

Veranstalter .....	Prof. Dr. Stephan Karschay
Thema .....	Envisioning the Monstrous in British Literature and Culture [AA-MA4]
Art der Veranstaltung .....	Seminar III
Veranstaltungsnummer .....	53-554
Zeit .....	Do 16-18
Raum .....	Ü35-01047
Beginn .....	4. April 2018

### Course Description:

Monsters are everywhere – and they always have been. The ancient Mesopotamian Epic of Gilgamesh (ca. 2000 BCE) features monsters such as the scorpion men and the giant Humbaba, and the Greek epics (ca. 800 BCE) of Homer are populated by a variety of monsters from Greek mythology such as the cyclops and the chimera. Our contemporary 21<sup>st</sup>-century culture is obsessed with monsters from earlier periods that refuse to die, most notably the vampire and the zombie.

Monsters are, in the words of Jeffrey Weinstock, “ontological puzzles”: they do not exist, yet they are ubiquitous, and they demand definition while defying it. The etymology of the word *monster* – from the Latin *de-monstrare* for ‘to show’ and even ‘to warn’ – points to the monster’s status as a symbolic representation that may perform important cultural work. Monsters often combine apparently incompatible features that challenge the boundaries of human identity itself: they are, at the same time, dead and alive, young and old, human and animal, male and female, ethereal and material.

In this seminar, we will look at a broad range of monsters from the history of British literature and culture including dragons, giants, vampires, zombies, mummies and aliens. We will consider monsters as representations of historically specific anxieties and concerns that shift over time and across geographical boundaries. The figure of the vampire, for example, can thus be read as a specifically *British* monster that – despite its long European history – re-emerges in nineteenth-century Britain in reinvigorated form for a complex set of historical reasons. We will also engage with the critical theory employed in the fields of Gothic and Monster Studies to help us edge closer to a definition of monstrosity while also accounting for the paradoxical effects of loathing and desire that the monstrous provokes in us. Students will use concepts such as the uncanny (Sigmund Freud), the abject (Julia Kristeva), and the grotesque (Mikhail Bakhtin) in their readings of monsters from a variety of historical contexts (from the Middle Ages to the present) and a broad range of cultural texts and media (fiction, theatre, poetry, visual art, film).

### Set Texts:

A list with all set texts will be made available in our first session. However, we will definitely read Bram Stoker’s vampire classic *Dracula* (1897). Please purchase the following edition:  
Stoker, Bram. *Dracula* [1897]. Ed. Roger Luckhurst. Oxford: Oxford U P, 2011.

### Workload:

Regular contributions to seminar discussions, lively participation in teamwork, an oral group presentation, and written course work (such as reading-response papers). The seminar will conclude with a substantial term paper.

### Introductory Reading:

Halberstam, Judith. “Parasites and Perverts: An Introduction to Gothic Monstrosity.” *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1995. 1-27.  
Hogle, Jerrold E. “Monstrosity.” *The Encyclopedia of the Gothic*. Ed. William Hughes, David Punter & Andrew Smith. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016. 455-8. Print.  
Mittman, Asa Simon. “Introduction: The Impact of Monsters and Monster Studies.” in A. S. M. & Peter J. Dendle, eds. *The Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous*. London:

Routledge, 2012. 1-14. (<https://promisesofmonsters.wordpress.com/2016/04/27/introduction-the-impact-of-monsters-and-monster-studies/>). Web.

**Further Reading:**

Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome, ed. *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*. Minneapolis, MN, 1996.

Hutchison, Sharla & Rebecca A. Brown, eds. *Monsters and Monstrosity from the Fin de Siècle to the Millennium: New Essays*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2015.

Levina, Marina & Diem-My T. Bui, eds. *Monster Culture in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Reader*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury.

Weinstock, Jeffrey Andrew. *The Ashgate Research Companion of Literary and Cinematic Monsters*. London: Routledge, 2014.

Wright, Alexa. *Monstrosity: The Human Monster in Visual Culture*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2013.