**Course Director:** Matthew Dunleavy

mdunlea@yorku.ca

**Office Hours:** By Appointment

**Course Delivery:** Asynchronous content via eClass (formerly Moodle)  
Optional synchronous weekly discussions Thursdays

6-7pm via Zoom

**Course Description:** The ghost that enters Victorian fiction haunts the text and intrudes upon the reader’s rational world-view. This intruder is a disruption to the norm and blurs the lines between the logical and illogical, natural and supernatural, and life and death. In a world becoming increasingly scientific and skeptical, priding itself for advancements in industry and knowledge, why did the ghost hold such a fascination for the Victorians? Just as Scrooge looked upon the ghosts of the past, present, and future, ghost stories allowed writers and readers to interrogate their history, express their anxieties of their contemporary world, and imagine what the future could look like.  
  
 In this course, students will engage with a variety of ghost stories—mostly fictional short stories from 1852-1907, in addition to early film and parascientific accounts—and examine how the figure of the ghost in the Victorian imagination intersects with nineteenth century culture more broadly. These intersections include, the spiritualist movement, technological advances (including photography and other optical technologies), the printing press and literacy, women’s rights movements, and social/class anxieties.  
  
 As collaborative members of the EN 4573 community, all assignments for the course will lead towards creating an edited, open-access collection of Victorian Ghost Stories. This will include—but is not limited to—writing introductory notes for short stories and authors, understanding and creating footnotes, and creating other critical apparatus that will illustrate the ways in which these stories intersect with the major themes of the course and Victorian society and culture.

**Learning Objectives:** As a 4000-level course within the department of English, this seminar is designed to give you the opportunity to utilize all the skills you have developed throughout your earlier years of study. Although this course has been adapted from an in-person seminar, the assignments and methods of evaluation are intended to promote a collaborative environment for you to engage with Victorian ghost stories within a community of scholars.

By the end of the course, you will understand the ways Victorian ghost stories reflect the social and cultural climate they were created and circulated within. You will engage with and interrogate stories from writers across the period in a variety of ways. Finally, you will leave this course having had an active role in creating an open-access, edited collection of Victorian ghost stories, providing you with tangible evidence of your intellectual engagement with English Literature in your final year(s) of study.

Therefore, this course will have you work toward the following goals:[[1]](#footnote-1)

*Critical reading*:

* To understand the relationship between a popular genre and its thematic content and historical context.
* To actively shape the content of this course by making informed decisions about *which* texts we bring forward for discussion after the reading break.

*Critical discussion*:

* To engage in attentive and challenging discussions of texts within a community of fellow scholars.
* To offer pertinent questions and comments to interrogate texts to help us all move beyond “surface” readings of our selected readings.

*Critical writing and research*:

* To enhance your understanding of texts by adapting your research output to suit your learning style.
* To be an important part of creating a new, open-access anthology of Victorian ghost stories, complete with scholarly annotations and complimentary resources.
* To create links between multiple texts to synthesize textual, contextual and critical materials and offer new insights into the ways these texts speak to each other.

**Required Texts:** To make this course as accessible as possible you will not be required to purchase any texts. All course material will be uploaded to eClass. If you desire to read some of the ghost stories selected for this course (or read stories we will not cover) in hard copy, many of them are available in the following anthologies, which may be available at your local bookstore (although none of these collections contain *all* the selected stories):

* *Avenging Angels: Ghost Stories by Victorian Women Writers*, edited by Melissa Edmundson
* *A Suggestion of Ghosts: Supernatural Fiction by Women 1854-1900* and *An Obscurity of Ghosts: Further Tales of the Supernatural by Women 1859-1903*, edited by J. A. Mains
* *The Oxford Book of English Ghost Stories,* edited by Michael Cox and R. A. Gilbert
* *The Penguin Book of Ghost Stories,* edited byMichael Newton

**Evaluation**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Assignment** | **Due Date** | **Value** |
| Short story editing and introduction exercise | Thursday, October 22nd | 15% |
| Discussion facilitation | Assigned Week | 10% |
| Unessay | Thursday, October 27th | 20% |
| Final Essay (2500-3000 words) | Thursday, December 3rd | 40% |
| Participation |  | 15% |

Details for all assignments and participation can be found in the “Assignment Details” folder on eClass.

**Pandemic Considerations[[2]](#footnote-2):**

1. To be patient and kind with ourselves and with each other as we acknowledge that we may be learning in new ways in an unfamiliar environment.
2. To understand that success in this course may look differently that in previous semesters/years.
3. To be respectful to each other, as we do not know the additional difficulties and trauma that COVID-19 may have brought upon our classmates.
4. To communicate openly (within your own comfort level) if circumstances change; I will do what I can to help you meet your expectations for yourself, achieve your goals, and alleviate your concerns.
5. To be adaptable and flexible. This course is designed to be asynchronous, allowing you to fit the work around your schedule and needs outside of York. While I hope to see each of you “live” during our weekly meetings, these Zoom sessions are optional and will not negatively impact your success in this course or your participation grade.

**Schedule**

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Readings/Lectures** | **Activities** |
| **Week 1 – Sept 10th** | Video: Welcome & Introduction |  |
| **Week 2 – Sept 17th** | Video: Ghosts Before the 19th Century  Reading: Ronjaunee Chatterjee, Alicia Mireles Christoff, and Amy R. Wong. “Undisciplining Victorian Studies.” *LA Review of Books*, Jul. 10, 2020. |  |
| **Week 3 – Sept 24th** | Video: Gothic Literature & Periodicals  Reading: Annie Armitt,  “The Oakleigh Ghost” (1900), Chapter 1  Julia Briggs. “The Ghost Story.” *A New Companion to the Gothic,* edited by David Punter, Wiley Blackwell, 2012, pp. 176-85. | E-mail CD your top 3 weeks for your editing/discussion facilitation assignments. |
| **Week 4 – Oct 1st** | Video: Spiritualism  Readings:  Annie Armitt,  “The Oakleigh Ghost” (1900), Chapter 2  W. T. Stead. “How We Intend To Study Borderland.” *Borderland* vol. 1, no. 1, July 1893, pp. 3-6.  Jennifer Bann. “Ghostly Hands and Ghostly Agency: The Changing Figure of the Nineteenth-Century Specter.” *Victorian Studies,* vol. 51, no. 2, 2009, pp. 663-85. | Editing/discussion facilitation weeks assigned. Select ghost stories with assigned group. |
| **Week 5 – Oct 8th** | Video: Photography & Illusions  View: “The Spirit Photographs of William Hope,” *National Science and Media Museum.*  Readings:  Annie Armitt -  “The Oakleigh Ghost” (1900), Chapter 3  Selections from J. H. Brown, *Spectropia; or, Surprising Spectral Illusions* (1865)  Alicia Mireles Christoff. “Metaleptic Mourning.” *Victorian Literature and Culture*, vol. 47, no. 3, pp. 631-636. | Inform CD of short story selections. |
| **Week 6 – Oct 15th** | **\*\* Reading Break \*\*** | |
| **Week 7 – Oct 22nd** | **The 1850s**  Available Readings:  Elizabeth Gaskell, “The Old Nurses’s Story” (1852)  J. Y. Akerman, “The Miniature” (1853)  Dinah Mulock Craik, “The Last House in C—” (1856)  Fitz-James O’Brien, “What Was It?” (1859)  Edward Bulwer Lytton, “The Haunted and the Haunters; or, The House and the Brain” (1859) | **Editing Assignment submission** |
| **Week 8 – Oct 29th** | **The 1860s**  Available Readings:  Mary Elizabeth Braddon, “The Cold Embrace” (1860)  Amelia B. Edwards, “The North Mail,” (1864)  Charles Dickens, “No. 1 Branch Line: The Signal-man” (1866)  R. S. Hawker, “The Botathen Ghost,” (1867)  Rhoda Broughton, “The Truth, The Whole Truth, and Nothing but the Truth,” (1868) | **Unessay Submission** |
| **Week 9 – Nov 5th** | **The 1860s cont’d**  Available Readings:  Henry James, “The Romance of Certain Old Clothes,” (1868)  Mrs. Henry Wood [Ellen Price], “Reality or Delusion?” (1868)  Sheridan Le Fanu, “Green Tea” (1869)  Tom Hood, “The Shadow of a Shade” (1869) |  |
| **Week 10 – Nov 12th** | **The 1870s**  Available Readings:  Harriet Beecher Stowe, “The Ghost in the Cap’n Brown House” (1871)  Thomas Street Millington, “No Living Voice” (1872)  Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, “Since I Died” (1873)  Wilkie Collins, “Miss Jéromette and the Clergyman” (1875) |  |
| **Week 11 – Nov 19th** | **The 1880s**  Available Readings:  Robert Louis Stevenson, “Thrawn Janet” (1881)  Robert Louis Stevenson, “The Body-Snatcher” (1884)  Mary Louisa Molesworth, “The Story of the Rippling Train” (1887) | **Final Essay drafts/thesis statements submitted to CD *if* you wish to have feedback before submission at the end of the course** |
| **Week 12 – Nov 26th** | **The 1890s**  Available Readings:  Ada Jocelyn, “The Warneford Abbey Ghost” (1890)  Edith Nesbit, “From the Dead” (1893)  Lettice Galbraith, “In The Séance Room” (1893)  Gertrude Atherton, “The Striding Place” (1896) |  |
| **Week 13 – Dec 3rd** | **After 1900**  Available Readings:  Patrick Lafcadio Hearn, “Nightmare-Touch” (1900)  William Wymark Jacobs, “The Monkey’s Paw” (1902)  Mary Eleanor Wilkins Freeman, “The Lost Ghost” (1903)  Ambrose Bierce, “The Moonlit Road” (1907)  Mary Austin, “The Readjustment” (1907) | **Final Essay Submission** |

**\*Note on readings for week 7-13: You will not be expected to read all the short stories listed in the above table, you will only be assigned the readings as selected by your classmates as outlined in Assignment 1 (details available on eClass). Finalized lists will be released after week 5.**

All readings should be optimized for assistive technologies; should you find a reading inaccessible for the devices and technologies you use to access course material, please contact me immediately so I can resolve the issue.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**Weekly Zoom Meetings** As noted earlier in the syllabus, each week a one-hour zoom session will be open for students to discuss the course material. I will be there each week but your attendance is *not* mandatory. There will be no formal delivery of course materials during this time, but will offer space for you to engage with the course material with your CD and colleagues.  
 Each week I will send a new Zoom link and password on the eClass site on Thursday before 6pm. Please, do not share these links and passwords. The “waiting room” function will be activated for these meetings, so please ensure your full name is set on your profile so I only grant access to students registered for the course. To respect the privacy of all members of EN 4573, these Zoom meetings will **not** be recorded. There will also be no policy mandating that you turn your camera on. I encourage you all to turn on your camera, as I believe it can help facilitate a more organic discussion, but you will not be penalized should you wish to leave your camera off.

**Assignment Submission**  All assignments must be submitted electronically via the appropriate links on our course website or as explained on the assignment handout(s). If you encounter any difficulties using eClass, please email itc@yorku.ca.

**Office Hours**  To set up an appointment to talk to the Course Director about assignments, course content, or any other concerns, please send an email to mdunlea@yorku.ca and we will set up a time for either a Zoom call or a discussion over the eClass chat function.  
  
**E-mail Policy** I will respond to e-mail enquires within 2 business days.

**Extensions/Lateness Penalty** If you need an extension, please contact the Course Director at least one week before the due date. If no extension has been granted, an assignment received later than the specified due date may be penalized 2% for every day (or part thereof) late.

**Academic Integrity**  Information on the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty can be found online at: <https://secretariat-policies.info.yorku.ca/policies/academic-honesty-senate-policy-on/>. To avoid any accusations of academic dishonesty/plagiarism, ensure that your credit all sources from which you directly quote *or* borrow ideas.

Note: Some of the work we produce for this course will be directly public facing and accessible to everyone; therefore, academic honesty may be even more important than in previous courses because, in addition to York policies, acts of plagiarism will be viewable by the very people you have failed to cite. Citing properly allows us to show that we are engaging in scholarly conversations and that our work in EN 4573 is part of larger English literature and Victorian academic communities.

**The Writing Centre** Like many resources at York, the Writing Centre has moved online for Fall 2020; however, you can access virtual one-to-one writing support and writing workshops. For more information you can visit <https://writing-centre.writ.laps.yorku.ca/>, call the Centre at 416-736-2100 x 55134, or reach them via e-mail at [lapswrit@yorku.ca](mailto:lapswrit@yorku.ca). If you need help with a specific writing assignment, book your appointment well in advance, as there are often waiting lists.

**Counselling and Disabilities Services (incl. Academic Accomodations)**

York’s Student Counselling and Development (<https://counselling.students.yorku.ca/>) and Student Accessibility Services (<https://accessibility.students.yorku.ca/>) offer a range of services to the York University community including confidential individual counseling and group workshops. For information, visit their relative websites.

I note again, that we are part of this course during an ongoing global pandemic, so your mental health needs and accommodations may change as the semester goes on (as can be the case in any other semester/year). Therefore, if you do not access these services at the beginning of the semester, know that you can still access them throughout the semester should you need their assistance. Please also speak to your CD if anything within the course can be adapted to assist with your success.

**Grading:** The grading scheme for the course conforms to the 9-point grading system used in undergraduate programs at York (e.g., A+ = 9, A = 8, B+ - 7, C+ = 5, etc.). Assignments will bear a letter grade designation (e.g. A+ = 90 to 100, A = 80 to 90, B+ = 75 to 79, etc.). For a full description of York grading system see the York University Undergraduate Calendar -

<http://calendars.registrar.yorku.ca/2010-2011/academic/index.htm>

**Senate Policies, Procedures and Regulations**

All students are expected to familiarize themselves with the following information, available on the Senate Committee on Academic Standards, Curriculum & Pedagogy webpage (see Policies, Procedures and Regulations) - <https://secretariat-policies.info.yorku.ca/>

<https://secretariat.info.yorku.ca/files/CourseInformationForStudentsAugust2012-.pdf>

* Ethics Review Process for research involving human participants
* Course requirement accommodation for students with disabilities, including physical, medical, systemic, learning and psychiatric disabilities
* Student Conduct Standards
* Religious Observance Accommodation

**Intellectual Property and Copyright Notice**

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More information on York's policy can be found here:

https://copyright.info.yorku.ca/students-reuse-of-teaching-materials-from-york-courses-2/

1. Reading/discussion/ writing/ research breakdown adapted from Dr. Ryan Fong via the V21 Collective. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Adapted from Dr. Michelle D. Brock. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)