



ART OF FICTION: THE UNCANNY AMERICAN HOUSE

Course #: ENGL 1006
Instructor: Teresa Carmody
Office Location: Sturm 492C

Session: Fall 2014
Location: Sturm 311
Time: Mon, Wed, 12:00–1:50 p.
Office Hours: Mon 2-4 pm & By Appt.

“[T]he ‘uncanny’ is that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar.” – Freud, “The Uncanny”

In literature, the uncanny describes the unsettling effect when something is both familiar and strange, thus provoking a sense of eeriness, *déjà vu*, compulsive repetition, or disturbance. The home, and especially the haunted house, has played a key role in literary constructions of the uncanny, for home is often a site of nostalgic longing and traumatic alienation. This course will explore the uncanny through the haunted house as portrayed within the American literary landscape. Together, we will explore the ways in which American houses are written and haunted by US culture's many ghosts: hidden desires, traumatic histories, the fantasy of the American dream. We will analyze how writers use language to build the constituent parts of narrative fiction: story, plot, character development, and point of view. Students will be expected to engage critically and creatively with the course materials. Texts will include essays and a variety of fictional forms—short stories, novellas, and novels—by writers such as Harold Abramowitz, Sherman Alexie, Charles Chesnutt, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Shirley Jackson, Henry James, Toni Morrison, Edgar Allan Poe, Vicki Sears.

READINGS/TEXTS:

- Dale Sherrard, “Freud’s Uncanny” (sound piece)
- Bennett and Nicholas Royle, “The Uncanny,” (excerpt from *Introduction to Literary Theory*)
- Edgar Allan Poe, “The Fall of the House of Usher” (short story)
- Sigmund Freud, “The ‘Uncanny’” (essay)
- E.T.A. Hoffmann, “Sandman.” (short story)
- Charles Chesnutt, “Po’ Sandy,” (short story)
- Mary Wilkins Freeman, “Luella Miller” (short story)
- Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper” (short story)
- Vicki L. Sears, “Grace” (short story)
- Sherman Alexie, “What You Pawn I Will Redeem” (short story)
- Sui Sin Far, “The Smuggling of Tie Co” (short story)
- Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw* (novella)
- Harold Abramowitz, *Not Blessed* (novella)
- Shirley Jackson’s *The Haunting of Hill House* (novel)
- Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (novel)