EXPOS 20: Vampirology
Fall 2022 Course Information

Do vampires burn when encountering sunlight? Are they malicious monsters or merely misunderstood? Is vampirism a virus, transmitted through blood; or is it genetic, passed down generationally? The answers to these and other questions of vampire lore vary across the different tales that depict these mythical, mystical figures. In Vampirology, we trace the evolution of vampire representations and consider what imaginations of monstrosity reveal about psychological and social anxieties concerning race, class, gender, and sexuality. We begin with Anne Rice’s novel *Interview with the Vampire*, a pivotal work in which a vampire tells his own story from a first-person point of view. We ask: How do Rice’s vampires resonate with, but also complicate, classic theories of the monster? Next, we each choose our own vampire case study to research. We might look back to Bram Stoker’s classic *Dracula* (or to Stoker’s predecessors, like Polidori or Le Fanu). We might follow the vampire forward, whether in literature (such as Octavia Butler’s *Fledgling* or Stephanie Meyer’s *Twilight* saga) or television (such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* or *The Vampire Diaries*). Alternatively, we might take a social scientific approach, examining historical folkloric evidence or considering a real-world vampire subculture. In our essays, we analyze how each incarnation of the vampire draws on prior tropes…and innovates new ones. Finally, we each create a pitch for a vampire story of our own, and we make the case for how our proposed tale might constitute a “next step” in the depiction of this most fascinating, almost immortal of creatures – the vampire.

Though our readings focus on vampires, this seminar is first and foremost a course in inquiry and argument. It is designed to help you learn strategies for asking analytical questions, conveying critical insights, articulating complex ideas, and mastering academic conventions. We’ll always be foregrounding how authors communicate ideas, so that what we learn about vampires will be deeply entwined with our investigations into why and how we write about them. Indeed, the skills you develop here can be utilized for writing about other topics as well, and in a range of academic disciplines.

Your Expos 20 Seminar plays an important role in helping you make the transition to college-level work and in preparing you for the range of writing challenges you’ll encounter during your time at Harvard. Learning to write well is a lifelong process. The more you practice writing, the better you’ll get at it. Your writing may go through messy and frustrating phases as you experiment with new strategies and work toward making more sophisticated arguments. Don’t let these seeming setbacks discourage you: such growing pains are ultimately worthwhile, as they indicate you are maturing as a writer and as a thinker.
Responsibility for this seminar’s success lies in all our hands. Together we comprise a community of readers and writers. All the work you do in this course is public within the course: we’ll be discussing your writing in small groups and full class conversations. I ask that you read critically but respectfully, and that you hold yourselves and each other to high standards as you offer and receive feedback. Be prepared to revise radically, re-imagining everything, from your underlying assumptions to the way you structure an argument, from your evidence and analysis to the statement of your thesis. Helping you learn to invest seriously in the practice of revision as part of the writing process is a key aim of this course.

Likewise, because the writing process is complex, I imagine that each of you comes to this class with specific strengths and struggles. In each assignment, I elaborate course goals common to everyone, but I also want you to think about your own personal goals and how this course can help you achieve them so that, no matter where you are as a writer, we can together get you to places you haven’t yet been able to reach.

**Required Texts and Materials**
Available at the Harvard Coop (as well as through Harvard libraries):

Rice, Anne. *Interview with the Vampire* [Approximate Cost $10]

All other required texts are available online through our course website on Canvas. The website is

[https://canvas.harvard.edu](https://canvas.harvard.edu)

We’ll also be working with the following Writing Program resources:

*Harvard Guide to Using Sources*, available online at [https://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu](https://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu)
Overview of Assignments

Here is a skeletal outline of the papers you’ll be writing in this course. It is intended to give you a sense of the arc of the semester. Detailed assignment sequences, including instructions for response paper assignments, will be distributed at the beginning of each unit.

Essay #1: Use a Theoretical Lens to Develop a Close Analysis (6 pages)
How do Anne Rice’s vampires resonate with, but also complicate, classic theories of the monster? Choose either Jeffrey Cohen, Julia Kristeva, or Franco Moretti as your lens. Comparing Interview with the Vampire with the ideas advanced in your theoretical lens text, make an argument about how the novel exemplifies and/or complicates the theory. Support your argument with a close reading of the novel.

- This unit introduces students to academic writing in the humanities. We learn to work with both primary sources (Rice’s novel) and theoretical sources (Cohen, Kristeva, or Moretti). The theoretical sources exemplify different approaches to working with literary texts: Cohen offers a cultural analysis of the monster, Kristeva takes a psychoanalytic approach to horror, and Moretti offers a Marxist critique of Gothic literature.
- This assignment introduces us to two methodologies – intrinsic and extrinsic – for analyzing textual evidence in humanities courses. For intrinsic analysis, we practice close reading; for extrinsic analysis, we interpret the novel in conversation with the theoretical lens text.
- This assignment requires us to think comparatively. We draw on cultural theory to help us gain otherwise inaccessible insights about our evidence as we apply our chosen theory to – or test that theory against – the novel.
- In this unit, we’ll use preliminary writing exercises to cultivate the following skills:
  - Analyzing Evidence: Close Analysis & Lens Analysis
  - Crafting Introductions

Essay #2: Intervene in a Scholarly Conversation (10 pages)
Choose a vampire or set of vampires to examine. (You might look at a classic work, like Bram Stoker’s Dracula or Le Fanu’s Carmilla. You might look at a contemporary story in literature, such as Octavia Butler’s Fledgling or Stephanie Meyer’s Twilight saga, or on television, such as Buffy the Vampire Slayer or The Vampire Diaries. Alternatively, you might opt to do a social scientific case study, examining historical folkloric evidence or considering a real-world vampire subculture.) Make a researched argument in which you critically intervene in the scholarly conversation on your chosen set of primary evidence. Your finished essay should cite approximately ten sources.

- This unit introduces independent research. The assignment, grounded in folklore and mythology studies, enables students to work in several fields. Each student selects primary source material and determines the disciplines and methodologies that will enable them to ask and answer a research question about it. Projects might draw on anthropology, art history, film & media studies, gender & sexuality studies, history, literary studies, musicology, psychology, sociology, or theatre studies.
• This assignment asks students to conduct research by identifying and locating resources available through the university libraries.

• In addition to primary and theoretical sources, students now also work with secondary sources and contextualizing sources. We learn to evaluate the arguments of others who are writing about the same (or analogous) primary source evidence, and to position our own ideas in relation to previous ones.

• We thus highlight how our own analysis of primary source evidence makes an original intervention into the scholarly conversation on our topic. In doing so, we learn to emulate professional scholarship and gain an appreciation for what makes academic writing original, worthwhile and, ultimately, publishable.

• In this unit, we’ll use preliminary writing exercises to develop the following skills:
  o Brainstorming
  o Creating an Annotated Bibliography
  o Conducting a Literature Review
  o Representing an Argument Visually

**Capstone Essay: Explain and Contextualize a Proposed Creative Work (5 pages)**

This assignment has two parts. **First**, develop a proposal for an original story featuring a vampire. Some questions you might answer include the following: What is the premise? Setting? Central conflict? Plot arc? **Second**, develop an argument explaining and contextualizing how the proposed story would constitute a “next step” in the evolution of vampire myths, based on readings you have completed during the course, whether on our common syllabus or in your independent research. Each part should be between two and three pages.

• In our first two units, we analyzed primary sources. In this unit, we develop primary sources of our own! We deepen our understanding of how primary sources work as pieces of writing by engaging ourselves in the process of creating them.

• This unit extends our earlier discussions of the pitch as a genre where establishing what’s at stake is especially important, moving from academic proposals to proposals for other kinds of projects.

• This unit similarly extends earlier discussions of transfer. Previously, we thought about how the Elements work in academic disciplines. Now we think about translating the elements outside of academia. What is the equivalent of “motive” or “thesis” in story, for example?

• Likewise, this assignment prompts us to think about audience. In our previous papers, we were writing to fellow academics. What would our audience be in this context, both for the pitch and for the imagined work?

• In this unit, we’ll use a preliminary writing exercise to develop the following skills:
  o Creating an Outline
Partial Syllabus – Policies & Schedule to be added Subsequently.