



**SYD FILM 3315**  
**The Australasian Nightmare:**  
**Horror Films and the Traumatic Imagination on the Pacific Rim**

**CAPA SYDNEY PROGRAM**

Faculty name :  
E-mail :  
Class times :  
Classroom location :  
Office Hours :

**Course Description**

The classic American horror film is derived from a gothic heritage, an inheritor of a European context and its tropes: the disintegration of civilization through wars, disease, economic collapse, and associated social traumas. The horror that the current, post9/11 generation has produced is notably different; it plays upon central themes that derive from an Australasian context, driven by the recent horror films of Australia, Japan, and Korea. These influential films have been made and distributed outside of an American context but then repackaged for the West in remakes and variations that awaken an American audience to themes of horror that are decidedly non-European in substance. This course will examine these films, comparing and contrasting European and Australasian tropes for horror as well as their reflection of and impact on society.

**Course Aims**

All students will develop the skills necessary to analyze film by utilizing critical texts, discussing each film, and developing their own writing. Students will also acquire a strong sense of trends in horror across time and space, differentiating between classic European and newer Australasian themes and tropes. Perhaps most importantly, students will gain insight into how film, and particularly the horror film, can reflect the societies from which they emerge, underscoring our deepest fears, national and individual traumas, and the catalysts that make these experiences scary. By the time they depart, students will have a sense of where horror comes from, the events and issues that make it possible and attractive to an audience, and how the form changes over time in response to social transformations. Students will also gain an understanding of horror in the context that the things that scare us can be both personal and transpersonal; that fears can be markedly different across cultures and can be central to the discussion of hundreds of years of history.

**Requirements and Prerequisites**

There are no specific requirements for this course. However, some interest in the horror genre and the analysis of film will be helpful.

**Learning Outcomes**

- A) Analyze, and discuss horror material with regard to its social, cultural, and historical context;
- B) Identify areas within films or tropes that are indicative of our own traumas and fears and why there is a market for such material;
- C) Apply critical thought to the idea that the films which are generally taken the least seriously are often most symptomatic of the nation's or region's identity; that a nation's fears can surface more powerfully in implicit ways in horror films rather than explicit ways in traditional narratives;
- D) Identify the importance of horror/fear within the context of childhood;
- E) Give productive and critical feedback to peers and instructors via discussion and weekly writing;
- F) Use various research methods and analysis to lead group discussion;
- G) Learn that in the era of globalization, horror introduces us to a whole different relationship between the United States and the Pacific Rim, and that we can use it to discuss similarities and differences across cultures.
- H) Write both efficiently and effectively to illustrate ideas and concepts.

## **Developmental Outcomes**

Students should demonstrate: responsibility & accountability, independence & interdependence, goal orientation, self-confidence, resilience, appreciation of differences. Additionally, students will gain confidence in expressing their opinions as group leaders, individual reporters on filmic themes and tropes, and their own interpretations of what certain elements of particular films mean. Students will utilize writing to express critical thoughts as well as imagine the creative process of the artists who have produced the texts.

## **Class methodology**

This course will meet once per week for the 8 hours (inclusive of a 1 hour lunch break). In the morning, students will watch a short film or excerpts followed by lectures with Adam Lowenstein and Adam Simon. Students will then break for a brown bag lunch on their own or, in at least one case, with their professors. After lunch, students will gather for additional discussion. In some sessions, a second film will be shown and subsequent discussions will take place. Each week, a group of students will be assigned to lead the discussion and will be expected to have thoroughly mastered the material through the readings as well as additional research and recommendations from the professors. In as many classes as possible, special guests will be lecturing. These will be comprised of industry insiders throughout the region, and may include screenwriters, authors, producers, directors, and other industry professionals connected to the horror genre.

**Field Component(s):** CAPA provides the unique opportunity to learn about the city through direct, guided experience. Participation in the field activity(s) for this course is required. You will actively explore the Global City you are currently living in. Furthermore, you will have the chance to collect useful information that will be an invaluable resource for the essays/papers/projects assigned in this course.

Depending on what is currently playing, students will have the opportunity to see a film at an Australian theater, particularly if it is connected to one of the productions studied in the class. If possible, students will also visit a set location or production studio so that they can gain an understanding of how ideas become film. Additionally, students will have the opportunity to meet several industry leaders to learn from the experts on how these films are made, consumed, and distributed.

Students are strongly encouraged to participate in co-curricular program activities.

## **Mid-Term & Final Exams**

**Weekly Self and Film Analysis Papers:** Students will be expected to turn in a short piece of writing each week (300 words). Assignments will include one question designed to elicit personal reflection about each student's relationship to fear and horror as well as one or several short-answer questions designed to facilitate reviews of the films and themes discussed each week. The assignments will be related to the week ahead so that each student will come prepared with decompressed thoughts on the content.

**Discussion Facilitator and Presentation:** Each week a small group of students will be responsible for taking the lead in the facilitating the discussion via introductory class presentation. The discussion facilitators will be expected to turn in their enhanced papers (600 words) for the week prior to the class meeting. Particular pieces of recommended reading will be required of the facilitator for the week. Students will be expected to turn in their detailed notes and be prepared to present on the identified topics

**Final Paper:** Students will be expected to produce a final paper of 2500 words. Topics will be approved by the end of the third week of the class so that students will have ample opportunity to research their topic and complete the writing by the end the term.

## **Assessment/Grading Policy**

<b>Assessment Task</b>	<b>Grade %</b>	<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
<b>Participation</b>	<b>10%</b>	A-H	weekly
<b>Discussion Facilitator Assignment</b>	<b>20%</b>	A-H but with particular emphasis on E, F, and H	TBD
<b>Weekly Analysis Assignments</b>	<b>40%</b>	C, F, H	weekly
<b>Final Research Paper</b>	<b>30%</b>	All but with particular emphasis on H	Week 6

DE-SCRIPTOR	ALPHA	NU-MERIC	GPA	REQUIREMENT/EXPECTATION
Outstanding (High Distinction)	A	93+	4.0	Maximum grade: In addition to description for grade "A", the student shows detailed understanding of materials about which he or she can show independent analytical ability. This means the ability to question an issue from different perspectives and evaluate responses in an objective manner.
Excellent (Distinction)	A-	90 - 92	3.7	Student shows understanding of literature beyond the textbook/class hand-outs/class notes, and the work shows a high level of independent thought, presents informed and insightful discussion and demonstrates a well-developed capacity for evaluation.
Very good (High Credit)	B+	87 - 89	3.3	Shows evidence of a capacity to generalise from the taught content, or the material in literature, or from class lectures in an informed manner. Also, the work demonstrates a capacity to integrate personal reflection into the discussion and an appreciation of a range of different perspectives.
Good (Credit)	B	83 - 86	3.0	The work is well organised and contains coherent or logical argumentation and presentation.
Good (Credit)	B-	80 - 82	2.7	Student shows understanding of literature beyond the textbook and/or notes, and, there is evidence of additional reading.
Average (Good Pass)	C+	77-79	2.3	The work demonstrates a capacity to integrate research into the discussion and a critical appreciation of a range of theoretical perspectives. Also, the work demonstrates a clear understanding of the question and its theoretical implications and demonstrates evidence of additional reading.
Adequate (Pass)	C	73 - 76	2.0	Shows clear understanding and some insight into the material in the textbook and notes, but not beyond. A deficiency in understanding the material may be compensated by evidence of independent thought and effort related to the subject matter.
Below Average (Borderline Pass)	C-	70-72	1.7	Shows some understanding of the material in the textbook and notes. A deficiency in any of the above may be compensated by evidence of independent thought related to the subject matter.
Inadequate (Borderline Fail)	D+	67 - 69	1.3	Fails to show a clear understanding or much insight into the material in the textbook and notes
Poor (Fail)	D	60 - 66	0.7 - 1.0	Besides the above for D+, student has not shown interest or engagement in the class work or study.
Poor (Fail)	F	<60	0	Shows little or no understanding of any of the material
Incomplete	I			Please see CAPA policy in the Faculty Handbook.

### **Dress Code**

No requirements.

### **Course Materials**

## **Required Readings:**

Chapters from the following will be required for the course:

Barr, Jason. *The Kaiju Film: A Critical Study of Cinema's Biggest Monsters*  
Gelder, Ken, ed. *The Horror Reader* (2000).  
Kalat, David. *J-Horror: The Definitive Guide to the Ring, the Grudge, and Beyond* (2007)  
Lim, Bliss Cua. *Translating Time* (2009).  
Lippit, Akira, *Atomic Light (Shadow Optics)* (2005).  
Lowenstein, Adam. *Shocking Representation* (2005).  
Morris, Meaghan "Tooth and Claw: Tales of Survival and *Crocodile Dundee*" (1989)  
Newman, Kim. *Apocalypse Movies* (2002).  
Schneider, Steven and Tony Williams, eds. *Horror: International* (2005)  
Sterns, Aaron, and Greg McLean. *Origin: Wolf Creek Book 1* (2014)

Recommended, but not required, further reading includes:

Broderick, Mick, ed. *Hibakusha Cinema* (2013)  
Grant, Barry Keith, ed., *Planks of Reason* (2004)  
Grant, Barry Keith, ed., *The Dread of Difference* (2015)

Additional readings will be made available in Xerox or electronic format when possible to supplement the required texts and films. Examples of such supplements are not limited to the following: Asian horror manga excerpts, Freud's essay on the uncanny, as well as excerpts from the works of Edgar Allan Poe. The above texts will be available to borrow from CAPA or purchased in advance (most can be found online relatively cheaply). It is imperative that students do the assigned readings before the class for which they are assigned, as they will be required to discuss and evaluate these ideas in the sessions. Readings will be supplemented with screenings which are equally if not more critical to the course objectives.

## **Required Films:**

Students will watch and analyze the following films:

*The American Nightmare* (Adam Simon, 2000, United States)  
*The Babadook* (Jennifer Kent, 2014, Australia)  
*Ju-on: The Grudge* (Takashi Shimizu, 2002, Japan)  
*Ringu* (Hideo Nakata, 1998, Japan)  
*Wolf Creek* (Greg McLean, 2005, Australia)  
*The Cure* (Kiyoshi Kurosawa, 1997, Japan)  
*The Last Wave* (Peter Weir, 1977, Australia)  
*Pulse* (Kiyoshi Kurosawa, 2001, Japan)  
*A Tale of Two Sisters* (Je-woon Kim, 2003, South Korea)  
*Memories of Murder* (Joon-ho Bong, 2003, South Korea)  
*Godzilla* (Ishiro Honda, 1954, Japan)  
*New Godzilla* (Hideaki Anno, 2016, Japan) or *Pacific Rim* (Guillermo del Toro, 2013, United States)

## **Guest Lectures:**

As part of the course, students will have the opportunity to learn from several guest lecturers potentially including (depending on availability) but not limited to:

Greg McLean (writer and producer),  
Aaron Sterns (writer and producer),  
Tate Brady (former chair of Melbourne Film Festival and Producer),  
Raffaele Caputo (writer, editor, and film analyst),  
Philip Trophy (writer, producer, and film analyst).  
Mark Hartley (director, editor, writer)  
Hideo Nakata (director, writer, producer)  
Ryuhei Kitamura (director, writer, producer)

## Weekly Course Schedule

### **Week 1: Context of the European and the Australasian horror traditions**

There are distinct differences between the horror tropes and themes in the classic European model and the Australasian counterpart. While Europe and America were following the classical formula, the Japanese, Australians, Koreans, and others were creating something new. This session will introduce students to some of the key tenets of horror so that students can be prepared to compare and contrast across the regions. Such key elements include industrial contexts, historical traumas, the contagious nature of horror objects, fear and coping mechanisms as they relate to childhood, and others.

Morning: Watch *The American Nightmare*, with opening lecture from Adam Lowenstein & Adam Simon followed by discussion

Afternoon: Watch *The Babadook*, with opening lecture from Adam Lowenstein & Adam Simon followed by discussion

Readings:

Adam Lowenstein, "Introduction: The Allegorical Moment" (in Lowenstein, pgs 1-16)); Tzvetan Todorov, "Definition of the Fantastic" (in Gelder, pgs 14-19); Jonathan Rayner, "'Terror australis': areas of horror in the Australian cinema" (in Schneider, pgs 98-113).

### **Week 2: Ghosts**

Ghost stories form one of the most recognizable subgenres within horror. The use of ghosts as a device for fear is one that is common both in childhood and throughout our lives as we become aware of our mortality and the perils of the world around us (and potentially beyond). Australasian horror differs distinctly in its deployment of ghosts than does the classic European model, most notably in the notion that bad things happen to good people for no rational reason. In this sense, film mimics life itself.

Morning: Watch *Ringu*, with opening lecture from Adam Lowenstein & Adam Simon followed by discussion

Afternoon: Watch *Ju-on: The Grudge*, with opening lecture from Adam Lowenstein & Adam Simon followed by discussion

Assignments:

Weekly Analysis Assignment Due

Readings:

David Kalat, "Dead Wet Girls" and "A Ghost is Born" (in Kalat, pgs 1-19 & 121-143); Lowenstein, "Unmasking Hiroshima: Demons, Human Beings, and Shindo Kaneto's *Onibaba*" (in Lowenstein, pgs 83-110).

### **Week 3: Human Monsters**

Horror is often easiest to digest when the subjects are paranormal, supernatural, or imagined. The audience can separate what is real from what is not and take comfort in the reassuring belief that vampires are merely fantastic or that it would be impossible to turn into a werewolf. However, in many instances some of the greatest atrocities are those committed by humans against other humans or humankind. In this distinct brand of horror, there is no safe place to hide; there is no denial based on total implausibility. In these cases, the real fear comes from the fact that anyone could be the perpetrator and anyone could be the victim.

Morning: Watch *Wolf Creek*; with guest lecture by Greg McClean and Aaron Sterns, writers and producers of *Wolf Creek*

Afternoon: Watch *Cure*, with opening lecture from Adam Lowenstein & Adam Simon followed by discussion

Assignments:

Weekly Analysis Assignment Due;

Topics for Final Research Paper due by the end of class in week 3.

Readings:

*Origin: Wolf Creek Book 1* (Sterns & McClean); David Kalat, "You are the Disease and Kiyoshi Kurosawa is the Cure" (in Kalat, pgs 96-120); Akira Lippit, "Phantom Cures: Obscurity and Emptiness" (in Lippit, pgs 133-158).

Out-of-Classroom Activity: The professors will use one of the following weeks (3, 4, or 5) to invite students to accompany them to the cinema to watch a horror production. If possible, individuals connected to the production will be invited to attend and comment on the film's creation.

#### **Week 4: Australasian Apocalypse**

Apocalypse films date back much further than the modern versions of *Mad Max* and *The Terminator*. In this session, students will be introduced to the apocalypse film, drawing upon what they have already seen from British and American films, and what they think they may know about the Australian counterparts given the success of the recent *Mad Max: Fury Road*. Students will develop an understanding that *Mad Max* falls into a complex and nuanced Australian landscape context that differs from its analogue in the United States and may make more national and cultural “sense” in an Australasian context.

Morning: Watch *The Last Wave*, with opening lecture from Adam Lowenstein & Adam Simon followed by discussion  
Afternoon: Watch *Pulse*, with opening lecture from Adam Lowenstein & Adam Simon followed by discussion

Assignments:  
Weekly Analysis Assignment Due

Readings:  
Kim Newman, “Apocalypse: Horror” and “Apocalypse: Science Fiction” (in Newman); Tania Modleski, “The Terror of Pleasure: The Contemporary Horror Film and Postmodern Theory” (in Gelder, pgs 285-293); Meaghan Morris, “Tooth and Claw: Tales of Survival and *Crocodile Dundee*” (online, pgs 105-127).

Out-of-Classroom Activity: The professors will use one of the following weeks (3, 4, or 5) to invite students to accompany them to the cinema to watch a horror production. If possible, individuals connected to the production will be invited to attend and comment on the film’s creation.

#### **Week 5: Time, Form, and Our Own Social Nightmares**

Horror films are often designed to reflect our discomfort with society: its inequalities, injustices, and faults. Time and cinematic form are used to help guide an audience through situations which would otherwise be difficult to perceive, creating suspense and fear. How does a cinematic approach to time affect our perception of social events, as well as social structures such as family, school, religion, etc.? Horror films with particular investments in time as an agent of cinematic form will be the focus of our discussion in this unit.

Morning: Watch *A Tale of Two Sisters*, with opening lecture from Adam Lowenstein & Adam Simon followed by discussion  
Afternoon: Watch *Memories of Murder*, with opening lecture from Adam Lowenstein & Adam Simon followed by discussion

Assignments: Weekly Analysis Assignment Due: Read Bliss Cua Lim, “Introduction: Clocks for Seeing” and “The Ghostliness of Genre: Global Hollywood Remakes the ‘Asian Horror Film’” (in Lim, pgs 1-42 & 190-244); Graham Huggan, “Ghost Stories, Bone Flutes, Cannibal Countermemory” (in Gelder, pgs 352-363).

Out-of-Classroom Activity: The professors will use one of the following weeks (3, 4, or 5) to invite students to accompany them to the cinema to watch a horror production. If possible, individuals connected to the production will be invited to attend and comment on the film’s creation.

#### **Week 6: Visual Imagination: *Kaiju*-Monsters and Spectacle**

Possibly the most famous example of Asian-style horror is *Godzilla* and the classic *kaiju*-monster movies of the post-war period *tokusatsu* films. Images of *kaiju* monsters have never ceased to find their way to U.S. shores, and the film itself has been made and remade decade after decade. In this session, students will use two examples of *kaiju* films, the original *Godzilla* and more modern version along with clips from several other versions throughout the decades, to better understand the collective spirit behind the *kaiju*, its purpose, and its connection to the deep trauma of post-war Japan. Remembering that *Godzilla* was made just 9 years after the atomic devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the original film itself was always far more than a simple monster movie. Instead, it is a reflection on science, atrocity, and coping with the realities of both.

Morning: Watch the original *Godzilla* (1954), opening lecture from Adam Lowenstein & Adam Simon followed by discussion  
Afternoon: Watch *New Godzilla* (2016) if available or *Pacific Rim*, opening lecture from Adam Lowenstein & Adam Simon followed by discussion

Assignments: Final Papers Due Today! Read Philp Brophy, “Horrority – The Textuality of Contemporary Horror Films” (in Gelder, pgs 276-284); Jason Barr, “The Japanese Origins of the *Kaiju*” and “International and Domestic Politics” and “America and *Kaiju*” (in Barr, pgs 25-36 & 68-104 & 121-155).

## **Attendance, Participation & Student Responsibilities**

**Attendance:** CAPA has a mandatory attendance policy. Attendance is taken at the beginning of every class. Unauthorized absence from class will result in a reduction of the final grade and potentially a failure for the course.

**Missing classes for medical reasons:** If you need to miss a class for medical reasons or for a family emergency, you must send an e-mail to let the Director of Academic Affairs (DAA) know at least one hour in advance of your class or meeting at the following e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_. Note that calling the CAPA Center (\_\_\_\_\_) is acceptable only if you do not temporarily have access to the internet. An e-mail is still required as quickly as you can get access to the internet again. You will need to provide evidence of the reason for your absence. Unexcused absences will result in a grade reduction. In the event of a missed class or field trip, it is your responsibility to contact your instructor and make up any missed assignments.

**Class Participation:** Students are expected to participate actively and critically in class discussions, and the participation portion of the class will be graded accordingly. Students must read assignments BEFORE the class, and come in on time. Participation is a vital part of your grade: students are expected to participate orally in seminars and in online forums and discussions in a critical and evaluative manner; to interact with the faculty and fellow students with respect and tolerance; and to actively engage in discussion. Derogatory or inflammatory comments about the cultures, perspectives or attitudes of others in the class will not be tolerated.

**Academic Integrity:** A high level of responsibility and academic honesty is expected. Because the value of an academic course depends upon the absolute integrity of the work done by the student, it is imperative that a student demonstrates a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholastic work and class behavior. Plagiarism and cheating will result in dismissal from the program. See the Handbook of CAPA Academic Policies for more information and resources on plagiarism.

**Use of electronic equipment in class:** All devices such as laptops, I-pods, I-pads, netbooks, notebooks and tablets, smartphones, cell phones, etc. are **NOT** allowed unless you have express permission from the faculty or you have been instructed to do so. If you require an accommodation to use any type of electronic equipment, inform the Director of Academic Affairs at the beginning of Term.

**Use of Electronic Translators:** In Language courses students are NOT allowed to use electronic translators for writing texts in the target language: those submitting compositions and texts of whatever kind translated in such a fashion will receive a final F grade for the course.

**Late Submission:** Late submission of papers, projects, journal entries, pieces of homework and portfolios is only permitted with prior approval. A request must be made to the relevant Faculty member no later than two days prior to the due date. Late submission without prior approval will result in a full alpha grade penalty. In either case, work cannot be submitted after feedback has been provided to the rest of the class on the relevant assessment or one week after the due date whichever comes first, after which point a grade of F will be given for the assessment.

**Behavior during Examinations:** During examinations, you must do your own work. Unless specifically instructed by the lecturer or instructor, talking during an exam is not permitted, nor may you compare papers, copy from others, or collaborate in any way. Any failure to abide by examination rules will result in failure of the exam, and may lead to failure of the course and disciplinary action.