

CANG 9172 & CANG 9272 _ C1 _ Exploring Cinema's Dark Side

Instructor: Caroline Boreham

Course Outline:

What makes films so apt at exploring our uneasy feelings? What elements of cinema can provoke anxiety, fear, or even dread in its viewers? In this course, we will watch films that interpret the emotionally tense and at times surreal worlds of the gothic. Cinema has long been interested in the more explicit elements of gothic tales—spooky castles, strange disappearances, a past that won't stay dead, but in this course we will focus on how the gothic continues to underpin major themes and atmospheres in more modern pastures. We might not be entering many dark castles, but we will be exploring spaces that have to do with the drama—and horror—of everyday life. Our films will range from older, more “classic” gothic films, such as Hitchcock's *Rebecca*, to more recent films that use the gothic to represent emotional trauma, haunting personal pasts, and disquieting socio-political contexts. Indeed, as our films cover the period from 1940 to the present, we will not only pay close attention to how they unsettle us as present-day viewers, but also investigate what sort of climates might have brought us such strange works in the first place.

Objectives: This is a discussion-based seminar and participants will be expected to contribute actively to our talks every week. We will analyse cinematic effects and techniques from the perspective of non-specialists and ordinary viewers. This approach will require students to think about how film technique affects them on a more personal level. For this reason, a background in film studies is not at all necessary. In the written assessments, students are encouraged to go beyond ‘good’ written expression of English and to develop their own voice and style.

Possible films: *Don't Look Now* (Nicolas Roeg); *The Conversation* (Francis Ford Coppola); *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* (Robert Aldrich); *Personal Shopper* (Olivier Assayas); *Klute* (Alan J. Pakula); *Get Out* (Jordan Peele)

Evaluation: Ongoing Assessment (50%): writing assignments; oral presentation; film club assignment. Final In-Class Exam (50%)