UNSETTLING TALES: SETTLER COLONIALISM AND THE GOTHIC  
TUE & THU, 9:30-11:20 AM  
SPRING, 2018-19

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Ruined castles, haunted chambers, villainous nobles, and ancient crimes—these are the ingredients of that frightening and fascinating genre: the gothic. But what happens to the gothic when it is transported to another world—a world without these familiar trappings? This course explores the relationship between the gothic and the historical phenomenon of settler colonialism, asking how and why writers, artists, and filmmakers have drawn on the gothic tradition, and reimagined it, to capture the unsettling aspects of colonial life.

Like the processes of settlement themselves, “Unsettling Tales” ranges widely across space and time. We will begin with an overview of the gothic’s European roots, examining a collection of short extracts (or “scenes”) from classic gothic texts to compile a catalogue of the genre’s characteristic themes and tropes. We will then follow the gothic on its travels—as its elements are repeated, repurposed, and revised in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand from the late eighteenth century to the present. The experiences of physical hardship and environmental insecurity, of the loosening of social and sexual norms and conventions, and of encounters with indigenous “others” become the raw materials of new and distinctively settler colonial varieties of gothic art, literature, and film. At the same time, as a selection of secondary readings from major psychoanalytic, feminist, poststructuralist, and queer critics will help us to see, the gothic becomes an important site at which colonialism’s culture confronts its own darkest fears, fantasies, and desires.

COURSE TEXTS

Available at the bookstore & Stanford University libraries:

Armagan Ballantyne (dir.), *The Strength of Water* (2009)
Jane Campion (dir.), *The Piano* (1993)

*Please try to get these editions, so that we’re all on the same page!*

Available on Canvas:

Margaret Atwood, selections from *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* (1970)
Marcus Clarke, “The Mystery of Major Molineux” (1881)
Frederick E. Maning, selections from “Old New Zealand” (1863)
Susanna Moodie, selections from *Roughing It in the Bush* (1852)
Percy Mumbulla, “The Bunyip” (1956)
Edgar Allen Poe, “The Fall of the House of Usher” (1839) & “A Tale of the Ragged Mountains”
Rosa Campbell Praed, “The Bunyip” (1891)
Paddy Roe, “The Living Ghost” (1983)
Mary Rowlandson, selections from The Sovereignty and Goodness of God: Being a Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson (1682)

Selected secondary readings (available on Canvas):

Kate Ferguson Ellis, The Contested Castle: Gothic Novels and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology (1989)
Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish (1977)
Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny” (1919)

Recommended resources:

For MLA documentation and formatting, consult MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 8th edition (2016) and the Purdue OWL website (https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/).


LEARNING GOALS

This course will help students to:

- better understand the gothic as a genre, and its characteristic themes and tropes;
- acquire a basic understanding of settler colonialism as a distinct formation within European colonialism;
- engage with important contemporary debates about post-colonialism, globalization, and the cultural and political legacy of settlement;
- enrich their reading and writing by drawing on some important and influential critical and theoretical approaches, including feminism, psychoanalysis, poststructuralism, postcolonialism, and queer theory;
- connect the form and content of literary texts through close reading;
- develop critical arguments that explore connections between literary forms and historical structures and processes;
- locate and evaluate relevant scholarly sources in relation to a research question;
- write with clarity, confidence, and style about complex issues of personal and public import.
STATEMENT ON WISE AND THE AESTHETIC AND INTERPRETIVE INQUIRY (AII) WAY

Although each WISE is unique, all WISE classes share fundamental learning goals that fulfill both the WIM requirement for English majors and the university’s Aesthetic and Interpretive Inquiry (AII) Way. In all WISE classes, students will explore and analyze literary texts (and in some cases other cultural objects), along with critical or theoretical pieces selected to support students’ investigations of primary readings and to offer models of inquiry and writing in the field of literary study. Students will also advance their own analytical, research, and writing skills through a structured series of assignments that includes: at least one assignment developing close reading skills; at least one assignment engaging critical or theoretical writings; and a final essay, developed in stages, that investigates primary texts, and that draws in relevant critical or historical sources, to produce a synthesized, original argument.

ASSIGNMENTS

The assessment for this course will consist of three major assignments (two shorter papers and one longer, research paper):

1. Travelling tropes (3-5 pages). Choose a trope (e.g. the doppelgänger) from the catalogue of gothic tropes we have put together as a class, and explore how ONE work of settler colonial gothic both relies on this trope and repurposes it for the settler context.
2. Travelling theories (3-5 pages). Choose a theoretical approach (e.g. psychoanalytic, feminist, poststructuralist, etc.) that we have discussed in class, and, in your own words, explain its key claims about the gothic. Consider the strengths and weaknesses of this approach by applying it to a scene (or scenes) or formal feature of ONE work that we have considered so far in the course.
3. Argument paper (12-15 pages). Develop and defend a comparative argument about TWO (or more) course texts in relation to the conventions of the gothic, ONE (or more) of the theoretical accounts of the genre we have considered, and the larger problems of settler-colonial culture we have discussed throughout the course. With the following preparation:
   a. Research proposal (1-2 pages).
   b. Conference with instructor (20 minutes).
   c. Partial draft (5-10 pages) to be workshopped in class.

Grading breakdown:

- Travelling tropes paper 20%
- Travelling theories paper 20%
- Argument paper 40%
- Class participation and attendance 20%

SCHEDULE

Week 1

1. Introductions; read (in-class) excerpts from European gothic and compile taxonomy of characteristic tropes and themes of the genre
2. Freud, “The Uncanny”; Sedgwick, The Coherence of Gothic Conventions
Week 2
4. Brockden Brown, _Wieland_

Week 3
5. Brockden Brown, _Wieland_
6. Brockden Brown, _Wieland_

Week 4
8. Moodie, _Roughing it in the Bush_; Atwood, _The Journals of Susanna Moodie_

***Travelling tropes paper due (4/26) by 5pm***

Week 5
9. Atwood, _Alias Grace_
10. Atwood, _Alias Grace_

Week 6
11. Atwood, _Alias Grace_; Ellis, _The Contested Castle_
12. Atwood, _Alias Grace_

Week 7
13. Clarke, “The Mystery of Major Molineux”; Foucault, _Discipline and Punish_

***Travelling theories paper due (5/17) by 5pm***

Week 8

***Research Proposal due (5/23) in class***

Week 9
17. Campion, _The Piano_; Ballantyne, _The Strength of Water_
18. Ballantyne, _The Strength of Water_

Week 10
19. In-class workshopping of partial drafts
20. Conclusion

***Argument paper due (6/10) by 5pm***

**STUDENTS WITH DOCUMENTED DISABILITIES**

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations,
and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the OAE as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations.

OAE contact information:
563 Salvatierra Walk
650-723-1066
http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oae

Honor Code

The Honor Code is the University’s statement on academic integrity written by students in 1921. It articulates University expectations of students and faculty in establishing and maintaining the highest standards in academic work:

The Honor Code is an undertaking of the students, individually and collectively:

1. that they will not give or receive aid in examinations; that they will not give or receive unpermitted aid in class work, in the preparation of reports, or in any other work that is to be used by the instructor as the basis of grading;
2. that they will do their share and take an active part in seeing to it that others as well as themselves uphold the spirit and letter of the Honor Code.

The faculty on its part manifests its confidence in the honor of its students by refraining from proctoring examinations and from taking unusual and unreasonable precautions to prevent the forms of dishonesty mentioned above. The faculty will also avoid, as far as practicable, academic procedures that create temptations to violate the Honor Code.

While the faculty alone has the right and obligation to set academic requirements, the students and faculty will work together to establish optimal conditions for honorable academic work.