

SCAR 2SG3 – SPIRITS, GHOSTS, AND DEMONS Winter 2023



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Office Hours: By appointment in-person, or Zoom

Lecture: ITB 137: Monday & Thursday @ 1:30-2:20PM

Lecture audio released as podcast each week + ppt slides

CONTENTS

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	2
COURSE OVERVIEW	3
COURSE OBJECTIVES	3
COURSE EVALUATION	4
REQUIRED TEXTS	4
LECTURE INFORMATION	4
2SG3 SPOOKY SPECIAL EVENT.....	4
COURSE EVALUATION – DETAILS	5
INTRODUCTION (5%):	5
SELF-ASSESSMENT PARTICIPATION (10%):	5
EXPERIENCE ASSIGNMENT (15%):	5
CRITICAL REFLECTIONS (30%):	5
FINAL ASSIGNMENT – MORAL PANIC (40%):	6
WEEKLY COURSE SCHEDULE AND REQUIRED READINGS	7
WEEK ONE:	7
WEEK TWO:.....	7
WEEK THREE:.....	7
WEEK FOUR:.....	8
WEEK FIVE:.....	8
WEEK SIX:	8
WEEK SEVEN: FALL BREAK!	9
WEEK EIGHT:	9
WEEK NINE:.....	9
WEEK TEN:	10
WEEK ELEVEN:	10
WEEK TWELVE:.....	10
WEEK THIRTEEN:	11
WEEK FOURTEEN: APRIL 10TH	11
STUDENT RESOURCES	12

CAMPUS RESOURCES.....	12
HOW TO CITE	12
HOW TO AVOID UNINTENTIONAL PLAGIARISM.....	12
HOW TO WRITE AN ESSAY & PUNCTUATION RULES	12
COURSE POLICIES.....	13
SUBMISSION OF ASSIGNMENTS	13
GRADES	13
LATE ASSIGNMENTS	13
AVENUE TO LEARN	13
UNIVERSITY POLICIES.....	14
ACADEMIC INTEGRITY STATEMENT	14
AUTHENTICITY / PLAGIARISM DETECTION.....	14
COURSES WITH AN ON-LINE ELEMENT	15
ONLINE PROCTORING.....	15
CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS	15
ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES	16
REQUESTS FOR RELIEF FOR MISSED ACADEMIC TERM WORK	16
ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION FOR RELIGIOUS, INDIGENOUS OR SPIRITUAL OBSERVANCES (RISO)	16
COPYRIGHT AND RECORDING.....	16
EXTREME CIRCUMSTANCES.....	17

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I recognize and acknowledge that McMaster University is located on the traditional territories of the Mississauga and Haudenosaunee nations, and within the lands protected by the “Dish with One Spoon” wampum agreement.

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course offers an introductory, social scientific examination of spirits, ghosts, and demons. Some questions we explore together include:

- What explains the widespread belief in the paranormal?
- How should we understand claims of paranormal experiences (hauntings, possessions, psychics)?
- How does gender, sexuality, race, and religion relate to the paranormal?

Some topics we cover include hauntings, spirit and demon possession, witch trials, the Satanic Panic phenomenon, Jewish and Muslim folklore, Queer ghost hunters, spirit channeling, and android (robot) ghosts.

You will learn to evaluate the paranormal, including attempts to explain paranormal phenomena, from a critical, social-scientific perspective.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This is an introductory course offered by the Department of Religious Studies (SCAR). I do not assume you have any prior knowledge of the topics discussed, or any background in the social scientific study of religion. All are welcome!

1. **Introductory Survey:** To provide you with an introductory survey of selected aspects of the cultural, historical, political, and religious considerations related to spirits, ghosts, and demons.
2. **Interconnections:** To unpack the complex power dynamics around gender, class, race, and religion with respect to the paranormal and paranormal experiences.
3. **Critical Thinking:** In true anthropological fashion, this course will make the strange familiar and make the familiar strange by cultivating your analytical, reflective, and critical thought.
4. **Enchantment:** To recognize the extent to which spirits, ghosts, and demons continue to 'haunt' our 'modern' world.

COURSE EVALUATION

You are responsible for completing all the assigned weekly readings, attending lectures, and attending tutorials. Movies are watched on your own time. These will prepare you for the course assignments.

As part of an effort to make grading fairer, participation is not based on tutorial attendance alone. More information on Avenue.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Journal articles can be found on the [McMaster Library](#) website. Book chapters are on Avenue as .pdf files. Videos are all publicly available.

LECTURE INFORMATION

Lectures: This course is offered in person and uses Avenue2Learn. It is your responsibility to check A2L on a regular basis.

Recorded Lectures: The lecture audio will be recorded and released on Avenue each week. The audio files will be accompanied by PowerPoint slides. This is being offered for students who cannot make it to campus and for students who miss a class.

Tutorials: Our tutorials are in person.

In case of illness, class & tutorials may take place online.

2SG3 SPOOKY SPECIAL EVENT

At the end of the semester, we will gather by candlelight (or dim lightbulbs) to listen to, and share, some scary stories. Conjure your best tales, real or fictional, and settle in for a frightful evening. After all, it is never too late, or too early, to get into the Halloween spirit.

This is an optional, extracurricular event (no participation necessary).

Date & Location: TBD

COURSE EVALUATION – DETAILS

Introduction (5%):

Introduce yourself and answer the following questions: Who are you? Why are you taking this course? What are your learning objectives this semester and how will you reach them? What is one academic skill that you most want to improve (ex: writing, reading comprehension)?

Due Date: January 25th @ 11:59pm

Self-Assessment Participation (10%):

Participation in this course can take several forms, including attending tutorials, speaking in class/tutorials, and optional discussion posts on Avenue. Participation grades will be based on your learning objectives, a self-assessment, and input from TAs. More information available on Avenue.

Experience Assignment (15%):

At the beginning of the course, I will anonymously poll students about their beliefs in the paranormal, ghosts, angels, spirits, and demons. Write a short reflection based on the results of the poll, and on your own experiences.

Due date: February 7th @ 11:59PM

Critical Reflections (30%):

Write two critical reflections based on course material. The reflections may coincide with films and guest lectures.

Due Dates: February 24th & March 24th @ 11:59PM

Final Assignment – Moral Panic (40%):

For your final assignment, research and write about a paranormal based “moral panic”. This can include witch trials, mass spirit possessions, the Satanic Panic, or a modern paranormal panic.

Your final assignment can be in the form of a traditional essay, a video presentation, a podcast, zine, graphic novel, or another creative medium.

Proposal Due Date (10%): March 4th @ 11:59PM

Final Due Date (30%): April 12th @ 11:59PM

WEEKLY COURSE SCHEDULE AND REQUIRED READINGS

Week One: INTRODUCTIONS

- **Jan 9th**: Overview of the course, assignments and learning objectives.
 - [“What Canadians Believe: From Science and Spirituality to Conspiracies and the Supernatural.”](#)
 - **Jan 12th**: Partridge, Christopher. 2013. “Haunted Culture: The Persistence of Belief in the Paranormal” In *The Ashgate Research Companion to Paranormal Cultures*, 39-49.
-

Week Two: HISTORICAL HAUNTINGS

- **Jan 16th**: [“History of Ghost Stories”](#)
 - Josephson-Storm, Jason Añanda. 2017. “Enchanted (Post) Modernity” In *The Myth of Disenchantment*, 22-37.
 - **Jan 19th**: Hill, Annette. 2011. “Spirit Histories” In *Paranormal Media*, 20-36.
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Week Three: SCIENCE AND/OFF SPIRIT

- **Jan 23rd**: Sconce, Jeffrey. 2000. “Introduction.” *Haunted Media*, 1-21.
- **Jan 26th**: Delgado, L. Anne. 2017. “Psychical Research and the Fantastic Science of Spirits.” In *Strange Science: Investigating the Limits of Knowledge in the Victorian Age*: 236-53.

Week Four:

DEBUNKING AND DEBUNKERS: IS IT ALL IN OUR HEADS?

- **Jan 30th:** Sagan, Carl. 1995. "The Most Precious Thing." In *The Demon-haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark*. 13-22.
 - **Feb 2nd:** Prothero, Donald R. 2020. "Why People Believe Weird Things" In *Weird Earth: Debunking Strange Ideas about Our Planet*, 228-248.
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Week Five:

A DYBBUK AND A JINN WALK INTO A BAR...

- **Feb 6th:** Watch: "[Gifting The Dybbuk Box](#)"
 - Peterson, Mark Allen. 2007. "From Jinn to Genies: Intertextuality, Media, and the Making of Global Folklore." In *Folklore/Cinema: Popular Film as Vernacular Culture*. 93-112.
 - **Feb 9th:** Chajes, Yossi. 2015. "Dybbuk." In *Encyclopedia of Jewish Folklore and Traditions*, 133-135.
 - Legutko, Agnieszka. 2010. "Feminist Dybbuks: Spirit Possession Motif in Post-Second Wave Jewish Women's Fiction" *Bridges Association*, 6-21.
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Week Six:

OF MONSTERS AND MYTH

- **Feb 13th:** Ramírez Plascencia, David. 2017. "The Role of the Internet in the Endurance of 'La Llorona' as a Liminal Archetypal Monster in Modern Latin American Society". *ETropic: Electronic Journal of Studies in the Tropics* 16: 1-12.

- **Feb 16th**: Paddison, Joshua. 2019. "The mystery of everything out there: Bigfoot and religion in the 21st century." In *The Paranormal and Popular Culture*, 78-91.
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Week Seven: FALL BREAK!

- Self-Care / Mental Health module available on course Avenue! Includes resources, music playlists, meditation guides, hobby suggestions and more.
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Week Eight: OF MONSTERS, MYTH, AND MEDIA

- **Feb 27th**: Henriksen, Line. 2013. "A Short Bestiary of Creatures from the Web." In *The Ashgate Research Companion to Paranormal Cultures*. 405-416.
 - **March 2nd**: Hunter, Jack. 2019. "The Dark Knight Rises Shamanic transformations in Gotham City." In *The Paranormal and Popular Culture*, 55-67.
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Week Nine: (Guest Presentation) GHOST HUNTERS & QUEERING THE PARANORMAL

- **March 6th**: Lauro, Sarah Juliet and Catherine Paul. 2013. "'Make Me Believe!': Ghost-Hunting Technology and the Postmodern Fantastic," *Horror Studies* 4: 221-239.
 - **March 9th**: Zeisler, Andi. 2017. "[The Feminist Power of Female Ghosts](#)"
 - Chabot, Kevin. 2019. "Queer Spectralities and Untimely Subjects: Queer Ghost Hunters and Paranormal Reality Television." *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 28: 1-22.
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Week Ten:

MORAL PANIC (IN THE STREETS OF LONDON)

- **March 13th:** Dyrendal, Asbjorn, James R. Lewis, and Jesper Aa. Petersen. 2015. "Anthropology of Evil: The Folklore of Satanism" In *The Invention of Satanism*. 13-27.
 - **March 16th:** Cohen, Jeremy. "[History of the Salem Witch Trials: Was it Mass Hysteria?](#)"
-

Week Eleven:

SATANIC PANICS

- **March 20th & 23rd:** Matthews, Chris. 2009. "In the Company of Killers: Satanic Ritual Abuse and Satanic Social Politics" In *Modern Satanism: Anatomy of a Radical Subculture*. 121-135.
 - Goodwin, Megan. 2020. "[Michelle Remembers and the Satanic Panic](#)"
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Week Twelve:

INDIGENOUS MONSTERS

- **March 27th:** Freeman, Victoria. 2011. "Indigenous Hauntings in Settler-Colonial Spaces: The Activism of Indigenous Ancestors in the City of Toronto." In *Phantom past, indigenous presence: native ghosts in North American culture and history*: 209-239.
 - **March 30th:** Cameron, Emilie. 2008. "Indigenous Spectrality and the Politics of Postcolonial Ghost Stories." *Cultural Geographies* 15: 383-93.
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Week Thirteen:

SPIRITS, GHOSTS, AND DEMONS IN THE MODERN WORLD

- **April 3rd:** McCloud, Sean. 2018. "Conjuring Spirits in a Neoliberal Era: Ghost Reality Television, Third Wave Spiritual Warfare, and Haunting Pasts." In *Religion and Reality TV: Faith in Late Capitalism*. 137-149.
- **April 6th:** Thompson, Tok. 2019. "Ghost Stories from the Uncanny Valley: Androids, Souls, and the Future of Being Haunted." *Western Folklore* 78: 39-66.

Week Fourteen: April 10th

NO CLASS – STORYTELLING EVENT TBD.

STUDENT RESOURCES

CAMPUS RESOURCES

- [Food Collective Centre](#)
- [Indigenous Student Services](#)
- [Sexual Violence Response Coordinator](#)
- [Equity and Inclusion](#)
- [Online Learning Support](#)
- [Writing Support](#)
- [Student Success Centre](#)
- [Ontario Crisis Resources and Helplines](#)
- [Canada Suicide Prevention Service](#)

HOW TO CITE

- [MLA](#)
- [Chicago](#)
- [APA](#)

HOW TO AVOID UNINTENTIONAL PLAGIARISM

- [Avoiding Unintentional Plagiarism](#)

HOW TO WRITE AN ESSAY & PUNCTUATION RULES

- [How to Write an Essay](#)
- [Reading and Writing for Academic Purposes](#)
- [13 Rules for Using Commas](#)
- [How to use the Semi-Colon](#)

COURSE POLICIES

SUBMISSION OF ASSIGNMENTS

All written assignments must be uploaded to Avenue in .docx or .pdf format (NO .pages).

GRADES

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-89	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Everyone has a 24-hour extension leeway to submit their assignment. If you need more than 24 hours, please contact your TA. Late assignments (past 24 hours) may be penalized at the discretion of the TA and/or professor.

AVENUE TO LEARN

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The

available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY STATEMENT

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. **It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.**

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour 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. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/), located at <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- improper collaboration in group work.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

AUTHENTICITY / PLAGIARISM DETECTION

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No

penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software. **All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld** (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster's use of Turnitin.com please go to the [Office of Academic Integrity website](#).

COURSES WITH AN ON-LINE ELEMENT

Some courses may use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

ONLINE PROCTORING

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the "Code"). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online**.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students' access to these platforms.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services \(SAS\)](#) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or sas@mcmaster.ca to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University's [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

REQUESTS FOR RELIEF FOR MISSED ACADEMIC TERM WORK

[McMaster Student Absence Form \(MSAF\)](#): In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar "Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work".

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION FOR RELIGIOUS, INDIGENOUS OR SPIRITUAL OBSERVANCES (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO](#) policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office **normally within 10 working days** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

COPYRIGHT AND RECORDING

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The

Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

EXTREME CIRCUMSTANCES

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.