ENGL4362 Special Topics in American Literature: Uncanny American Homes and Homeplaces

Dr. Sarah H. Salter
Time/Place: TR 12.30 – 1.45 PM
Sarah.Salter@tamucc.edu
Island Hall 162
Office: Faculty Center 256
Office Hours: Thurs. 3.30 – 5 PM
Fri. 10.30AM – 1PM
& 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
Films
The Innocents (1961) Available on course reserve in Bell Library
The Others (2001). http://tinyurl.com/ha5rv4p
The Shining (1980) http://tinyurl.com/z79eu72 Also available on Netflix Streaming
Room 237 (2013) http://tinyurl.com/jdz7hdw Also available on Netflix Streaming

Assignments
Participation: 15%
Film Commentary: 15%
Blueprint Project (SketchUp optional): 20%
Argumentative Essay: 20%
Short Reading Responses. 3 @ 10% = 30%

Each assignment will have assignment sheets/prompts available on Bb.

Argumentative Essay. Students will develop a sustained, original argument in the service of an argumentative thesis. This argumentative essay will be drawn from one of the three reading responses for this course. The purpose of this assignment is for students to (1) undertake revision and expansion of a previous argument; (2) articulate and engage with a specific theoretical lens; (3) participate in meta-reflection about revision, theory, and literary argumentation. 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.

Film Commentary. We will watch four films in this course, and students will select one film to research and write about in a short paper. This commentary will include a summary of reviews/critical perspectives as well as an original analysis of the film.
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. April 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 acknowledgment 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.** As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, Student Grade Appeals, 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.C2.03, Student Grade Appeals. These documents are accessible online at: http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C0.03_student_grade_appeals.pdf. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s office in the college in which the course is taught. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal in CLA, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html.

**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.

**Basic Needs Statement.** Insufficient basic needs—food, a safe living space—can affect your performance in classes and make your university experience more challenging. If you have difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food, or you lack a safe and stable place to live, you might consider several resources on campus.

- Contact the Division of Student Engagement and Success for support. Specifically, the office of Student Assistance provides consultations, resource management, and institutional support for “extenuating circumstances.” Their website is here: [http://studentaffairs.tamucc.edu/StudentAssistance.html](http://studentaffairs.tamucc.edu/StudentAssistance.html). The Student Assistance Coordinator is Kristeen Gonzalez. UC318, M-F 8AM-5PM. 361-825-2612
- If you do not have access to or cannot afford sufficient food, be aware that “Izzy’s Food Pantry” provides on-campus access to food. Find more information here: [http://seas.tamucc.edu/FoodPantry/](http://seas.tamucc.edu/FoodPantry/)
- If you feel comfortable doing so, please talk with me and/or your other professors. We may be able to assist.

**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](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, an employee of Campus Security, or a member of the ICARE community. For more information about this policy, please consult the TAMUCC website at [http://campuscarry.tamucc.edu/](http://campuscarry.tamucc.edu/) and [http://www.tamus.edu/campus-carry-rules/](http://www.tamus.edu/campus-carry-rules/)

**Proposed Schedule.**

**NB:** Instructor reserves the right to make changes to the course schedule as necessary

**Week 1**

Th 1/18 Introductory

**Week 2**

T 1/23 Freud, “The Uncanny” (1919); Thacker, from *In The Dust of This Planet* (2010)

Th. 1/25 Jacobs. *Incidents.* (1861) “Intro”–XV

**Week 3**

T 1/30 Jacobs. *Incidents.* XVI–XXVII

Th. 2/01 Jacobs. *Incidents.* XVIII–XLII

**Week 4**

T 2/06 James. *Turn of the Screw* (1898) Preface– Ch. V

Th. 2/08 James. *Turn of the Screw* Ch. VI–XVII

RR I due: Friday 02/09 @ 11.59PM

**Week 5**

T 2/13 James. *Turn of the Screw* Ch. XVIII–end

Th. 2/15 Eric Savoy, essay TBD.
Week 6
T 2/20 The Innocents (1961) FILM
Th. 2/22 The Others (2001) FILM
RR II Due: Friday 02/23 @ 11.59PM

Week 7
T 2/27 Gilbert and Gubar, from The Madwoman in the Attic (1980)

Th. 3/01 Perkins Gilman. The Yellow Wallpaper (1892)

Week 8
T 3/06 Morrison, from Playing in the Dark (1992)
Th. 3/08 Morrison. Beloved pp. 1-100

March 12–17 SPRING BREAK

Week 9
Th. 3/22 Morrison. Beloved pp. 200-end
RR III due: Friday 3/23 @ 11.59PM

Week 10
Th. 3/29 Room 237 (2012)

Week 11
T 4/03 King. The Shining (1977) Ch. 1–12
Th. 4/05 King. The Shining (1977) Ch. 13–22
Film Commentary due: Friday 4/06 @ 11.59PM

Week 12
T 4/10 King. The Shining (1977) Ch. 23–40
Th. 4/12 King. The Shining (1977) Ch. 41–end

Week 13
T 4/17 Wharton. Short Stories
Th 4/19 Erdrich. Short Stories
Blueprint Project due: Friday 4/20 @ 11.59PM
Week 14
Th. 4/27

Week 15
T 5/01 Course Conclusion

Final Essay Due: Finals Week TBA