ENGLISH 465.001  
Topics in Creative Writing: The Haunted Story  
Fall 2019, Ferguson 177  
MWF 11-11:50 AM

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Office hours: 10-11AM (MWF), 1:50-2:50PM (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.

ENGL 465 "Special Topics in Creative Writing" (3 credits) typically meets twice each week in 75-minute segments, three times a week in 50-minute segments, or one night a week in 150-minute segments, for 15-weeks, and includes a 2-hour final examination or Final Portfolio of revised original fiction. The topic varies by genre and style; it may focus on prose or poetry. It may be limited to form (for example, flash fiction) or by tone and tradition (for instance, ghost stories). Students are assigned readings, both critical and creative. They are required to complete three original stories (two must be 2000-4000 words long, one must be under 1000 words) or a selection of poems with justification, for workshop review, one short craft analysis essay (roughly 5 pages) or analysis assignments (totally 5 pages); participate in workshop by having read and responded to others’ work and submitted editorial comments to their peers (roughly 30 pages of editorial suggestions); to create a self-reflective final portfolio that includes at least two drafts (original and revised) of their creative work. These activities average at a minimum 6 hours of work each week to prepare outside of classroom hours.

REQUIRED BOOKS  
*We Have Always Lived in the Castle*  
Shirley Jackson

*Disquiet*  
Julia Leigh

*We Were Liars*  
E. Lockhart

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? A story about obsession or guilt? 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. This course is part workshop/part literature course. 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 three complete stories this semester and workshop at least one of them. You will also write a brief craft analysis paper focusing on a successful element in two or three of the works we’ll read and give one presentation on the story or book of your choice. You will also have a creative final exam.

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.

**GRADING BREAKDOWN**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Grading Scale</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ATTENDANCE</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>100-90 = A</td>
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<tr>
<td>PARTICIPATION</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>89-80 = B</td>
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<tr>
<td>PEER EDITING</td>
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<td>79-70 = C</td>
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<tr>
<td>SHORT STORY 1</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>69-60 = D</td>
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<tr>
<td>SHORT STORY 2</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANALYSIS PAPER</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>REVISED STORY</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRESENTATION</td>
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<tr>
<td>FINAL EXAM</td>
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**ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION**

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 readings before you come to class.

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.

Be thoughtful with the craft analysis paper. Present it neatly and make careful observations and you’ll do well. Standard English usage and MLA format applies to those assignments.

The presentations will each be 10-15 minutes long. You will discuss a piece of “haunted” literature you admire and discuss how you intend to use its influence in your own work. We’ll chat more about that assignment as the semester progresses. It should be rewarding.

**FORMAT**
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. The entire document should be in a 12 point font and double-spaced. Choose a calm font with serifs. Don’t include extra spaces between your paragraphs unless you intend for a white space break to indicate scene change. Proofread! Lastly, staple the sequential pages.

**FICTION**
You’re going to write two stories for workshop this semester, each between 2000-4000 words. You will choose one of the two to turn in again for your revised story. 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.

**FINAL EXAM**

There will be a final for this course. It will be an in-class, timed creative assignment, most likely a flash fiction. We’ll talk more about that later.

**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 analysis)
❖ 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
8/26 Introduction to course; go over syllabus, policy statement.
**HOMEWORK:** Review handouts. Go buy books.

8/28 Get to know each other. What is a ghost story?
**HOMEWORK:** Read handout.

8/30 Discuss handout.
**HOMEWORK:** Read “How Fear Departed the Long Gallery.”

WEEK TWO
9/2 Discuss story.
**HOMEWORK:** Read Ray Bradbury’s “The Skeleton.”

9/4 Discuss story.
**HOMEWORK:** Begin reading Shirley Jackson’s novel.

9/6 Discuss reading.
**HOMEWORK:** Keep reading Jackson. Start first story.

WEEK THREE
9/9 Discuss Jackson.
**HOMEWORK:** Finish Jackson.

9/11 Discuss Jackson.
**HOMEWORK:** Work on stories.

9/13 First stories due for workshop.
**HOMEWORK:** Read stories for workshop. Read handout story.

WEEK FOUR
9/16 Discuss handout. Start Workshop 1
**HOMEWORK:** Read stories for workshop.

9/18 Workshop 1
**HOMEWORK:** Read stories for workshop.

9/20 Workshop 1
**HOMEWORK:** Read stories for workshop.
Begin Lockhart’s novel.
WEEK FIVE

9/23  Discuss Lockhart. Workshop 1
      **HOMEWORK**: Continue Lockhart. Read & edit stories.

9/25  Workshop 1
      **HOMEWORK**: Finish Lockhart. Read & edit stories.

9/27  Discuss Lockhart. Workshop 1 continued.
      **HOMEWORK**: Write analysis paper

WEEK SIX

9/30  **Craft Analysis due.**
      **HOMEWORK**: Read and edit stories for workshop.

10/2  Workshop 1
      **HOMEWORK**: Read stories for handout.

10/4  Last day of Workshop 1. First stories due for Workshop 2.
      **HOMEWORK**: Read stories for workshop.

WEEK SEVEN

10/7  Workshop 2
      **HOMEWORK**: Read stories for workshop.

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

10/11 Workshop 2
      **HOMEWORK**: Begin Leigh’s *Disquiet*.

WEEK EIGHT

10/14 Discuss Leigh. Workshop 2
      **HOMEWORK**: Read and comment stories.

10/16 Workshop 2
      **HOMEWORK**: Read for workshops.

10/18 Workshop 2
      **HOMEWORK**: Finish Leigh’s novel.

WEEK NINE

10/21 Discuss *Disquiet*. Workshop 2 continued.
      **HOMEWORK**: Read more in TBBGS.

10/23 Workshop 2.
      **HOMEWORK**: Read handout.
10/25  Last day of Workshop 2.
       **HOMEWORK:** Prepare presentation.

**WEEK TEN**
10/28  Presentations.
       **HOMEWORK:** Work on Revisions.

10/30 W  Presentation.
       **HOMEWORK:** Revision of stories.

11/1 F  More presentations.
       **HOMEWORK:** Read handout stories.

**WEEK ELEVEN**
11/4  Presentations.
       **HOMEWORK:** Work on your revisions.

11/6  Presentations
       **HOMEWORK:** Read stories.

11/8  Presentations
       **HOMEWORK:** Read stories.

**WEEK TWELVE**
11/11 Presentations
       **HOMEWORK:** Work on your revisions.

11/13 Presentations
       **HOMEWORK:** Prepare for last day of presentations.

11/15 Last day of presentations.
       **HOMEWORK:** Finish up Revised Story.

**WEEK THIRTEEN**
11/18 Let’s talk about revisions.

11/20 Revised Story due. (This should be publishable work. No kidding.)

11/22 No Class!

**WEEK FOURTEEN**
No School. Happy Thanksgiving!

**WEEK FIFTEEN**
12/2 Discussing markets.
       **HOMEWORK:** Revise work
Markets, cont’d.

**HOMEWORK**: Prepare for final.

The Final Exam is Monday, December 9, 10:45-1:15PM.
Congratulations. You’re done. Have a wonderful winter break!