

Preliminary Course Outline, subject to revisions

SPIRITS, GHOSTS, AND DEMONS

Fall 2020

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Lecture: Online class

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Course Description

This course will examine the conceptualizations and roles of spirits, ghosts, and demons in a range of cultural, contemporary, and historical settings. Special attention will be paid to how demons and spirits influence human health and well-being.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- (1) understand the range of meanings conveyed by stories of and experiences with spirits, ghosts, and demons;
- (2) outline the historical and ongoing interplay of folklore and popular culture;
- (3) grasp the role of mass media in perpetuating, creating, and challenging stories of, experiences with, and images of spirits, ghosts and demons in contemporary life in North America.

Required Materials and Texts

Course material will be available online via Avenue and Mills Library's electronic collection.

Note: We will read the entirety of *Haunting Experiences* available as an e-book via Mills:

Goldstein, Diane, Sylvia Grider, Jeannie Banks Thomas. 2007. *Haunting Experiences: Ghosts in Contemporary Folklore*. Utah: Utah State University Press. E-book.

<https://www-jstor-org.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/stable/j.ctt4cgmqg>

Class Format

Online class

I **urge** students to follow the weekly schedule of lectures (recorded using Echo360 and available via Avenue) and accompanying readings listed below. Following the schedule increases the ability to absorb and understand the material and decreases stressful attempts at cramming. To facilitate access to the material, course lectures and readings will be posted on Avenue as soon as they are available and students will have continuous access to these materials throughout term.

Quizzes will be available online on specific dates from 8AM to 5PM.

Assignments and tutorial discussion responses will be due on specific dates and by specific times.

Again, I encourage students in the strongest possible terms to use and follow the schedule below.

Course Evaluation – Overview

- (1) 50% Quizzes
- (2) 20% Halloween assignment
- (3) 20% Article paper
- (4) 10% Tutorial participation

Course Evaluation – Details

(1) 50% Quizzes: 8AM to 5PM on September 25, October 9, October 30, November 13, November 27

Five quizzes each worth 10%

There will be five quizzes throughout the term, available from 8AM to 5PM on the dates specified (listed above, on the schedule below, and on the Avenue course website calendar page). Quizzes will cover the specified readings and lecture material. Quizzes will consist of a combination of multiple choice, fill in the blank, and short answer questions and must be completed within 60 minutes. No collaboration is allowed when completing the quizzes. Academic integrity is key to the success of this course and can result in serious penalties, as outlined below.

(2) 20% Halloween assignment: 5PM November 6

Students will capture an image of Halloween and write a short essay explaining and contextualizing its significance in light of course readings, lectures, and additional research. Papers and images should be uploaded together to Avenue. Papers should be between 900-1000 words.

- (3) 10% Tutorial participation: 8AM to 5PM on October 2, October 23, November 20, December 4

Tutorial participation will consist of written contributions to our online discussions. Although less formal than the short paper and Halloween assignment, these contributions should nonetheless be clearly written and reflect engagement with course material. Topics to be announced on Avenue.

- (4) 20% Article paper: 5PM December 11

Students will choose one academic paper from a list of choices available on Avenue. The paper will summarize the paper and consider how the author's argument enhances the study of spirits, ghosts and demons. Papers should be between 900-1000 words and uploaded to Avenue.

WEEKLY COURSE SCHEDULE

September 8-11

Lecture 1.0 Course introduction and overview

This brief lecture will provide an overview of the structure, requirements, and goals of this course. It is important that you understand the course components, timeline, and expectations.

Notes: 8AM-5PM, Friday, September 11: Optional quiz for bonus marks on Lecture 1.0.

Week 1 September 14-18 Studying Spirits, Ghosts, and Demons

Lecture 1.1 What, where, and how do we study spirits, ghosts, and demons?

"Introduction: Old Spirits in New Bottles." in *Haunting Experiences: Ghosts in Contemporary Folklore*, by Diane E. Goldstein et al., Utah State University Press, 2007. E-book at Mills. [referred to as *Haunting* below]

Lecture 1.2 Who believes in spirits, ghosts, and demons?

Lipka, Michael. "18% Of Americans Say They've Seen a Ghost." *Pew Research Center*, Pew Research Center, 30 Oct. 2015, www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/10/30/18-of-americans-say-theyve-seen-a-ghost/.

Parrinder, Geoffrey. "Ghosts." In *Encyclopedia of Religion*. Ed. Lindsay Jones. 2nd ed., Macmillan Reference USA, 2005. 15 vols. *Gale eBooks*, https://link-gale-com.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/apps/pub/5BSX/GVRL?u=ocul_mcmaster&sid=GVRL

"What Canadians Believe: From Science and Spirituality to Conspiracies and the Supernatural." *Pollara.com*, Pollara Strategic Insights, 2019. <https://www.pollara.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Pollara-Beliefs2019-RptF2.pdf>

Ballard, Jamie. "45% Of Americans Believe That Ghosts and Demons Exist." *YouGov*, YouGov, 21 Oct. 2019, <https://today.yougov.com/topics/lifestyle/articles-reports/2019/10/21/paranormal-beliefs-ghosts-demons-poll>

Notes: Catch up if you joined the class late.

Week 2 September 21-25 The Work of Ghost Stories

Lecture 2.1 What do ghost stories do?

"Chapter One: The Usefulness of Ghost Stories" in *Haunting*

Lecture 2.2 What do ghost stories do? cont'd

Heller, Nathan. 2017. "Reasons to believe in ghosts in America." *The New Yorker*. October 31.

Notes: 8AM to 5PM, Friday, September 25 quiz on 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2

Week 3 September 28-October 2 Rationalism and Belief

Lecture 3. 1 Rationalism and the Supernatural

"Chapter Two Scientific Rationalism and Supernatural Experience Narratives" in *Haunting*

Lecture 3.2 Rationalism and the Supernatural, cont'd

Gregory, Alice. "What Lies Behind Ghosts, Demons and Aliens – According to Sleep Researchers." *The Conversation*. June 20, 2018.

McAndrew, Frank. "Why Some People See Ghosts and Other Apparitions." *Psychology Today*. July 9, 2015.

Stierwalt, Sabrina. "6 Possible Scientific Reasons for Ghosts." *Quick and Dirty Tips*. October 30, 2018.

Notes: 5PM, Friday, October 2, tutorial response to Week 3

Week 4 October 5-9 Gender and Ghosts

Lecture 4.1 Gender and Ghosts

"Chapter Three Gender and Ghosts" in *Haunting*

Lecture 4.2 Gendered Ghosts

<https://www.topic.com/something-wraithlike-this-way-comes>

<https://www.bitchmedia.org/post/the-feminist-power-of-female-ghosts>

Notes: 8AM to 5PM, Friday, October 9, quiz on 3.1, 3.2, 4.1, 4.2

October 12-16 Fall midterm recess

Week 5 October 19-23 Halloween

Lecture 5.1 Halloween, Part I

Morton, L. 2012. "1: Halloween: The Misunderstood Festival." In *Trick or Treat : A History of Halloween*. London: Reaktion Books. Pp. 9-21.

Lecture 5.2 Halloween, Part II

Rogers, Nicholas. 1996. "Halloween in Urban North America: Liminality and Hyperreality." *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 29(58): 461-477.

Notes: 5PM, Friday, October 23, tutorial response to Week 5

Week 6 October 26-30 Haunted Houses

Lecture 6.1 Haunted Houses, Part I

"Chapter Five Haunted Houses" in *Haunting*

Lecture 6.2 Haunted Houses, Part II

Watch: "History is a Ghost Story – The Haunted White House: Jeff Belanger at TEDxSpenceSchool." February 14, 2014. <https://youtu.be/RQrxNE7D5I4>

Fitzpatrick, Molly. "Quarantining With a Ghost? It's Scary." *The New York Times*. 14 May 2020. <https://nyti.ms/3fOUtZa>

Notes: 8AM-5PM, Friday, October 30, quiz on 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, and 6.2

Field research for Halloween paper

Week 7 November 2-6 Teaching Children about Spirits, Ghosts, and Demons

Lecture 7.1 Children's Ghost Stories

"Chapter 4 Children's Ghost Stories" in *Haunting*

LIVE Q&A 9-11AM, NOVEMBER 2 AND 4

Notes: 5PM, Friday, November 6, Halloween paper due

Week 8 November 9-13 Selling Spirits, Ghosts, and Demons

Lecture 8.1

"Chapter Six The Commodification of Belief" in *Haunting*

Lecture 8.2

TBA

Notes: 8AM-5PM, Friday, November 13, quiz on 7.1, 8.1, 8.2

Week 9 November 16-20 Reality Television

Lecture 9.1

Koven, Mikel. 2007. "Most Haunted and the Convergence of Traditional Belief and Popular Television." *Folklore* 118 (2): 183-202.

Lecture 9.2

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*, eds. Mara Einstein and Diane Winston. New York: Routledge. Pp. 137-149.

Notes: 5PM, Friday, November 20, tutorial response to Week 9

Week 10 November 23-27 Ghost Hunting

Lecture 10.1

Bader, Christopher, Joseph Baker, and F. Carson Mencken. "The Thrill of the Haunt." In *Paranormal America*, second edition. New York: New York University Press. Pp. 80-106.

Lecture 10.2

Bastian, Misty. 2017. "What Do Ghosts (and Ghost Hunters) Want?" *Anthropology News* 23 February. Pp. 1-6.

Dickey, Colin. 2016. "The Broken Technology of Ghost Hunting." *The Atlantic* 14 November.

Notes: 8AM-5PM Friday, November 27 quiz on 9.1, 9.2, 10.1, 10.2

Week 11 November 30-December 4 Comparative Case Studies

Lecture 11.1

Rothenberg, Celia. 2004. "Chapter Two: The Jinn." In *Spirits of Palestine: Gender, Society, and Stories of the Jinn*. Lanham: Lexington Press.

Notes: 8AM-5PM, Friday December 4, tutorial response to 11.1

Week 12 December 7-9

LIVE Q&A 10AM -12PM MONDAY December 7

ARTICLE PAPER DUE: 5PM, FRIDAY DECEMBER 11

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments

[Insert policy on format of assignments and how to be submitted. Keep in mind our department policy that staff in the office of the Department of Religious Studies will not date-stamp or receive papers and other assignments.]

Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

| MARK | GRADE |
|-------------|--------------|
| 90-100 | A+ |
| 85-90 | 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

Assignments submitted after the due date will be reduced by 1% per day from the weight of the paper (e.g., a paper marked 18% out of 20%, will receive 17% if submitted one day late).

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.

Turnitin.com

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal plagiarism. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically to Turnitin.com and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work to Turnitin.com must still submit a copy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been

upheld (e.g., on-line search, etc.). To see the Turnitin.com Policy, please to go www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

University Policies

Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behavior in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

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 behavior 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 types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

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

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.