ENGL–4362 Special Topics in American Literature: Uncanny American Homes and Homeplaces

Dr. Sarah H. Salter  Time/Place: TR 12.30–1.45PM
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Office: Faculty Center 135
Office Hours: Mon/Wed 2–3.30PM
    Thursday 10AM – 12PM & by appointment

Course Description. Sigmund Freud’s 1919 essay describes the uncanny as “that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar.” In fact, he traces the English word to its German cognate, unheimlich, which means “unhomely.” In this course, we will read fiction and view films that depict uncanny American homes. Some have ghosts, some hide monsters, and some, perhaps, reflect the monstrous or eerie within narrators, characters, and readers. By turns welcoming, terrifying, familiar, and utterly unknowable, the American homes we visit in imagination will help us to explore histories of gender, race, class, and literary production from the antebellum to the contemporary period.

Course Objectives. This course will support the following learning goals:
- Introduce students to literary and cultural histories in the United States.
- Introduce students to theories of genre, perception, and aesthetics in literary study.
- Support the development of student libraries and vocabularies for the further study of literature and American culture.
- Introduce space-based and perception-based frameworks for analysis.
- Encourage students to make connections between imaginative texts and theoretical frameworks, and to articulate those connections with textual analysis and argumentation.

Required Texts
ISBN: 9780486419312
James, Henry. The Turn of the Screw and Other Short Fiction. Penguin Edition.
ISBN: 9780553210590

Assignments
Discussion Leader 10%
Participation 15%
Blueprint Project (SketchUp optional) 15%
**Short Reading Responses.** 2 @ 10% = 20%

**Argumentative Essays:** 2 @ 15% = 30%

**Argumentative Papers.** Students will develop a sustained, original argument in the service of an argumentative thesis. The purpose of this assignment is twofold: (1) students identify a cultural, historical, or literary “conversation” in which they will take part and (2) students develop and present an argument (including supporting examples, outside sources, and original analysis) that advances a particular intervention or perspective within what they identify as their conversation of interest. Additionally, this assignment includes two separate graded units: the proposal/working draft AND the final draft.

**Reading Responses.** Reading responses allow students to experiment with an argument in a short form, low risk format. In two reading responses, students should formulate a short thesis statement work through an example or two from the chosen text(s). In practical terms, the reading response is a practice for the final paper: a place to try out daring ideas, experiment with counter-intuitive arguments, organize observations around an unexpected or innovative question.

**Blueprint Project.** As a creative and interpretive project, each student will develop a map or blueprint of a space from the texts we read in class. This project might use the SketchUp program (available online), or it could draw, model, digitally render, or otherwise visually represent the space in another way. More details will follow in class.

**Specific Course Policies.**

**Class Participation.** Success in literary and cultural criticism requires good communication and productive interaction, so attending class and contributing usefully to discussion are important parts of the final grade in this class. It will be difficult, if not utterly impossible, to retain the important aspects of class discussion without some textual marking and active reading practices, so bring the appropriate text to class every day and be ready to write in it. Students who are routinely without hard copies (either bound books or, when appropriate, printouts) will lose participation points. While you need not contribute to class discussion on every single day we meet, every student should arrive to class prepared by having done the reading and considered a question or two about the text. Asking informed and productive question is as important as answering them! Studying American literature in a serious way means getting to enjoy the pleasures of beautiful writing and the insights of sophisticated minds. It also means confronting violent histories, especially histories of race, sex, and labor. Our readings include accounts of physical abuses, rapes, and other harms, as well as literally dozens of instances of racist epithets. We will talk openly about how hard it can be to read this work, but all assigned
readings are required. Also important is your willingness to engage thoughtfully, generously, and sympathetically with your peers in this learning community. Please see Professor Salter to discuss any questions or concerns you may have about your own participation in this course. During the course of the semester, I will give unannounced reading quizzes and require assorted extra activities, such as mini-presentations on passages of text or work with secondary critical material. All such activities will count toward the class participation grade.

Class Attendance. Students are allowed a maximum of three (3) absences. All absences count equally, irrespective of the cause, and students who exceed 3 absences will be penalized .05 points on their final grade for every absence over the limit. Additionally:

- Students who participate in university-sanctioned activities should meet with me during the first week of classes.
- If you are unable to attend class, you do not need to email me to explain the circumstances. You should contact another student in class and copy his/her notes.

For more detail, consult TAMU-CC’s “General Academic Policies and Regulations.” http://catalog.tamucc.edu/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=177

Communication. As members of a learning community, everyone is expected to be up-to-date and responsible for any changes or additions to the course schedule. I will be using your TAMU-CC email, through Blackboard, to send messages about readings, assignments, and assorted matters to the class throughout the semester. It is imperative to check email regularly and stay aware of what is happening in and outside of the classroom. I will also take my communication responsibility to you seriously: if I have not responded to an email within 24 hours, do not hesitate to follow up. Be advised that emails sent after 10pm will not be read until the following day.

Technology. There will often be required supplementary readings posted to Blackboard; these should be printed out on hard copy, or students can bring a digital reading device, such as a Kindle, to class. The use of laptops in class has been found to lower course grades for the students who use them (see this article, one of several: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/05/16/why-smart-kids-shouldnt-use-laptops-in-class/)

Thus, laptops and tablets will not be considered appropriate digital reading device for class; students using laptops, tablets, or cell phones during class will be considered absent for the day.
Work Policies. All late work will lose 1/3 of a letter grade each day for as long as the assignment continues to be overdue. Students must complete all major assignments (as listed in the syllabus) in order to pass the course.

General Educational Policies.

Dropping a Class: Although I hope we will learn together for the course of this semester, sometimes a student must drop a course. Please see me if you are considering doing so. You must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. November 6 is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.

Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct. TAMU-CC identifies “Academic Misconduct” as “engaging in an act that violates the standards of the academic integrity policy as described in the Student Code of Conduct and Procedure for Academic Misconduct Cases.”

Specifically, academic misconduct includes plagiarism, the act of using someone else’s words and ideas without attribution. The TAMU-CC Student Code of Conduct defines Plagiarism as “Intentionally, knowingly, or carelessly presenting the work of another as one’s own without proper acknowledgement of the source, with the exception of information that is generally accepted as common knowledge.

Examples:

- Using another’s work from print, web or other sources without acknowledging the source.
- Quoting from a source without citation.
- Using facts, figures, graphs, charts or information without acknowledgement of the source.
- Using a past assignment the student has completed as a portion of a new assignments, without providing citation. Please note that without instructor permission, this is also considered a multiple submission violation.

We will discuss MLA citation style and the appropriate use of academic sources and conventions throughout the semester. Please do not hesitate to ask me any questions about academic misconduct and academic integrity at anytime. If you are discovered plagiarizing you will automatically receive an "F" for the paper, or depending on the severity, for the class, and will be reported to the appropriate officials for further
disciplinary action. See the TAMU-CC Student Code of Conduct for more detail.
http://judicialaffairs.tamucc.edu/studentcofc.html

Classroom / Professional Behavior. Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has a diverse
student population that represents the population of the state. Our goal is to provide you
with a high quality educational experience that is free from repression. You are responsible
for following the rules of the University, city, state and federal government. We expect that
you will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful and courteous to all people,
regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation or disability.
Behaviors that infringe on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

Grade Appeals Process. As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade
Appeal Procedures, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate
academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or
appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is
upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a
complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For
complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the
number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Procedure
13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures (available at
appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website,
http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the
grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s Office.

Disabilities Accommodations. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-
discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with
disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities
be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of
their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please
call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116.
If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues
in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance
at (361) 825-5816.

Statement of Academic Continuity. In the event of an unforeseen adverse event, such as a
major hurricane and classes could not be held on the campus of Texas A&M University–
Corpus Christi; this course would continue through the use of Blackboard and/or email. In
addition, the syllabus and class activities may be modified to allow continuation of the
course. Ideally, University facilities (i.e., emails, web sites, and Blackboard) will be
operational within two days of the closing of the physical campus. However, students need
to make certain that the course instructor has a primary and a secondary means of
contacting each student.

*Academic Advising.* It is imperative that all students visit regularly with an academic
adviser. Each college within the university has an academic advising center, staffed by full-
time, professional advisers to assist students with course selection, degree plans, and
other academic matters. To find out how to contact the right adviser, go to:
http://www.tamucc.edu/academics/advising.php
Students who have yet to declare a major are advised by the Academic Advising Transition
Center.

For more information, go to: [http://www.tamucc.edu/~aac](http://www.tamucc.edu/~aac)
The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon
as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan,
which must be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. Degree
plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online
Degree Audit system. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and
the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan
audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The College's Academic
Advising Center is located in Driftwood 203E, and can be reached at 825-3466.

*Campus Carry.* Beginning August 1, 2016, it is legal in the State of Texas for “a handgun
license holder to carry a concealed handgun on the campus of an institution of higher
education.” As a state institution of higher learning, Texas A&M–Corpus Christi must
recognize and abide by the Campus Carry law, which limits concealed carry to those over
the age of 21 who hold the appropriate permit. By law, employees of TAMUCC cannot
restrict permit holders, under the appropriate circumstances, from carrying a firearm on
campus (with the exception of university restricted zones, which are clearly marked). I hope
that you will consider participating in our learning community’s safe-space mentality in the
classroom and my office. If you have concerns about this law and its effect on your learning
experience, you can speak to your professor, a representative of the office of Student
Engagement and Success, a employee of Campus Security, or a member of the ICARE
community. For more information about this policy, please consult the TAMUCC website at
Proposed Schedule.
NB: Instructor reserves the right to make changes to the course schedule as necessary

Week 1
Th 1/19 Introductory

Week 2
T 1/24 Freud, “The Uncanny” (1919); Thacker, from In The Dust of This Planet (2010)
Th. 1/26 Jacobs. Incidents. (1861) “Intro”–XV

Week 3
T 1/31 Jacobs. Incidents. XVI–XXVII
Th. 2/2 Jacobs. Incidents. XVIII–XLI

Week 4
T 2/7 Felman, “Turning the Screw of Interpretation” (1977)
Th. 2/9 James. Turn of the Screw (1898)
RR I Due

Week 5
T 2/14 James. Turn of the Screw
Th. 2/16 James. Turn of the Screw

Week 6
The Innocents (1961)
The Others (2001)
Essay I Due

Week 7
T 2/21 Gilbert and Gubar, from The Madwoman in the Attic (1980)
Th. 2/23 Perkins Gilman. The Yellow Wallpaper (1892)

Week 8
T 2/28 Morrison, from Playing in the Dark (1992)
Th. 3/2 Morrison. Beloved (1987)

Week 9
SPRING BREAK
Week 10
T 3/21 Morrison. *Beloved*
Th. 3/23 Morrison. *Beloved*
RR II Due

Week 11
Th. 3/30 Derrida.

Week 12
Th. 4/6 King. *The Shining* (1977)

Week 13
Th. 4/13 King. *The Shining* (1977)
Blueprint Project Due

Week 14
Th 4/20 *Room 237* (2012)

Week 15
T 4/25 Louis Erdrich. Short Stories
Th. 4/27 Course Conclusion
Essay II Due