GERM 304 - 003: German Cinema (in English) - Shadows and Screams: Germanic Horror Films from Expressionism to Today

Instructor: Dr. Jason Lieblang / jason.lieblang@ubc.ca

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Our class meets: Tuesdays & Thursdays 2:00-3:20 in Buchanan D217

Office hours are Tuesdays & Thursdays 3:30-4:45 in Buchanan Tower 906. (As you leave the ninth-floor elevators, turn left, then right, then right again.)

Please note that I am generally open to making exceptional ZOOM appointments if/as needed. Email me to request/arrange.

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Course Description

The films of German Expressionism are some of the earliest examples of the horror genre and have undoubtedly influenced horror cinema worldwide right up to the present day. That being said, the development of the genre in Germany is fascinatingly problematic, with politics interrupting continuity to such an extent that we'll have to search hard to find horror films made there between 1932 and the 1980s. In this course we will find, discuss and write about these isolated examples in addition to some Expressionist masterpieces and the best of a recent crop of horror films from the German-speaking countries.

Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of the course (i.e., with active attendance and participation, and the completion of viewing, reading and writing assignments) students will be able understand and explain the development of the horror genre in the German-speaking countries. You'll also learn about the cultural, social and political contexts within which these works were produced. You'll be challenged to think, and communicate clearly, respectfully and convincingly, and your writing should also improve over the course of the term. Additionally, as this is a film course, you'll be introduced to and will apply the analytical skills needed to understand films and communicate convincingly about them in the academic context.

Required Materials

There are no textbooks for this course. All course materials will be available on Canvas. You will watch the majority of the films at home, either through Canvas, Kanopy, CLAS, or through links to my personal copies. (You will be able to navigate to any of these viewing websites through Canvas.)
Content and Trigger Warnings

This is a course on horror and contains written and/or visual content that depicts psychological and physical violence, as well as sexuality. None of these course texts were chosen to engage gratuitously in violence and/or sexuality, and in all cases, we will approach them intellectually, always aiming to assess why violent and/or sexual content has been deployed. I will try to make you aware in advance of course content that might be especially triggering. If you are concerned about any particular text potentially being a trigger for you, please let me know.

Academic Integrity

I will not tolerate academic dishonesty in any form. If I suspect you of engaging in it, I will immediately make my department head aware and he will begin the process of investigating. Note that I am aware of the advanced forms of artificial intelligence being used by students to generate work that is not their own. I also expect you to cite (whether as quotation or paraphrase) the work of others appropriately. If you are unsure whether you know how to do so, please let me know.

I expect you to familiarize yourself with UBC’s expectations regarding academic integrity. Please do so by thoroughly reviewing this website.

Structure of the Course

Classroom activities will include lectures, discussions, and group work. When offered as a blended course, these activities will sometimes occur via Canvas, i.e. using screen cast lectures, student video and sound recording posts, online discussion groups and peer review.

This section of GERM 304 has seven main units.

1. Introduction: History of Horror; Introduction to Film Analysis; Introduction to Genre Theory and Analysis
2. Germanic Silent Horror Cinema (with a focus on German-speaking Europe)
3. The Golden Era? (focusing on the influence of émigrés and exiles in Hollywood)
4. Mid-20th Century Horror in German-speaking Europe (with a focus on apparent absences of horror)
5. Germanic Horror from 1970s through 2000
6. Contemporary Horror Cinema in German-speaking Europe (with a focus on cinema of extremity and “post-horror”)
7. Review
Evaluation

- **10% Attendance and In-class Participation** (I will take daily attendance beginning after add/drop deadline)
- **30% Homework Assignments** (five sets of two or three questions spread out over the course of the semester, responses of 300-500 words each)
- **20% Sequence Analysis** (700-900 words, double-spaced, 12-point font)
- **40% Essay** (1200-1600 words, double-spaced, 12-point font)

**Note** that I will list assignment due dates clearly on Canvas as soon as possible.

**10%: Attendance and In-class Participation**

**Attendance is mandatory**, and active participation is encouraged and appreciated. Participation grades will be based on the instructor’s assessment of students’ involvement in class discussion (in both full group and small group situations), familiarity with course material when called on, and on-task engagement in group work. Students uncomfortable participating in class may meet the instructor during office hours and/or do additional work online via Canvas (i.e., by posting a number of short responses, *as mutually agreed on with instructor*). Unexcused absences accumulate after the first two and will negatively affect the course grade at a rate of .5% per additional absence. Repeated lateness will also negatively affect this portion of the course grade (with each two instances of unexcused lateness equaling one absence). Absences will be excused at the instructor’s discretion, based on UBC and departmental policy. Written documentation is required for UBC-sponsored activities.

**Please note** that I do not record my lectures. While I appreciate the arguments that doing so supports accessibility and supports review of course content, I feel these are outweighed by the risk that having access to recordings gives students an excuse to not attend class.

**Please also note**: While I am fine with students using technology in support of class activities, I will ask students abusing this privilege to leave class.

**30% (5x6%): Homework Assignments (Posted as Canvas Assignments)**

Students will complete five homework assignments over the course of the semester that will involve responding to two or three questions and/or prompts (expected length 300-500 words per assignment). Questions/prompts will be posted on selected Fridays and due before the first class of the following week. Although the homework assignments are intended as a lower-stakes way to engage with core course ideas and texts, I will nevertheless expect an appropriate title and that you have edited to avoid typos, repetition and redundancy.
20%: Formal Sequence Analysis

For this assignment you will read about then apply concepts used in the narrative and formal analysis of cinema. You will choose a film scene from a provided list and submit your analysis in writing on Canvas. You will be graded on the quality of your interpretation and on how well you apply the formal concepts specific to filmic analysis. Your Sequence Analysis should be 700-900 words, double-spaced, 12-point font; and it should have a descriptive title and clear thesis. You can learn more about this assignment here. I’ve also written an example you can access here.

40%: Essay

Students will digitally submit (on Canvas) a formal essay (1200-1600 words in length, double-spaced, 12-point font). Essay topics will be released about a month in advance of the submission deadline (on Canvas).

The essay must be formal in character, and must contain a descriptive title, a clear thesis statement, and be argumentative and substantive; and must include a Works Cited if you use any secondary sources. (I am fine with any of the major style formats (MLA, APA, Chicago), providing you are consistent.) To learn about my essay expectations, see the Essay Grading Rubric and Tips for good Academic Writing.

Excellent essays will have a relevant introduction that concludes with a compelling thesis (i.e. one that is clear, succinct and persuasive); respond to the chosen prompt logically and coherently throughout; will synthesize individual ideas with primary and secondary textual support as appropriate; and will incorporate this support elegantly. Special attention will be paid to how well the paper embodies the course’s learning objectives, especially objectives 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Grading will be informed by the following rubric. It offers a guide for what “A” papers, “B” papers, etc. might exhibit. Note that the questions and statements below are not exhaustive for what may occur in each category. They are only intended as a guide and an aid.

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<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
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<th>D</th>
<th>Fail</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. How effective is the paper’s title? (How well does it imply or communicate the main argument?)</td>
<td>Highly effective. Explicitly prepares reader for argument.</td>
<td>Effective. Suggests argument to come.</td>
<td>Not wholly unrelated to what’s coming, but not nearly explicit enough.</td>
<td>Has a title, but how it relates to the argument isn’t clear.</td>
<td>Either no title or non-sensical.</td>
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<td>Question</td>
<td>Rating</td>
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<td>2. How compelling is the thesis? (How original, clear, succinct, persuasive is it?)</td>
<td>Compelling. Original, clear, succinct and persuasive.</td>
<td>Interesting but lacking somewhat in originality and/or clarity and/or succinctness and/or persuasiveness.</td>
<td>Not very interesting and/or seriously lacking in originality and/or clarity and/or succinctness and/or persuasiveness.</td>
<td>Thesis is too vague and/or is unclear.</td>
<td>No thesis or non-sensical.</td>
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<td>3. How well supported is the thesis?</td>
<td>Thesis supported clearly and convincingly (i.e., with relevant, substantive points) throughout rest of paper.</td>
<td>Support breaks down occasionally – while most paragraphs support clearly and convincingly, one or two do so weakly or not at all.</td>
<td>Support breaks down too often – while some paragraphs support the thesis well, several do so weakly or not at all.</td>
<td>The majority of supporting paragraphs support the thesis too weakly or not at all.</td>
<td>The thesis goes unsupported.</td>
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<td>4. How well organized is the paper overall?</td>
<td>The paper shows excellent organization – with good balance and effective transitions throughout.</td>
<td>The paper shows good organization. Papers suffers from occasional imbalance and/or weak transitions.</td>
<td>The paper needs better organization. It lacks sufficient balance and is too often awkward in transition.</td>
<td>The paper is generally disorganized. It lacks balance. Its transitions are generally poor.</td>
<td>A total mess.</td>
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<td>5. How well organized are the paper’s individual paragraphs?</td>
<td>All paragraphs have clear topic statements which go supported clearly and sufficiently throughout.</td>
<td>Occasional paragraphs lack clarity and/or sufficient support.</td>
<td>Several paragraphs lack clarity and/or sufficient support.</td>
<td>The majority of paragraphs lack a clear topic statement and/or show insufficient support.</td>
<td>Hard to make sense of the majority of the paper’s paragraphs.</td>
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<td>6. How effective is the paper’s conclusion?</td>
<td>An excellent conclusion – elegant and efficient. It also does more than summarize the paper’s argument.</td>
<td>A good conclusion. It summarizes the paper’s argument.</td>
<td>An average conclusion. Doesn’t summarize paper’s argument well.</td>
<td>A poor conclusion. Lacks clarity and/or doesn’t work with the</td>
<td>Either no conclusion or nonsense.</td>
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<td>7. How well written is the paper mechanically (i.e., in terms of grammar, spelling, typos and word choice)?</td>
<td>Paper is mechanically clean – no (or next to no) grammar errors or spelling mistakes. Accurate and concise word choice throughout.</td>
<td>The very occasional grammatical error, typo, or spelling mistake and/or word choice occasionally needs to be more accurate and/or concise. Errors, however, never affect sense.</td>
<td>Paper is too sloppy. It suffers from more than occasional mechanical mistakes and/or word choice is too often inaccurate and/or wordy. Errors sometimes affect sense.</td>
<td>Littered with errors and/or many errors affect sense.</td>
<td>So many errors as to make understanding the argument impossible.</td>
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<td>8. Does the paper pay attention to both narrative (plot, story, development) and formal (layout, visual style etc.) qualities in its analysis?</td>
<td>Yes. Paper effectively analyzes both narrative and formal qualities. (The very best papers will argue how plot and form function together and/or in tension with each other.)</td>
<td>Yes, but discussion of one (usually narrative) receives too great a focus and/or the analysis of one (usually form) isn’t sophisticated enough.</td>
<td>Paper fails to address one of either narrative or formal qualities. That being said, what is discussed is analyzed (i.e. not summarized or described.)</td>
<td>No, and what the paper focusses on tends to be described or summarized rather than analyzed.</td>
<td>Insufficient attention paid to either.</td>
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<td>9. How well does the paper employ appropriate</td>
<td>Shows sophisticated understanding and effective</td>
<td>Employs appropriate conceptual vocabulary but</td>
<td>Employs little appropriate conceptual vocabulary</td>
<td>Employs very little appropriate conceptual</td>
<td>Doesn’t employ any.</td>
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<td>conceptual vocabulary in its analysis?</td>
<td>application of appropriate conceptual vocabulary, and does so to an appropriate extent.</td>
<td>could use more and/or could show more understanding and/or sophistication in its use.</td>
<td>and/or does so in a manner that lacks understanding.</td>
<td>vocabulary and/or does so in a manner that lacks understanding.</td>
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<td>10. How effectively does the paper employ sociohistorical, political, cultural contexts (as appropriate) in its analysis?</td>
<td>Employs context very effectively, i.e., in a manner that shows nuanced understanding and explains relevance very convincingly.</td>
<td>Employs context effectively, i.e., in a manner that shows understanding and explains relevance convincingly.</td>
<td>Employs context in a manner that shows incomplete or unsure understanding and/or fails to explain relevance convincingly.</td>
<td>Employs context where it is inappropriate and/or in a manner that shows a lack of understanding and/or fails to explain relevance.</td>
<td>Fails to employ context when it is crucially needed for the argument.</td>
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**Note** that papers submitted late will lose 10% per day up to a maximum of 30% (after which a paper will no longer be accepted).

**Outline**

**Note:** All readings and screenings can be accessed via Canvas unless otherwise indicated

**General Schedule of Units:**

1. Introductory Unit (modules 1, 2, 3: 6 classes x 80 minutes)
2. Silent Horror Cinema (modules 4, 5, 6: 4 classes)
3. Expressionism’s influence and the Golden Era (module 7: 1 class))
4. Mid-20th Century Horror (module 8: 2 classes)
5. Germanic Horror from 1970-2000 (modules 9, 10, 11: 6 classes)
6. Contemporary Horror Cinema in German-speaking Europe (modules 12, 13, 14, 15: 7 classes)
7. Summary and Review (module 16: 1 class)
Module 1 (2 classes: 10 and 12 January): What is (and What Isn’t) Horror (Cinema): Questions of Genre and Theory

Readings Module 1:

1. Required: *Various short Canvas texts and/or web pages (written and/or posted by me)
2. Required: “What is Horror?” (Murray Leeder, Horror Film)

*Note that I don’t list these short texts here on the syllabus When you go to the relevant module on Canvas, you’ll see them clearly indicated as, for example: READ for Jan. 10, 5 pages: The Uncanny (1919) Freud, exceprt.pdf

Screenings for Module 1:

1. Required: *Stranger Things, Season 4, Episode 2 for discussion in 12 January class

*Note: I take for granted that the majority of students will have access to Netflix. If not, please arrange with a friend and/or classmate who does have Netflix access to watch with them.

Module 2 (2 classes: 17 & 19 Jan.): The Roots of Horror Cinema: Cultural and Technological Antecedents

Readings for M2:

1. Required: Various short Canvas texts and/or web pages (written and/or posted by me)
2. Required: “Introduction” (Leeder, The Modern Supernatural)
3. Required: “Introduction” (Gordon, Theatre of Fear and Horror)

Screenings for M2:

1. Required: *Various short Canvas video excerpts (posted by me)

*Note that in most cases I don’t list these short texts here on the syllabus When you go to the relevant module on Canvas, you’ll see them clearly indicated as, for example: WATCH for Jan. 26: M, 1931, Fritz Lang, first 8 minutes

Module 3 (2 classes: 24 & 26 Jan.): How to Watch a (Horror) Movie: The Fundamentals of Film Analysis (with a focus on horror)

Readings for M3:

1. Required: Various short Canvas texts and/or web pages (written and/or posted by me)

Screenings for M3:

1. Required: Various short Canvas video excerpts (posted by me)

Module 4 (1 class: 31 Jan.) : Silent Horror Cinema 1: General Contexts 1895-1932

Readings for M4:
1. Required: Various short Canvas texts and/or web pages (written and/or posted by me)

Screenings for M4:
1. Required: Various short Canvas video excerpts (posted by me)

Module 5 (2 classes: 2 & 7 February): Silent Horror Cinema 2: Expressionism 1

Readings M5:
1. Required: Various short Canvas texts and/or web pages (written and/or posted by me)
2. Required: Anthony Kaes, Shell Shock Cinema, excerpts
3. Optional: Lieblang Arts One Lecture on Weimar Cinema

Screenings for M5:
1. Required: Various short Canvas video excerpts (posted by me)
2. Required (for 7 Feb.): The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, Germany, 1920, dir. Robert Wiene

Module 6 (1 class: 9 Feb.): Expressionism 2

Readings for M6 (Note that this week requires more reading that usual. You may want to start early):
1. Required: Various short Canvas texts and/or web pages (written and/or posted by me)
2. Required: Listen to BBC 4 In Our Time Podcast on Polidori’s The Vampyre
3. Required: “Chapters 1 and 2” (Nick Groom, The Vampire: A New History)

Screenings for M6:
1. Required (for 5A): Nosferatu, Germany, 1922, dir. Friedrich Murnau

M7 (1 class: 14 Feb.): The Influence of Expressionism / The Golden Era ...?

Readings for M7:
1. Required: Various short Canvas texts and/or web pages (written and/or posted by me)
2. Required: “The Golden Age of Horror” (Murray Leeder, Horror Film)

Screenings for M7:
1. Required: Various short Canvas video excerpts (posted by me)
M8 (2 classes: 16 and 21 Feb.): Mid-20th Century Horror in German-speaking Europe

Readings for M8:

1. Required: Various short Canvas texts and/or web pages (written and/or posted by me)
2. Required: “Introduction” (Stefan Hantke, Caligari’s Heirs)

Screenings for Week M8:

1. Required: Various short Canvas video excerpts (posted by me)


Readings for M9:

1. Required: Various short Canvas texts and/or web pages (written and/or posted by me)

Screenings for M9:

1. Required: Various short Canvas video excerpts (posted by me)
2. Nosferatu: Phantom of the Night, dir. Werner Herzog, West Germany, 1979 / at least listed excerpts
3. The Fan, dir. Eckhart Schmidt, West Germany, 1982


Readings for M10:

1. Required: Various short Canvas texts and/or web pages (written and/or posted by me)

Screenings for M10:

1. Required: Various short Canvas video excerpts (posted by me)
2. Angst, 1983, Austria, dir. Gerald Kargl
3. NEKROMANTIK, 1987, dir. Jörg Buttgereit: at least listed excerpts


Readings for M11:

1. Required: Various short Canvas texts and/or web pages (written and/or posted by me)

Screenings for M11:

1. Required: Various short Canvas video excerpts (posted by me)
2. Funny Games, 1997, Austria, Michael Haneke
M12 (1 class: 21 March): Contemporary Horror Cinema: Part 1

Readings for M12:
1. Required: Various short Canvas texts and/or web pages (written and/or posted by me)

Screenings for M12:
1. Required: Various short Canvas video excerpts (posted by me)

M13 (2 classes: 23 and 28 March): Contemporary Horror Cinema: Part 2

Readings for M13:
1. Required: Various short Canvas texts and/or web pages (written and/or posted by me)

Screenings for M13:
1. Required: Various short Canvas video excerpts (posted by me)

M14 (2 classes: 30 March and 4 April): Contemporary Horror Cinema: Part 3 (Something from elsewhere: your choice): Part 3

Readings for M14:
1. Required: Various short Canvas texts and/or web pages (written and/or posted by me)

Screenings for M14 (Note that for this week’s class we will vote between the two films listed below, screening the one that garners the most support. I will show you excerpts from the film that loses the vote):
1. Required: Various short Canvas video excerpts (posted by me)
2. *Let the Right One In*, 2009, Sweden, Tomas Alfredson OR

M15 (2 classes: 6 and 11 April): Contemporary Horror Cinema in CENE Part 4

Readings for M15:
1. Required: Various short Canvas texts and/or web pages (written and/or posted by me)

Screenings for M15:
1. Required: Various short Canvas video excerpts (posted by me)
2. *Goodnight Mommy*, 2014, Austria, dir. Franz and Fiala
M16 (1 class: 13 April: Review and Summation

Readings for M16:

1. Required: Various short Canvas texts and/or web pages (written and/or posted by me)

Screenings for M16:


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**Bibliography**


Donnelly, Kevin J. *The Spectre of Sound: Music in Film and Television*. BFI, 2005.


Films (Note that I will provide access to those films not linked here)


Nosferatu, Murnau, 1922, Germany / requested on Kanopy / https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FC6jFoYm3xs


Funny Games, Haneke, 1997, Austria / Criterion Channel / my copy

The White Ribbon, Haneke, 2009, Austria (evil children / Nazism) / my copy

NEKRomantik, Buttgereit, 1987, Germany (necrophilia) / my copy

Let the Right One In, Tomas Alfredson, 2008, Sweden (vampire) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=amqqT3tfCi4

Midsommar, Ari Aster, 2019, US/Sweden (folk horror)

Goodnight Mommy, Franz and Fiala, 2014, Austria (doppelganger)

Angst, Gerald Kargl, 1983, Austria (serial killer)

The Fan, Eckhart Schmidt, 1982, West Germany

The Head, Victor Trivas, 1959, West Germany

The Horrors of Spider Island, Fritz Böttger, 1960, West Germany (sexploitation / camp)

Nosferatu: Phantom of the Night, Werner Herzog, 1979, West Germany (vampire) / I have copy on dropbox / requested from Kanopy

Laurin, Robert Sigl, 1989, West Germany (Gothic) / My copy

The Field Guide to Evil, Various/Anthology, Various, 2018 (folk/fairy-tale) / My copy