Advanced English: Creative Writing - The Evolving Gothic, a Creative Approach through Literature and Film

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Academic year 2019-2020 - Language Department - Spring semester.

This course is meant for students of the advanced C1 and C2 levels. Theme-based language classes aim at developing written and oral skills through the study of a specific topic.

Course Objectives

This is a 12-week course exploring the Gothic genre as a means of improving student understanding and use of English.

The course has three main objectives:
- Introducing students to the Gothic genre as it has evolved from the 18th c. to the present.
- Facilitating critical analysis of selected works in various media.
- Expanding appreciation of the genre through creative writing.

Course Description

In the first weeks of the semester, students will be introduced to the Gothic genre. Its tenets and characteristics will be identified so as to serve as signposts throughout the semester, guiding our analysis of selected works. Our particular focus throughout the semester will be the notion of the Gothic “self,” or identity.

Together we will read Frankenstein by Mary Shelley and the novellas The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde by Robert Louis Stevenson, The Picture of Dorian Gray by Oscar Wilde and The Island of Dr. Moreau by H.G. Wells. A lesser focus will be tracing these works through their many filmed versions.

In addition, students will be assigned supplementary readings in various sub-genres of the Gothic, i.e. Irish and American (Southern) Gothic. Other topics may include poetry, the Gothic in translation and its influence on other genres, such as the detective novel. Throughout, our analysis will center on identifying the Gothic elements in each work and exploring how these have evolved from the genre’s roots.

Finally, students will “practice” the genre by writing an original short-form piece of fiction or criticism. Time allowing, we will refine these original works via in-class workshops and readings.
Organization

Activities will cover the four language skills: speaking, writing, listening and reading. While in-class discussion of course content will emphasize **speaking** (including pronunciation, stress, et cetera), preparation will require **reading** (assigned novels, stories, critiques and scholarly articles regarding the Gothic’s social/historical context); **writing** (both critical and creative); and **listening** (including film extracts, author readings and presentations).