodies transgress is, in this section of the course, gender-linked. Make clear references to the films and readings to support your ideas.

You will not need to use all the films and readings in this short assignment, but I expect to see you critically engage with appropriate course materials to support your argument.

Short Assignment: Our Zombies, Ourselves
20% - March 14, before the start of class, in class. No exceptions without University-approved documentation.

Format: 1000-1300 words (ca. 4-5 pages) excluding any title page and Works Cited. Arial, 12 point font, double-spaced, 1-inch margins.
With support from readings, films, brief lectures, and in-class discussions during Weeks 6-9, illustrate how zombies are a “metaphor for oppressed racial minorities and identities” (Kee 48), and analyze how one film of your choice represents and challenges oppressive and marginalizing social systems. Be sure to use a feminist analysis that ties in with the course themes and topics.

I will expect to see you reference a number of the weeks as you engage in the first portion of the short assignment, and then take a closer focus on one film for the second portion.

**Take Home Final: Your choice of one of three options**

**30% - April 15, by 4:00 pm.** No exceptions without University-approved documentation. Hard copy handed in to RB-2014 between 9am and 4pm.

Format: 1500-2000 words (ca. 6-8 pages) excluding any title page and Works Cited. Arial, 12 point font, double-spaced, 1-inch margins.

NOTE: I am happy to give feedback on rough drafts, so long as I receive them a week prior to the due date. I am also happy to discuss your ideas during my office hours.

**Option #1**

**Traditional scholarly paper**

Focusing on Weeks 10-13, and incorporating early supporting materials when appropriate, write a traditional scholarly paper on one of the following topics:

a) abject bodies and feminist analysis of horror; or

b) horror films in relation to systems of control and marginalization; or

c) the use of horror as social commentary and resistance.

Be sure to show me that you can use course materials, concepts, and themes to support your ideas and argument throughout your paper.

**Option #2**

**Write your own horror story**

Write a short horror story that incorporates one or more of the main themes of the course. Along with your story, you will submit a scholarly write-up that clearly explains how your story connects to feminist analyses of horror, and/or feminist horror films.

Your short story will be a minimum of 4 pages long; your scholarly write-up will be a minimum of 2 pages long, with differentiation based on the word limit.

Be sure to show me that you can use course materials, concepts, and themes throughout your short story (I should be able to recognize themes we’ve covered this term), and your scholarly write-up, in a more formal style with citations.
Option #3
Analytical reflection
This assignment gives you the opportunity to place yourself within the culture that surrounds you and to think about how you might reproduce or resist cultural norms.

1. Begin by identifying one film from “Horrifying Bodies,” one film from “Our Zombies, Ourselves,” and one film from “Postmodern Horror,” for a total of three (3) films that affected you the most (either scared you the most, or made you the most uneasy / squeamish, or angry);

2. Take time to do free writing in relation to the three films (I recommend 15-20 minutes per film). Free writing is best done in a quiet place, with no distractions, and you write down whatever comes into your head as you begin pondering the question: “why did this film scare / bother / etc. me?” Free writing can be a series of words, impressions, complete sentences, whatever works best for you. You will hand in your free writing as an appendix to your Analytical reflection. I will not mark it, but will use it as a reference to what you argue in your reflection;

3. Leave your free writing for a day or two to give yourself some distance from it;

4. Return to your free writing and see it as a cultural text on which you can reflect, and analyze:
   a. what themes, words, or ideas are the most prominent / repetitive in relation to the three films you identified?
   b. what does your response to the films, as evidenced in the main ideas you identified in the previous step, tell you about the culture that you live in, and yourself as a conduit of / part of that culture?
   c. why do you think these films affected you the way that they did, based on the main threads you identified in your free writing (remember that your social location will affect your response to the films)? What have you learned to be disturbed by, or afraid of, and why do you think the dominant cultural norms taught you to fear or be disturbed by the things you identified?

When you work through 4.b) and c), above, be sure to cite course materials and concepts to support your argument and ideas.

Marking rubric for all written work
A+ (90-100%): Near-Perfection. The work clearly develops a near-irrefutable argument concisely and convincingly. Ideas are linked and flow clearly from sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph. The argument or story, if that option is chosen, leads
clearly and inexorably to its conclusion, is stimulating to read and shows analytical and connective abilities well in excess of expectations for the level. There are no errors in scholarly documentation or formatting, and the work is virtually free of errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation. Secondary sources never stand in for student's own thoughts and are used intelligently to evidence the argument.

**A-, A (80-89%):** Excellent. The work thoughtfully develops an interesting thesis, or story, if that option is selected; secondary source material is used intelligently, and not as a substitute for the student’s own thinking in scholarly work. The student is in command of the topic and shows some originality and enthusiasm in discussing it. The work is well organized, convincingly argued, or presented if the short story is chosen, and clearly expressed – a pleasure to read. It is mainly free of errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation, and uses the conventions of scholarly documentation correctly.

**B-, B, B+ (70-79%):** Very Good to Good. The work is a competent, accurate treatment of its topic. It is well written and has a clear thesis, or storyline, if that option is chosen. Writing at the bottom of this range may not have fully digested the materials, and may lean uncritically on secondary sources. The organization is good and the sentences are all comprehensible. There are few errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation. The work follows standard conventions of scholarly documentation.

**C-, C, C+ (60-69%):** Good to Fair. The thesis is unclear, or trivial, or undeveloped; the short story, if that option is chosen, is difficult to follow, under-developed, or not clearly connected to course themes and content. Much of the work is summary or paraphrase, with only occasional analytical comment. There may be inaccuracies; writing at the bottom of this range may rely exclusively on secondary sources instead of the students' own thoughts. The writing is disjointed; some sentences may be convoluted and incomprehensible. There may be mistakes in grammar, spelling and punctuation, as well as carelessness about scholarly documentation.

**D-, D, D+ (50-59%):** Poor. The work has serious inaccuracies and inconsistencies. The student has some grasp of the topic, but not much. Where sources are cited, they tend to be misused or misinterpreted. The student may express opinions, but does not support them with evidence or argument from the course materials in support of their position. The writing lacks coherence, is unclear, and has many errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation, as well as carelessness about scholarly documentation.

**E (40-49%):** Failure Grade. Near-total misunderstanding. The student has very little grasp of the materials or subject. The essay is disorganized, obscure, full of grammatical errors and is unscholarly.

**F (0-39%):** Failure Grade. Total misunderstanding. The student seems to have no grasp of the materials or subject. The essay is disorganized, obscure, is full of grammatical errors and is unscholarly. Any cases of plagiarism will be submitted to the Dean with my request that a mark of zero be assigned.
Campus support resources

Student Accessibility Services
https://www.lakeheadu.ca/faculty-and-staff/departments/services/sas
https://www.lakeheadu.ca/current-students/student-services/tb/aboriginal-services

Student Health and Wellness
https://www.lakeheadu.ca/current-students/student-health-and-counselling-centre

Office of Human Rights and Equity

Writing Centre: Access via MySuccess.lakehead.ca, and make an appointment with a writing coach.

Writing Help for ESL students: Friday afternoon 1-4pm in the ELC (ground floor of Paterson library). No appointment is required.