Scary Sheet: Zombies, Haunted Houses, and the American Ghost Story
Dr. Yael Segalovitz
Department of Foreign Literatures and Linguistics
Ben-Gurion University, Spring 2019

Monday, 16:15-17:45, Room TBA
Office hours: Tuesday 12:00-14:00
Building 74, Room 521, office phone: 08-6461125

Course description:
In this (somewhat spooky) course we will follow the figure of the ghost (a soul without a body) and that of the zombie (a body with no soul) in twentieth century American culture. We will ask what these uncanny entities stands for (racial abuse? gender discrimination?), how their presence is expressed through different works (do they speak or are embodied? if not, how can their immateriality be communicated?), and what perceptual capacities characters, viewers and readers must possess in order to sense the “walking dead.” In tracing these haunting presences, we will shift between different mediums—film, television, photography, digital media, and a number of literary genres (graphic novels, novellas, short stories). Doing so, we will examine the transformation the ghost and the zombie go through as they travel from one medium to the other. Simultaneously, we will consult theorists that attempted to conceptualize and historicize the “uncanny,” like Avery Gordon, and Molly McGarry; what do these scholars have to say about the living dead as psychological or social presences?

Texts
- The majority of reading materials will be available on Moodle (https://moodle2.bgu.ac.il/moodle/)
- Henry James, The Turn of the Screw, to be found at the library or Tzomet Sfarim
- Robert Kirkman, Terry Moore, Charlie Adlard, The Walking Dead: Days Gone Bye [Vol. 1], to be found at the library or Tzomet Sfarim

Requirements:
Attendance is mandatory. You are allowed up to two unexcused absences during the semester, including Tkufat Hashinuyim. Any additional absence will prevent you from completing the course. If you need to be absent for more than two classes due to a medical or family emergency, please get in touch with me in advance about possible arrangements. You are responsible for material you miss during an absence. Please consult another student in the course about the material you missed or come to see me in office hours rather than emailing.

Read the assigned text(s) prior to each class meeting. I will send out 2-3 discussion questions prior to each class, they are meant to guide you in your reading.
Participate productively in class discussions. Please come prepared to answer the discussion questions I will send out prior to each class. Participation is an incredibly important aspect of this course, which will frequently involve class discussions. If you are nervous about participating and/or public speaking in general, please come talk with me in office hours as soon as possible – we can brainstorm ways to make you feel more comfortable in class and consider alternative methods of participation.

Write a Midterm paper (2-3 pages); and a final paper (4-5 pages). For each paper, you will be requested to submit a draft, and then use my comments to revise your paper into its final form. You will be graded on both the draft and the final version.

Sources: Your written work will be based on close readings of the primary texts. I recommend using a good dictionary, preferably the unabridged Oxford English Dictionary http://www.oed.com. You must document each and every source you consult as I do not tolerate plagiarism. You will find a number of resources on Moodle; use them to understand the issues we discuss, and ask questions whenever anything is not entirely clear to you.

Grade distribution

Participation 5% (discussion questions; active participation in class)
Midterm paper (2-3 pages) 35%
  • Draft 10%
  • Final version 25%
Final Paper (4-5 pages) 60%
  • Draft 20%
  • Final version 40%

Schedule

25/2 Introduction
  Emily Dickinson, “I felt a Funeral, in my Brain” (1862)
4/3 Henry James, The Turn of the Screw (1898)
11/3 Alejandro Amenábar, The Others (2001 film)
18/3 Henry James, The Turn of the Screw (1898)
25/3 Henry James, The Turn of the Screw (1898)
1/4 Henry James, The Turn of the Screw (1898) + short excerpt from Molly McGarry, Ghosts of Futures Past: Spiritualism and the Cultural Politics of Nineteenth-Century America (2008).

14/4-26/4 NO CLASSES: PESSAH BREAK

29/4 Midterm papers (draft) due; Randall Kenan, “Clarence and the Dead (And What do They Tell You Clarence? And The Dead Speak to Clarence)” (1992)
6/5 Randall Kenan, “Clarence and the Dead (And What do They Tell You Clarence? And The Dead Speak to Clarence)” (1992)
13/5 Midterm papers (revision) due; A Time Not Here: The Mississippi Delta by Norman Mauskopf (Documentary photography collection)

Robert Kirkman, Terry Moore, Charlie Adlard, The Walking Dead: Compendium One (graphic novel)

Robert Kirkman, Terry Moore, Charlie Adlard, The Walking Dead: Days Gone Bye (graphic novel)

The Walking Dead (horror television drama, AMC) (2010)

Queer Ghost Hunters (TV series, 2016)

Final Paper (Draft) Due

Final Paper (Revision) Due