

## **ANTHROPOLOGY 4BB3 – Current Problems in Cultural Anthropology II: “The Anthropology of Zombies and the ‘Undead’”**

**Fall 2014**

**Course Instructor:** Dr. Karen McGarry

**E-mail:** [mcgarry@mcmaster.ca](mailto:mcgarry@mcmaster.ca)

**Phone:** 905-525-9140, ext. 23901

**Office:** CNH 531

**Office Hours:** Thursdays 10:30-11:30 or by appointment

**Class Time:** Wednesdays 8:30-11:20 a.m. in BSB 238

**\*\*Note: The best way to get in touch with me is via e-mail.**

### **Course Description:**

In recent years, there has been a steadily growing cultural interest in liminal beings that occupy ambiguous spaces between the cultural binarism of “living” and “dead.” This intensified interest is manifested, for instance, in various pop culture genres including films, comic books, video games, action figures, zombie walks and other phenomena. This course explores this cultural fascination and asks questions such as: Why should anthropologists study the undead?; How are notions of the undead understood and how do they manifest themselves cross-culturally?; What socio-cultural forces or anxieties have contributed to this cultural fascination with the undead?; How do liminal beings such as zombies or vampires intersect with pervasive anxieties concerning social change, disease, the effects of globalization, mobilities, borders, and other phenomena?

### **Course Texts:**

*The Serpent and the Rainbow*, by Wade Davis (available in the McMaster bookstore)  
All other course readings are posted on Avenue.

### **Evaluation:**

- 1. In-class test: (30%)** – November 5. On November 5, we will have an in-class test that will cover all class material up to and including the October 29 material.
- 2. Group Presentation: (20%)** – Various due dates. By the second week of classes, you will be asked to sign up for a group presentation date/topic. More information will be provided during the first class.
- 3. Final paper: (25%)** – due November 26. You will have a choice of topics for this question:
  - a) Participant observation at either the Hamilton Zombie Walk on Saturday October 4 or the Toronto Zombie Walk/Zombie Market on Saturday October 25. 5-6 pages.
  - b) A research paper on a topic of your choice. Your research topic must be approved by the Professor prior to beginning research. 7-8 pages.

More details on each assignment option will be provided on the first day of class.

**4. Participation: (15%)** – Weekly class attendance and relevant contributions to discussion are expected. 7.5 marks are allocated to weekly attendance, and 7.5 marks are for active participation (answering and asking questions, showing evidence of engagement with readings, etc.).

**6. Pop Culture Zombie Analysis (10%)** – More details provided in class. Due on November 12.

**The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.**

### **ACADEMIC DISHONESTY**

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g., the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, Appendix 3, <http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicIntegrity.pdf>

The following illustrate only three forms of academic dishonesty

1. Plagiarism, e.g., the submission of work that is not one’s own for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

### **FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES E-MAIL COMMUNICATION POLICY**

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student’s own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a

McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Email Forwarding in MUGSI:

<http://www.mcmaster.ca/uts/support/email/emailforward.html>

\*Forwarding will take effect 24-hours after students complete the process at the above link

(Approved at the Faculty of Social Sciences meeting on Tues. May 25, 2010)

**Policy on the Submission of Assignments** - Assignments submitted by e-mail **will not be accepted**. No extensions will be given unless written certification, approved by your Faculty office, is provided. Please note that policies concerning the use of MSAFs (McMaster Student Absence Forms) have changed (see <http://www.mcmaster.ca/msaf/>). Late assignments without appropriate documentation will be penalized **10% per day** late, including weekend days. No assignments are accepted after 72 hours of the submission deadline, and you will receive a 0.

**Missed Assessments or Exams** -Students are responsible for arranging make-up exams/assignments with the instructor. A makeup exam/assessment will be granted on a case-by-case basis, and documentation from a physician is required. **Please note – make-up exams will be in essay format.**

**Course Materials and Avenue to Learn (ATL)** -Lectures will be presented using Power Point, an abbreviated version of which will be posted weekly on ATL. You must be registered in the course to have access to the 4BB3 site. **Please familiarize yourself with the Avenue to Learn system.** You can access ATL at:  
<http://avenue.mcmaster.ca/?logout=1>

**Correspondence** - I will check my email regularly throughout the week, so you can expect a response within approximately **48 hours**. Please put **4BB3 in the subject line** of your email and **include your name and student number** at the end of all correspondence.

**Student Behavior and Responsibilities** –

***Your learning*** – it is your responsibility to **keep up with the readings** – do not leave them until the night before the exams. Attendance in this class is **essential** if you want to do well in this course. You are expected to think about the readings and integrate them into the information and concepts presented during lecture.

**Classroom behavior** – Please **do not be afraid to ask questions** or provide constructive comments! If you do not understand something, or if I have gone over a concept too fast, stop me and ask a question. Chances are if you do not understand something, other people in the class are in the same position.

**Please ensure that cell phones are turned “off”**(including text messaging, Twitter, etc...) and **arrive on time for class**. If you have to leave class early, please sit near one of the exits. **Laptop computers** may be used in class for taking notes, but students using

their computers for any other purpose (e.g., checking Facebook) will be asked to turn their computers off. Please be polite to your neighbors and **keep conversation to a minimum.**

**Student Accessibility Services:** <http://sas.mcmaster.ca> MUSC-B107 905-525-9140 x28652

*NOTE: Disclosure of disability-related information is personal and confidential.*  
Student Accessibility Services offers various supports for students with disabilities. We work with full time and part time students. SAS provides or assists students with their academic and disability-related needs, including: Learning Strategies, Assistive Technologies, Test & Exam Administration, Note-Taking Programs, Classroom Accommodations. Please inform the instructor if there are disability needs that are not being met.

**McMaster University Policy on Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities & McMaster University Anti-Discrimination Policy**

• <http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicAccommodation-StudentsWithDisabilities.pdf>

#### **Special Accommodations -**

Any student with special learning needs should contact Dr. McGarry by the end of the **second week** of classes at the latest. You must have written confirmation from Student Accessibility Services (formerly the Center for Student Development). Students can contact SAS to arrange assistance in the completion of exams. <http://sas.mcmaster.ca/>

**Student Success Centre:** <http://studentsuccess.mcmaster.ca> GH-110 905-525-9140 x24254 Provides the following services: student orientation, academic skills, leadership, service-learning, volunteerism, educational planning, employment and career transition.

**Student Wellness Centre** <http://wellness.mcmaster.ca/> MUSC-B101& B106 905-525-9140 x27700 Provides services in: Personal and Psychological Counseling, Mental Health Support, Medical and Health Services

#### **Class Schedule:**

##### **September 10: Introduction to the course**

**Readings:** Please read the course syllabus carefully.

##### **September 17: Haitian Zombies and Voodoo “Origins?”**

Reading: Davis, “The Serpent and the Rainbow” Parts I and II

##### **September 24: Critiques of Davis and Other Models**

Reading: Davis, “The Serpent and the Rainbow,” Part III

Ackermann and Gauthier, “The Ways and Nature of the Zombi” (posted on Avenue)

##### **October 1: Zombies as “Others”**

**Reading:** Sheller, Mimi, Chapter 5: Eating Others – Of Cannibals, Vampires and Zombies (posted on Avenue)

**October 8: Race, Colonialism and Capitalism**

McAllister, Elizabeth, “Race, Cannibals and Infected Hyper-Whites: The Race and Religion of Zombies” (Posted on Avenue)

**October 15: Race, Colonialism and Capitalism, Part II**

**Readings:** Comaroff and Comaroff, “Alien-Nation: Zombies, Immigrants and Millennial Capitalism” (posted on Avenue)

Niehaus, Isak, “Witches and Zombies of the South African Lowveld” (Posted on Avenue)

**October 22: Zombies and Pop Culture, Part I**

**Readings:** King, “Dead Man Still Walking: Explaining the Zombie Renaissance” (Posted on Avenue)

Lauro, Sarah Juliet, “Playing Dead: Zombies Invade Performance Art...and your Neighbourhood” (Posted on Avenue)

**October 29: Zombies and Pop Culture**

**Readings:** Bishop, Kyle, “Becoming Monsters and Becoming Monstrous: Human Devolution in The Walking Dead (posted on Avenue)

Vint, Sherryl, “Abject Posthumanism: Neoliberalism, Biopolitics and Zombies” (Posted on Avenue)

**November 5: In class test (worth 20%).** This test is essay-based with a choice of essays. A study guide will be distributed in class on October 22.

**November 12: Zombies and Pop Culture (10% of final grade)**

**Readings: None**

Please come to class today with an example of a pop culture zombie genre to discuss (a particular film, video game, comic book, novel, etc.). You will be asked to briefly present your example to class and discuss how the content of your example merges with key course themes, and hand in a 500 word overview of your analysis. More information will be provided in class.

**November 19: Gendered Monstrosities: Vampires, Gender, and Sexuality**

**Readings:** Beck, Bernard, “Fearless Vampire Kissers” (posted on Avenue)

The Vampire in Modern American Media, 1975-2000 – read the Preface, Introduction and Chapter 3:

<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~elektra/thesis.html>

**November 26: Guest Speaker**

**Film:** *Real Vampires*

Final Papers are due today

**December 3: Course Wrap up and Summary**

