ENGLISH 465.001
Topics in Creative Writing: The Haunted Story
Fall 2017, Ferguson 177
MWF 9-9:50 AM

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Office hours: 11-Noon (MWF), 9:30-11AM (TH), and by appointment.

OFFICIAL COURSE DESCRIPTION
Topics in Creative Writing - Advanced study of a special topic. Variable topics may include screenwriting, graphic novels, horror fiction, the history of literary magazines, or other related topics. May include workshop component or seminar paper.

REQUIRED BOOKS
We Have Always Lived in the Castle
Shirley Jackson

Disquiet
Julia Leigh

Slade House
David Mitchell

The Big Book of Ghost Stories
Otto Penzler (editor)

RECOMMENDED OPTIONAL SOURCES
A good dictionary, of course. Do you use one, ever? A style book, too.

OBJECTIVES
What does it mean to say a story is haunted? Is it just a fancy word for a ghost story—however we decide to define that—or is it more encompassing? What makes a good haunting? Is it straightforward fright or is it more? Let’s figure out some answers to these questions and to the myriad questions we’ll come up with along the way. My expectations? Read and write, a lot. With care. Take your craft seriously and address your classmates’ work with that same attention and respect. Meet deadlines. Actively participate in discussions. Give ample editorial advice to your peers. Read the required material before we discuss it in class. Be an active listener. Be nice to your mother. (Thought I’d slip that one in there). I’m teaching this course as a workshop hence you will write a lot for your peers and read a lot of your peers work. You will be required to write a considerable amount this semester and you must not be shy about sharing your
work with classmates and editing their work as well. Learning to give and accept constructive criticism is an important step in becoming a writer (or artist of any sort). Expect to write at least three complete stories this semester and workshop at least two of them. You will also write three brief craft analysis papers focusing on a successful element in three of the works we read for discussion.

Here are the official Program Learning Outcomes. Your Student Learning Outcomes (beautiful bureaucratic language, isn’t it?) are based on these goals:

1.) The student will demonstrate close reading skills and recognize strategies used by professional creative writers.
2.) The student will employ these techniques and strategies, crafting carefully composed, competent fiction.
3.) The student will articulate useful, critical editorial advice for peer writers.
4.) The student will demonstrate strategic revision on completed creative work.
5.) The student will compose a complete, polished manuscript of substance.

**GRADING BREAKDOWN**

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<tr>
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<th>Grading Scale</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ATTENDANCE</td>
<td>100-90 = A</td>
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<tr>
<td>PARTICIPATION</td>
<td>89-80 = B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEER EDITING</td>
<td>79-70 = C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHORT STORY 1</td>
<td>69-60 = D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHORT STORY 2</td>
<td>59- = F</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANALYSIS PAPERS</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>SHORT STORY 3</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>FINAL PORTFOLIO</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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**ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION (10%)**

If you want to do well in this course, you should attend every class period. There will be numerous discussions, maybe some quizzes, group activities, and assorted in-class assignments. Your eventual grade will benefit from high attendance and active participation. If you miss more than three classes your grade will drop with each additional absence. In other words, I give you a week’s worth of classes to skip; use them wisely.

In the case of unavoidable extra absences (serious illness, death in the family, your car dies...one auto death per student...), I’ll excuse a limited number of absences IF you give me a valid excuse (from a doctor or the university); if you don’t get in touch with me, then any absence over the one will be unexcused. In any case, being absent is not an excuse for missing assignments. You should either call a classmate or talk to me and find out what went on in class if you were not able to attend.
DON'T MISS DAYS ON WHICH YOU HAVE WORK DUE—
I DON'T ACCEPT LATE WORK AND I DON’T GIVE EXTRA CREDIT.

The effort you put into assignments, group work, and class discussion will count toward your grade. If you are consistently absent for either class discussion days or group work, your grade will be affected. If you doze or act in a disruptive manner (particularly, talk while others are talking), expect your grade to suffer accordingly.

Tardiness is rude and annoys me more than you imagine. Be punctual. I dock points for every time you come in late.

READINGS
Most of the assignments (and any pop quizzes) relate to the texts you’ll read for class discussion. Keep up with the readings; they are very important. We will be analyzing them carefully. I expect you to have read and thought about the stories before you come to class.

HOMEWORK
There will be a variety of exercises, editing, etc. assigned. Do them and you’ll improve your writing and your grade. Don’t do them and both will suffer.

The craft analysis papers are worth 15% of your grade. Be thoughtful with that work. Present it neatly and make careful observations and you’ll do well. Standard English usage and MLA format applies to those assignments.

Please note that if you fail to turn in a major assignment (a story, analysis, or the final portfolio), you will fail the course.

FORMAT
All in-class assignments must be written neatly in ink. Stories and analyses must be printed by computer; no handwriting for those. Staple pages together. Your work must be presented in a neat and professional manner. No need for separate title pages. Use a left header with your name, the class name, my last name, the date, and the word count. Double space once, center your title, double space once more, and get to your first paragraph.

FICTION
You’re going to write three stories this semester. Two must be between 2000-4000 words; one may be under 2000 words. As for content, well, it must be haunted. What you mean by that is up to interpretation. I do ask that you avoid gratuitous sex, violence, or hateful characters. Notice the word gratuitous. Sometimes sex, violence, and hateful characters have their place in accomplished fiction, but it takes skill. If you want to write a really graphic story, see me. Perhaps you’ll convince me that your skills are up to it and we’ll let the class decide if you succeeded. That’s my
typical disclaimer. Also, I will give points for humor. Comedy is hard. A genuinely funny and haunted story will impress me. We’ll talk more about that, too.

GRADING
How will I grade creative work? It’s subjective, of course, but I give you some ground rules in both format and content that should clarify what I’m looking for. Effort counts, too. I don’t know who said it, but art really is 98% perspiration, 2% inspiration. Work hard and you’ll get an A. If you are naturally talented and turn in sloppy work, you won’t get an A. Believe me, I can tell. Consider this: sometimes the most naturally gifted people are too lazy to produce work that’s up to their abilities and potential. They are too accustomed to things coming easily. Sometimes those who don’t have as much talent at the onset work diligently and create better, more interesting, more polished work. Be the latter.

PORTFOLIO
The last thing you hand in this semester will be a portfolio of the work you produced this semester. I expect it to be revised work; nobody produces their sharpest stuff first time out. The work you wrote in September will reappear in December, but it must be in a more polished form. Save your early drafts. I want to see two versions, so I can compare how your manuscript has improved. We’ll talk more about this as the semester progresses, but my warning now is you must be prepared to revise. Writing is revision. (Say it again: writing is revision. It should be one of your mantras.) I also want a brief self-analysis of your writing: what you see as your strengths, your weaknesses, etc.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY (A-9.1)
Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

Definition of Academic Dishonesty
Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one’s own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one’s paper without giving the author due credit.

Please read the complete policy at http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp
WITHHELD GRADES SEMESTER GRADES POLICY (A-54)
Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/

ACCEPTABLE STUDENT BEHAVIOR
Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the Student Conduct Code, policy D-34.1). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic, classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The instructor shall have full discretion over what behavior is appropriate/inappropriate in the classroom. Students who do not attend class regularly or who perform poorly on class projects/exams may be referred to the Early Alert Program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance that is available to help SFA students succeed.

AND NOW FOR SOME GRUMPY WARNINGS:

I will fail the following:
- Late major assignments (stories or craft analyses)
- Incomplete work
- Stories not presented in expected format
- Stories with an abundance of uncorrected misspellings or typos (more than 2 per page)—professional editors have no patience with thoughtless errors. Neither do I.

Always back-up your work. Then back up your back-up. Gmail is good for this.

SOME COMFORTING LAST WORDS
If you don't know, ask. If you can't remember, ask. If you panic, talk to me before the night before. Most importantly, relax.

Here’s my last advice. Write for fun. Edit for professionalism. Don’t procrastinate. Remember, there is always someone more talented than you, but you can be the hardest worker and that can pay off. Seriously.

**Tentative Syllabus**

**WEEK ONE**

8/28 Introduction to course; go over syllabus, policy statement.  
**HOMEWORK:** Review handouts. Go buy books.

8/30 Get to know each other. What is a ghost story?  
**HOMEWORK:** Read handout.

9/1 Discuss handout.  
**HOMEWORK:** Read first stories in *TBBGS*.

**WEEK TWO**

9/4 Discuss stories.  
**HOMEWORK:** Read stories in *TBBGS*.

9/6 Discuss stories.  
**HOMEWORK:** Read *TBBGS*.

9/8 Discuss readings.  
**HOMEWORK:** Write story for first workshop.

**WEEK THREE**

9/11 First stories due for workshop. Discuss workshopping/line editing.  
**HOMEWORK:** Read stories for workshop.

9/13 Workshop 1  
**HOMEWORK:** Read stories for workshop

9/15 Workshop 1  
**HOMEWORK:** Read stories for workshop. Read in *TBBGS*.
**WEEK FOUR**
9/18 Workshop 1  
**HOMEWORK:** Read stories for workshop.

9/20 Workshop 1  
**HOMEWORK:** Read stories for workshop.

9/22 Workshop 1  
**HOMEWORK:** Read stories for workshop.  
Begin *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*.

**WEEK FIVE**
9/25 Workshop 1  
**HOMEWORK:** Continue Jackson.

9/27 Workshop 1  
**HOMEWORK:** Finish Jackson

9/29 Discuss Jackson  
**HOMEWORK:** Write analysis paper

**WEEK SIX**
10/2 Analysis due.  
**HOMEWORK:** Finish second story.

10/4 Exchange stories for Workshop 2  
**HOMEWORK:** Read stories for handout.

10/6 Workshop 2  
**HOMEWORK:** Read stories for workshop.

**WEEK SEVEN**
10/9 Workshop 2  
**HOMEWORK:** Read stories for workshop.

10/11 Workshop 2  
**HOMEWORK:** Read stories for workshop

10/13 Workshop 2  
**HOMEWORK:** Begin *Disquiet*. 
WEEK EIGHT
10/16  Workshop 2
      HOMEWORK: Read and comment stories.

10/18  Workshop 2
      HOMEWORK: Read for workshops.

10/20  Workshop 2
      HOMEWORK: Finish Leigh’s novel. Write analysis.

WEEK NINE
10/23  Analysis due. Discuss Disquiet.
      HOMEWORK: Read more in TBBGS.

10/25  Discuss story.
      HOMEWORK: Read handout.

10/27  Discuss handout.
      HOMEWORK: Begin Mitchell’s novel.

WEEK TEN
10/30  Catch up day.
      HOMEWORK: Read Mitchell.

11/1 W  Discuss Mitchell.
      HOMEWORK: Finish analysis.

11/3 F  Last analysis due.
      HOMEWORK: Write Story 3.

WEEK ELEVEN
11/6   First Story 3 due for exchange.
      HOMEWORK: Read stories for Workshop 3.

11/8   Workshop 3.
      HOMEWORK: Read stories.

11/10  Workshop 3.
      HOMEWORK: Read stories.
WEEK TWELVE
11/13  Workshop 3  
**HOMEWORK:** Read stories.

11/15  Workshop 3  
**HOMEWORK:** Read stories.

11/17  Workshop 3  
**HOMEWORK:** Read stories.

WEEK THIRTEEN  
Thanksgiving Holiday. No school!

WEEK FOURTEEN
11/27  Workshop 3  
**HOMEWORK:** Read stories.

11/29  Workshop 3  
**HOMEWORK:** Research magazines

12/1  Discuss magazines  
**HOMEWORK:** Spend the weekend looking up markets

WEEK FIFTEEN
12/4  Markets  
**HOMEWORK:** Revise work

12/6  Markets  
**HOMEWORK:** Revise work

12/8  Last class day discussion  
**HOMEWORK:** Polish your portfolio.

There is no final exam for this course.  
Portfolios are due in my office on Wednesday, December 13th by noon.

**I do not accept late portfolios under any circumstances.**

Congratulations. You’re done. Have a wonderful winter break!