

AMS 311s: Haunting in American Culture

Unique 31810

Holly Genovese

MWF: 2:00-3:00, BUR 436A

Office: Burdine 404

Office Hours By Appointment Only

[Calendly Link](#)

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Course Description:

Ghosts, spirits, haints, and other ghastly forms are often present in American culture: in literature, film, and television. But they are also significant in religious practice, at historical sites, and even in political theory. Why is American culture so taken with the haunted? And what about American history--a history of enslavement, genocide, land removal--makes the figure of the ghost so omnipresent? How can hauntings inform the way we discuss American history, literature and culture?

Who believes in ghosts? In the course, I don't ask you to believe in ghosts but instead to suspend your disbelief as we explore the role of hauntings and whose needs they serve. Can a belief in the ghastly be a form of resistance against modern conceptions of science?

This course will also introduce you to the methods and questions inherent in American Studies as a field: what can we learn from media, from culture, from literature, and from history? How does American history and culture look different when viewed through the lens of haunting?

ATTENDANCE:

Attendance is not required, only encouraged. I will have a zoom option available for those who need to attend class virtually and you will not be penalized for total absences. No excuse is required. PLEASE do not come to class sick or if you have been exposed to COVID-19. Rest, recover, and rejoin us when you are able to.

Readings/Material:

Many readings will primarily be made available through canvas, ebook, or a link. I will put copies of all of these books on reserve in the library. I do ask that you purchase the novels *Beloved* by Toni Morrison, *Sing, Unburied, Sing* by Jesmyn Ward, and *Mexican Gothic*. These can be found relatively cheaply online as well as in some of the other indie bookstores in Austin. That said, if purchasing these books places an undue burden on you, please come speak to me! No one should drop this class because they cannot afford the materials.

Required Books:

Silvia Moreno-Garcia, *Mexican Gothic*

Toni Morrison, *Beloved*

Jesmyn Ward, *Sing, Unburied, Sing*

Optional Books: (required reading, but uploaded version provided)

Henry James, *Turn of the Screw*
Alan Moore, *Swamp Thing*

Films:

All required films and television episodes will (hopefully!) be available through the library. If not, I will make other arrangements for viewing the film. That said, some of these may be readily available to you depending on which streaming services you have. We will talk about this more in the first week of class.

Required Films and TV:

Tales of The Supernatural, Sharon Sherman (free online)
The Shining (on canvas)
La Llorona (the 1933 Mexican version on youtube)
Rhymes for Young Ghouls (hopefully via canvas)

Bookstores to Check Out:

BookWoman (Austin's feminist bookstore, over 40 years old, great selection of literature as well as feminist/queer academic monographs).

Book People (big downtown indie, very good with novels).

Malvern Books (right off campus, lots of poetry, indie publishers, creative nonfiction)

Bookshop.org (an alternative to Amazon that benefits independent bookstores)

[Resistencia Books](#)

[Black Pearl Books](#) (Austin's first Black owned bookstore! Small but filled to the brim with amazing books and goodies)

[Reverie Books](#) (a new indie in South Austin!)

The Little Gay Shop (not exclusively a bookstore, but sells a lot of queer books/magazines as well as stickers, shirts, swag, etc)

ASSIGNMENTS:

Weekly Reading Notes: 30%

Paper 1: 35 %

Paper or Project 2: 35%

Papers:

Students will write one 3-4 page paper and have the option to write one 7-8 page paper or complete a creative project.

3-4 Page Analysis paper

This paper is designed to help you develop your close reading and analytic skills. Choose 2 of the readings/videos/other sources that we have read or watched in class and put them in conversation with

each other to make an argument about haunting in American culture. Your argument can be based on themes we have discussed in class or another topic that you choose. But you must use materials from class to build your argument. They are your evidence.

A few things to keep in mind:

1. This is not a summary paper! I want you to analyze the sources, their strengths and weaknesses, and their usefulness for your own argument.
2. Please feel free to mix and match. An academic article, a documentary, and a song could all be used as evidence for an argument together. I want you to try out a variety of sources.
3. Use the notes you have been taking all semester
4. Feel free to build an argument against an author's perspective, but do so respectfully.

I will have you write a one page plan for your paper. This plan should include your topic, a tentative argument, and the sources you hope to use. You will not be held to this plan but it is designed to get you thinking about the project ahead of time.

After I have a chance to read everyone's paper plan, we will set up individual conferences to discuss your papers. These can be done in my office or via zoom, whichever works for you.

A draft of the paper is not a requirement, but if you choose to submit a draft I am happy to give brief feedback on your paper.

7-8 Page Final Analysis Paper (Option 1)

You can choose to build off of your first paper or explore an entirely different topic. For this paper, I want you to write a paper on a topic of your choosing using 3 sources from class as well as 2 additional sources. At least 2 of your sources must focus on representations of an underrepresented minority. You can write about themes we have discussed in class or another topic that you have found in the sources. Like paper one, I ask that you do close readings of some of your texts but I want you to bring in additional sources and reading.

1. If you choose to build on your first paper, I will expect you to work from my substantial commentaries as you revise. I would like you to include an additional source from class as well as your two additional sources.
2. Your 2 additional sources can include songs, visual art, novels, academic articles and books, political manifestos, websites, exhibits, interviews, maps, etc. Just pick sources that interest you and that you have time to read/watch/etc.
3. Please choose a citation style and stick with it. You all have different majors with different citational practices. I will not penalize you for that. That said, I want you to use correct citations following a standardized style of your choice. (MLA, Chicago, APA). I will post some resources on citation on canvas and if you are having trouble please come see me! Consider using a tool like Zotero to store citations and sources.
4. Like with paper 1, I want you to write a one page description of your topic, thesis, and potential sources. Please also include which citation style you plan to use.

5. I would like some evidence of progress turned in to me (scanned or copied is fine) before our conference! This can be notes, an outline, notecards, or even the beginnings of a draft. I will give feedback as we discuss your project.

Conferences:

I would like to meet with each of you when you are beginning to work on your essays via Zoom . I will send out a schedule closer to the dates.

Creative Project (Option 2)

Do you want to explore these materials through visual art, music, creative writing, film, dance, computer programming etc? Your second option from a final project is to use 3 sources from class as well as 2 from outside while you design a creative project engaging the ways in which haunting informs our study of American culture. Please do get my approval before you begin work. You will need to write a 1 page proposal and a 2 page essay explaining the ways in which your project engages the readings and themes of the course.

Weekly Notes or Brief Reflection Essays (30% of your grade)

Each week, students will be expected to turn in a set of notes on the readings. These notes can take many forms: an extended google doc, notes in a separate notebook, Evernote folders, etc. If your notes cannot be turned in via hard copy, please use a scanning app to scan and send in your notes. I know that note taking is a skill we all need to develop (and constantly hone) so we will have an annotation workshop during the first week of class. In that workshop, we will discuss digital vs paper annotation methods, formats for notes (Cornell notes are one example), etc. That said, I do know that writing short essays can be very helpful in developing a writing practice and in remembering and referencing our texts. Either option is fine (and maybe switching back and forth is ideal?)

A few reason for this assignments:

1. Note taking is a skill that is often assumed. Few people will take the time to explicitly teach you methods for note taking, though you will need them as you continue throughout your college career. I want to help you with this and make sure you get something practical you can take away from this class.
2. As our papers in this class focus on the readings for class, the notes you take or short essays you write throughout the semester will help you write those papers (without re-reading everything!)
3. This isn't meant to punish you for not reading but instead to encourage and reward you for keeping up with the work of the course.
4. Include personal opinions, experiences, comparisons in your notes! I want them to become a conversation between us and the text.

That said, I understand that things happen! You get two freebies (no questions asked) a semester (though please do find a partner to trade notes with when this happens) so that when you have a mid-term or paper in another class you aren't stressed over notetaking. If you need to miss more than two, just talk to me first!

This class will reward close reading and engagement with texts rather than a focus on larger assignments in an attempt to put less pressure on papers. That said, I won't be judging the content of your notes (as long as you have made a clear effort) but instead focusing on commenting and engaging with your learning. These comments are meant to be a conversation between us on the reading rather than a grading mechanism.

Disability statement (adapted, with permission, from Dr. Kafer)

All students are welcome in this course, including students with learning, emotional, physical, cognitive, and/or hidden disabilities, illnesses, and injuries, regardless of diagnosis.

If you have documentation from the [Services for Students with Disabilities Office](#) for specific accommodations, please let me know of your needs. With or without documentation, we can discuss how to improve your access to course material and explore different possibilities for learning. If you have questions about documentation and accommodations at UT, please contact Services for Students with Disabilities in the Student Services Building, 4.206; 512-471-6259 (voice) or 512-232-2937 (video phone).

Registering for services for Students with disabilities can be very difficult. If you think you might qualify but need help navigating the process, I am happy to discuss it with you (and you are not required to disclose it to me).

Another way of creating access is using everyone's chosen names and pronouns. If you have questions about pronouns and inclusivity, the Gender and Sexuality Center offers helpful information, including UT-specific instructions on how to add or change names and gender markers (e.g., on class rosters, IDs, etc.).

Late Work:

Late work is accepted within two weeks of the deadline (with the exception of the final paper), as long as you let me know 48 hours in advance (with exceptions for emergencies and illness). Please take advantage of this policy when needed, but know that the deadlines are there to guide you through the semester.

Office Hours:

Though we are ostensibly returning to campus this Spring, office hours will be held online. I will have set times for office hours, but you will need to make an appointment on calendly (just to avoid Zoom waiting rooms).

Please come visit me during office hours! Please come in if you have questions, concerns, or just want to chat! I know it can be intimidating, but I will be delighted to talk to you about course related and non-related topics (within the bounds of appropriate discussion, of course!). Nervous about your paper? Bummed about a grade? Want to discuss a piece of art you loved? Want to declare an American Studies major? I LOVE ALL OF THIS.

Content Warnings:

I have included content warnings for much of the material and if there is anything you feel you need to skip because of your health/safety/comfort, please do. If you are concerned about missing material, I am happy to find an alternate reading or material for that particular day. And if I miss something or fail at this, please call me out if you feel able and willing.

Campus Resources

[The Sanger Learning Center](#)

The SLC offers tutoring, learning specialists, public speaking practice, peer coaches and other workshops to help you succeed in your courses. Many of their offerings are available on Zoom.

[UT Counseling and Mental Health Center](#)

They offer short term individual counseling, referrals, groups, classes, mindfulness, and a lot more for students. I have also posted a lot of resources and pamphlets within our Canvas site.

[The Writing Center](#)

They offer one-on-one Consultations (Students can sign up at uwc.utexas.edu), lots of Handouts about writing-related topics (You may find these on the [Resources](#) page) and weekly writing groups for graduate and undergraduate students. These groups are tailored for students who are engaged in *long writing projects*, like thesis projects, capstones, and dissertations.

[Student Emergency Services, Office of the Dean of Students](#)

SEO can provide cash assistance, help with your Austin utility bill, send out absence notifications in the case of an emergency etc.

[The UT Outpost-a food bank on campus.](#)

UA9 Building 2609 University Ave. Austin, TX 78712. Food insecurity is very common on college campuses. There is no shame in getting help and the UT Outpost is a great resource. I am happy to walk you there if you need it.

Writing

This course carries the Writing Flag. Writing Flag courses are designed to give students experience with writing in an academic discipline. In this class, you can expect to write regularly during the semester, complete substantial writing projects, and receive feedback from your instructor to help you improve your writing. You will also have the opportunity to revise one or more assignments, and you may be asked to read and discuss your peers' work. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from your written work. Writing Flag classes meet the Core Communications objectives of Critical Thinking, Communication, Teamwork, and Personal Responsibility, established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

The Writing Flag faculty committee also provides statements on Plagiarism and Academic Integrity and Plagiarism Detection Software

Honor Code

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the University is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

Classroom Safety and COVID-19

To help preserve our in person learning environment, the university recommends the following.

Adhere to university mask guidance

Vaccinations are widely available, free and not billed to health insurance. The vaccine will help protect against the transmission of the virus to others and reduce serious symptoms in those who are vaccinated.

Proactive Community Testing remains an important part of the university's efforts to protect our community. Tests are fast and free.

Visit protect.utexas.edu for more information

CWGS Syllabus Statement on COVID-19 and Collective Care

As we continue to battle the devastating effects of the COVID-19 virus, we would like to encourage all members of our community—students, faculty and staff—to wear masks, engaging in social distancing and get vaccinated not only to protect themselves but to protect one another. Mask wearing and getting vaccinated is not just a question of health. It is also a question of feminist collective care. As community members, we are accountable to one another and seek constantly to support, respect and care for one another. We never know what the person next to us might be going through in their personal lives. We do not know if they are immunocompromised, take care of a person at high risk of contracting COVID-19 or are struggling with the weight of the anxiety of dealing with the pandemic. We, therefore, do our best to respect all people, understanding that the most we can do to protect one another during these difficult times is wear a mask, get vaccinated, and take the necessary precautions to not get sick or spread sickness to others. Let's care for one another.

Classroom Evacuation Policies (official UT language)

Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside. Familiarize yourself with all the exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building. Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class. In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.

Religious Holidays (official UT language)

Religious holy days sometimes conflict with class and examination schedules. If you miss a work assignment or other project due to the observance of a religious holy day you will be given an opportunity to complete the work missed within a reasonable time after the absence. It is the policy of the University of Texas at Austin that you must notify each of your instructors at least fourteen days prior to the classes scheduled on dates you will be absent to observe a religious holy day.

Guns

Though you have the right to concealed carry, if I see a gun I will call 911. Additionally, I will give verbal notice that concealed carry is not allowed in my office.

UT Language: Pursuant to SB11

(<http://www.legis.state.tx.us/tlodocs/84R/billtext/pdf/SB00011F.pdf>) and UT Austin Campus Carry Policy (<https://campuscarry.utexas.edu/> and

<https://www.policies.utexas.edu/policies/campus-concealed-carry>), persons with a current legally valid Concealed Carry License may carry a concealed legal handgun on or about their person in this class.

Please take note of several provisions:

1. All legal provisions associated with concealed carry on campus must be followed without fail at all times. In addition to SB11 and UT-Austin Campus Carry policy, please review at least the 84 pages of applicable law curated by TX DPS

(<http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/InternetForms/Forms/CHL-16.pdf>).

Please take special note of two of the many legal provisions:

a. Holstering requirements: “A license holder who carries a handgun on campus must carry it in a holster that completely covers the trigger and entire trigger guard area. The holster must have sufficient tension or grip on the handgun to retain it in the holster even when subjected to unexpected jostling” (UT-Austin HOP 8-1060, VII-A-2).

b. “On or about your person means a person licensed to carry a handgun must carry a handgun in a manner that the handgun is close enough to the license holder that he or she can reach it without materially changing position” at all times (UT-Austin HOP 8-1060, IV).

2. Open carry, including partially or wholly visible guns, is not permitted on campus at any time except “under circumstances in which the actor would have been justified in the use of force or deadly force” (SB11, Section 4 and Texas Penal Code, Section 46.035(a-1)). Violation is a Class A misdemeanor or a third degree felony. If any legal requirement is violated at any moment, the person who witnesses the violation should leave the classroom and call 911 immediately without waiting to ask me for permission.

3. Office visits: Pursuant to UT-Austin policy (HOP 8-1060, VII-C), I must give oral notice of my prohibition on concealed handguns in my office.

Course Schedule

Week	Topic	Reading/Viewing	Assignments/Media/Optional Readings
January 19th	Syllabus Day!	Syllabus (posted in canvas) Read Syllabus Annotation Exercise Join on our class group https://hypothes.is/groups/nq5ombVx/haunting-in-ac-spring-22	Syllabus annotation (post one to two comments on the syllabus via hypothes.is). Is there anything confusing? Weird? That you are excited about? Will you have 6 papers due in the same day? Tell me!

January 21st	Radical Pedagogy	Paulo Friere, Chapter 2 of <i>Pedagogy of the Oppressed</i> James Baldwin, <i>A Talk to Teachers</i>	Annotation Workshop We will again practice jointly annotating these works in class while discussing pedagogy!
January 24th	Early American Hauntings /Indigenous Myths	“ The American Ghost Story ” By Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock Burial Ground Acknowledgements – The New Inquiry Sherman Film, Linked on Canvas	
January 26th	Early American Hauntings /Indigenous Myths	“Heirs through Fear: Indian Curses, Accursed Indian Lands, and White Christian Sovereignty in America “ Chapter 1, <i>The Rural Gothic in American Popular Culture</i> <i>Backwoods Horror and Terror in the Wilderness</i> “The Ghost Story Persists in American Literature Why?” <i>New York Times</i>	
January 28th	Guest: AMS Ph.D. Student Taylor Johnson	Watch film Rhymes for Young Ghouls (at home) https://tubity.com/movies/627904/rhymes-for-young-ghouls Read: Conclusion, <i>Transit of Empire</i> (in modules)	CW: suicide
January 31st	Early American Hauntings	“The Gray Champion”, Nathaniel Hawthorne Washington Irving, “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” Washington Irving, “Rip Van Winkle”	
Feb 2nd	The 19th Cent iury	Emma Dawson , “Itinerant House” Gilman, “The Giant Wisteria” “The Feminist Power of Female	Add to Collab Resources Document!!! (sign your name next to it)

		Ghosts	
Feb 4th	Writing Seminar #1: NOTES	Notes documents uploaded on Canvas	Recorded on Canvas
Feb 7th	The 19th Century	Emma Dawson , “Itinerant House” Gilman, “The Giant Wisteria” “The Feminist Power of Female	Recorded Lectures on Canvas
Feb 9th	The 19th Century	Edgar Allen Poe, “The Mask of the Red Death” In class, short film	
Feb 11th	The 19th Century	Henry James, “Turn of the Screw” Pg 3-50	Extra Credit: Watch episode of Bly Manor or a film adaptation of Turn of the Screw, write one page on it
Feb 14th	The 19th Century	Henry James “Turn of the Screw” Pg 51-100	Set up Conferences
Feb 16th	The 19th Century	Henry James “Turn of the Screw” Pg 100-finish	
Feb 18th	Writing Seminar Analysis vs Summary/Thesis Statements		
Feb 21st	Hauntings and the Enslaved	Toni Morrison, Beloved, (1-59) or page with last line that reads “the shadows of three people still hold hands” (end of 4th break) Chapter from Avery Gordon, <i>Ghostly Matters</i>	CW: slavery, violence, incest, rape Paper 1 Proposal Due
Feb 23rd	Hauntings and the Enslaved	Toni Morrison, Beloved	

Feb 25th	Writing Seminar #4 Citations		CW: slavery, violence, incest, rape
Feb 28th	Hauntings and the Enslaved	Toni Morrison, <i>Beloved Through like 130? Discussion will focus on Avery Gordon</i>	CW: slavery, violence, incest, rape
March 4th	Hauntings and the Enslaved	Toni Morrison, <i>Beloved</i>	
March 7th	Writing Seminar #5		3 minute essay (ungraded, practice, DO NOT WORRY)
March 9th	Hauntings and the Enslaved	Toni Morrison, <i>Beloved</i>	CW: slavery, violence, incest, rape Paper 1 Optional Draft Due
March 11th	Hauntings and the Enslaved	Wrap up Beloved Discussions	
March 14 th	SPRING BREAK		
March 16th	SPRING BREAK		
March 18th	SPRING BREAK		
March 21st	Hauntings and the Enslaved	Alan Moore, <i>Swamp Thing</i> (first half) “Of Slaves and Other Swamp Things: Black Southern History as Comic Book Horror” Quiana Whitted	
March 23	Hauntings and the Enslaved	Alan Moore, <i>Swamp Thing</i> (2nd Half)	

March 25th	Writing Seminar #7	DRAFT REFLECTIONS, updates, share topics	
March 28th	Hauntings and the Enslaved	<i>Ghostland</i> , Chapter 6, A Devilish Place Chapter 3 from Tiya Miles, <i>Tales from the Haunted South</i>	Click around on the website for a ghost tour/house/haunted site. Focus your response on how they advertise the tour/site. I will provide a list of suggestions (very incomplete)
March 30th	The Specter of Colonialism	<i>Mexican Gothic</i> , Chapters 1-4	CW: incest, violence, graphic imagery
April 1st	The Specter of Colonialism	<i>Mexican Gothic</i> , Chapters 5-9	
April 4th	The Specter of Colonialism	<i>Mexican Gothic</i> , Chapters 10-18	Paper 1 Due
April 6th	The Specter of Colonialism	<i>Mexican Gothic</i> , Chapters 19-27	
April 8th	The Specter of Colonialism	Mexican Gothic	
April 11th	Guest Lecture: AMS Ph.D. Student Amanda Tovar	Monstras Podcast episode, La Llorona Cisneros, “Woman Hollering Creek” “From Llorona to Gritona: Coatlicue In Feminist Tales by Viramontes And Cisneros”, Ana Maria Carbonell	CW: suicide EC: Watch 2019 version of La Llorona (available on canvas), one page write up.
April 13th	The Specter of Colonialism	Watch La Llorona (1933 Mexican version, available on Youtube” “Haunting the Borderlands”	Start Paper Meetings

April 15th	Children an Haunting	Watch “The Shining” (outside of class) “The Child and Adult Trauma in American Horror of the 1980s”	CW: alcoholism,
April 18th	<i>MEET AT STATE CEMETERY</i>		
April 20th	Children an Haunting	“Stephen King’s Super Duper Magical Nergroes” Key and Peele, “Magical Negro Fight” “Kubrick’s Shining Secret”	Start Setting up Meetings
April 22nd	Asylums	“Ghosts are Scary, Disabled People are Not: The Troubling Rise of the Haunted Asylum By SARAH HANDLEY-COUSINS	
April 25th	Haunting and Incarceration	Jesmyn Ward, <i>Sing, Unburied, Sing</i> , Chapter 1-3	CW: incarceration, drug addiction, EC: Watch 13th documentary (available on Netflix) and write a one page response
April 27th	Haunting and Incarceration	Jesmyn Ward, <i>Sing, Unburied, Sing</i> Chapters 3-6	CW: incarceration, drug addiction,
April 29	Haunting and Incarceration	Jesmyn Ward, <i>Sing, Unburied, Sing</i> Chapters 7-9	CW: incarceration, drug addiction,
May 2nd	Haunting and Incarceration	Jesmyn Ward, <i>Sing, Unburied, Sing</i> 10-12	CW: incarceration, drug addiction DRAFT DUE
May 4th	Haunting and Incarceration	Ward <i>Sing, Unburied, Sing</i> Finish novel	CW: incarceration, drug addiction,
May 6th		Co-writing!	

May 13th		Final Paper/Projects Due	
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