

DePaul University
School for New Learning
Winter 2010

Syllabus

**IN 307 Advanced Elective Seminar:
Frankenstein Across the Curriculum**

Faculty: John Kimsey
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Day/Time: Wednesdays, 1/6 – 3/17, 6:30-9:30 pm
Location: DePaul Naperville campus, room TBA

Course Description:

Cultural historian Theodore Roszak has called Frankenstein—Mary Shelley’s tale of a brilliant, well-meaning intellectual who plays god to disastrous effect—“the central myth of modern society.” Beginning from that assumption, this course considers Mary Shelley’s story from three key perspectives: the literary/historical; the sociocultural; and the scientific/technological. In addition to the novel itself, we will focus on other cultural artifacts—e.g., films—that derive from or are related to Mary Shelley’s vision. We will also consider “Frankenstein” as a popular discourse—i.e., as a set of assumptions, metaphors and questions we commonly use to talk about ethical problems, social structures and technological applications. Our goal is twofold: 1) to become more familiar with this pattern of thought, its structure, power and pitfalls; and 2) to get an in-depth sense of the ways in which intellectual disciplines converge and diverge as they engage differing issues through a common cultural language.

Faculty:

John Kimsey received his Ph.D. in English from the University of Illinois at Chicago and specializes in modern literature and cultural studies. A member of the SNL resident faculty, he thinks that Mary Shelley won the ghost story contest, hands down.

Competencies:

- E-1: Understands and can synthesize interpretive perspectives on a cultural myth.
- E-2: Can describe the dynamics of a cultural myth and analyze its impact on debates about [topic of student’s choice].

Learning Strategies:

A variety of learning strategies will be employed, including textbook readings; film screenings; classroom lectures and discussions; journals of the readings; group dialogues; and presentations by students.

Required Textbook:

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus. Edited by Susan J. Wolfson. 2nd edition. NY: Longman, 2006. ISBN-10: 0321399536

Reserve Readings:

Numerous articles are posted on Electronic Reserve for this course. Go to <http://library.depaul.edu> and click on Course Reserves. When the Search box comes up, type in "Kimsey". When the Kimsey page comes up, click on the title of this course. The password is IN307.

Evidence Students Will Submit:

Students will keep a journal of the primary readings. A suggested format for journal entries is presented on the last page of this syllabus.

In addition, students will write a midterm paper, 7-10 pages in length, on a literary or historical aspect of Shelley's work. The instructor will provide a choice of topics for this paper.

Students will also submit a final paper, 10-12 pages long, on an issue from a domain other than literature (e.g., parenting, science, ethics, sociology, psychology) which pertains to *Frankenstein*. In this paper, students will do three important things: 1) describe the issue in question; 2) explain how it relates to *Frankenstein*; 3) discuss how *Frankenstein* informs or deforms (i.e., helps or hinders, clarifies or muddies) our thinking about the issue. Students will develop their own topics for this paper, in consultation with the instructor.

Given that this is a seminar, students are expected to take an active role in class discussion.

Grading will be weighted as follows:

Journal	25%
Midterm paper	35%
Final paper	40%

Criteria for Assessment:

In assessing work like that described above, I look for evidence of a) knowledge and comprehension of pertinent backgrounds, ideas and issues; b) research by the student that goes beyond material covered in the class; and c) thoughtful engagement with the material, i.e., with questions or conflicts raised or implied by the material.

Evidence of one of these elements equates roughly with a grade of C; evidence of two with a B; and evidence of three with an A. Other factors, such as class participation and quality of journal writing, may also affect final grades. I expect papers to conform to basic college-level standards

of mechanics and presentation, etc. I am happy to work with students on these points, on a draft-revision sort of basis, if students so desire. In making such assessments, I strive to be clear, flexible, forthright and empathetic.

Policy on Academic Integrity:

This course abides by the university's strictures against plagiarism and its policies on Academic Integrity as described in the DePaul Student handbook. All work done for this course must observe the Guidelines for Academic Integrity as outlined in the *Code of Student Responsibility* (in the *DePaul Student Handbook*). The code's Plagiarism Policy reads as follows:

Plagiarism is a major form of academic dishonesty involving the presentation of the work of another as one's own. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to the following: The direct copying of any source, such as written and verbal material, computer files, audio disks, video programs or musical scores, whether published or unpublished, in whole or in part, without proper acknowledgement that it is someone else's; copying of any source in whole or in part with only minor changes in wording or syntax even with proper acknowledgement; submitting as one's own work a report, examination paper, computer file, lab report or other assignment which has been prepared by someone else; and the paraphrasing of another's work or ideas without proper acknowledgment.

Plagiarism, like other forms of academic dishonesty, is always a serious matter. If an instructor finds that a student has plagiarized, the appropriate penalty is at the instructor's discretion. Actions taken by the instructor do not preclude the college or the university taking further punitive action including dismissal from the university.

Policy on Incompletes:

It is expected that students will complete course assignments by specified due dates within the quarter. In circumstances that the instructor determines to be exceptional, when the student is unable to complete required coursework by the established due dates, the student may request that a grade of Incomplete (IN) be issued. This request must be made formally, in writing, by completion of IN Request Form that the student signs. The form specifies the final date by which all outstanding coursework must be completed. Failure to submit outstanding work by the specified due date will result in a grade change from IN to W or FX for each enrolled competence, along with serious academic and/or financial consequences. After the final submission deadline, the student will have no further opportunities to submit work for a passing grade.

Schedule of Topics and Readings:

Note: (E) = The reading is posted on Electronic Reserve at the DePaul Libraries website (typically in Adobe, as a PDF file). Just go to <http://library.depaul.edu> and click on Course Reserves. When the Search box comes up, type in "Kimsey". When the Kimsey page comes up, click on the title of this course. The password is IN307.

Week One 1/6

Introduction to course; key figures, topics and questions; Historical overview; Screening of excerpt from *Haunted Summer*; Discussion of Annas & Juma excerpts

Week Two 1/13

The novel

Due: Journal entry on the novel

Readings:

Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 1818 edition (in Wolfson, pp. 1-179)

“Introduction,” from *Frankenstein*, 1831 edition (in Wolfson, 186-191)

Week Three 1/20

Contexts of the novel: Four perspectives on its meaning; Midterm paper assigned

Due: Journal entry on one of the readings listed below

Readings:

Percy Shelley, from *The Atheneum*, in Wolfson, 399-401

Sanford, “The Shadow” (E)

Mellor, ch. 2, “Making A Monster” (E)

Week Four 1/27

Contexts of the novel: Poets, Revolutionaries, Prometheans; Screening of *A History of Britain: Forces of Nature*; Listening to excerpt from *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*; Brief selections by Byron and Percy Shelley; The sublime, the beautiful & the picturesque

Due: Journal entry on one of the readings below

Readings:

Mellor, “Promethean Politics” (E)

Wollstonecraft, “Jemima’s Story,” in Wolfson, 228-244

“Aesthetic Adventures,” in Wolfson, 211-217 (includes Burke, Wollstonecraft, Gilpin)

Week Five 2/3

Contexts of the novel: Prometheus & Lucifer; Hermeticism & Gnosticism; Blake: Fourfold Vision and Newton’s Sleep

Due: Journal entry on one of the readings below

Readings:

“God, Adam and Satan in Wolfson, 301-322

(excerpts from Genesis and Milton’s *Paradise Lost*)

Percy Shelley, selections in Wolfson

(excerpts from *A Defence of Poetry & Prometheus Unbound*)

Goodall interview, Secret Science (E)

Holroyd, “Gnosticism, Ancient and Modern” (E)

Blake, Excerpts from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*

http://www.hermetics.org/pdf/Blake_William_-_The_Marriage_of_Heaven_and_Hell.pdf

Week Six 2/10

Frankenstein and ethics; Doing science: four short readings; Screening of *Newton’s Dark Secrets*

Due: Midterm paper

Journal entry on one of the readings below

Readings:

M. Wilson, "On Being A Scientist" (E)

Feynman, "The Value of Science" (E)

E. O. Wilson, from "Science and Ideology" (E)

Feyerabend, "Introduction..." from *Against Method* (E)

Week Seven 2/17

Biotechnology: debates and frames; Guest speaker Dr. Morry Fiddler

Due: Journal entry on one of the readings listed below

Readings:

Lander, "In the Wake of the Genetic Revolution. . ." (on web)

McKibben, "Too Much" (E)

Appleyard, "Eugenics 1: the Right To Be Unhappy" (E)

Pinker, "The Blank Slate" (E)

Week Eight 2/24

The nuclear predicament; screening of *The Manhattan Project*

Due: One-page proposal for final paper; Journal entry on one of the readings listed below

Readings:

Easley, "Alamogordo, Hiroshima and Nagasaki: 'Almost Full Grown At Birth'" (E)

Erikson, "Of Accidental Judgments and Casual Slughters"

Chaffee, "Two Historians' Views on the Bombing of Hiroshima"

Week Nine 3/3

Frankenstein and visual culture; Screening of *The Bride of Frankenstein*; the Gothic—genre and gender

Due: Journal entry on one of the readings below

Readings:

Mellor, ch. 2, "My Hideous Progeny," 52-7

ch. 7, "Problems of Perception," 127-39

Morton, "Why Did You Make Me Like This?!" (E)

Week Ten 3/10

Artificial intelligence; What's "human"? How do you know?;

Screening of *Blade Runner*

Due: Journal entry on one of the readings listed above or below

Readings: Waldrop, "Can Computers Think?" (E)

Joy, "Why the Future Doesn't Need Us" (E)

Week Eleven 3/17

Frankensteinian paradigms: windows & blindspots

Due: Final paper

Suggested Format for Journal Entries

For the designated reading, fill up about a page responding to the following questions:

1. What is the reading about? (Be concrete and literal at this point. Try not to jump to “interpretation.”)
2. Describe something—anything—from your own experience that you are reminded of by the reading.
3. What is the most important passage in the reading? Why?
4. Which other reading seems most to agree with this one? Which other reading seems most to disagree with this one? Explain your choices.
5. Pretend the reading is not about whatever you said it was about in #1. Pretend it’s about something else, something hidden or unstated. What is this “something else”?