

FM 240 Frankenstein's Heirs: Mary Shelley's Novel and Film Adaptations

Seminar Leader: Matthias Hurst

Advanced Module: Artists, Genres, Movements

Course Times: Monday 10.45-12.15; Wednesday 10.45-12.15; weekly film screening Monday 19.30-22.00

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Office Hours: Tuesday, 13.30 - 15.00

Course Description

This course is dedicated to Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus* (1818) and its cultural repercussions, particularly as charted by the numerous adaptations of the book in film. The story of an ambitious scientist who, like God himself, creates life, but then fails to take responsibility for his creation, stands as a landmark in the tradition of Gothic fiction and is seen by many scholars as the first modern science fiction novel. The idea of the "mad scientist" and the human inclination to hubris, inspired by Frankenstein and his transgressive experiment, has become a pivotal motif in fantastic literature and film. As an imaginative (Romantic) response to the darker sides of enlightenment rationality, Shelley's novel features ideas that are still relevant in our contemporary moment, namely the inherent potential dangers represented by human accomplishments in technology and the natural sciences as well as the need to conduct scientific research and experiments with due respect to ethical values. Seen from another perspective, the novel also presents the story of Frankenstein's creature (the "monster") as a *Bildungsroman*: the existential drama of a sentient being left alone in a hostile world, a world deserted by God or any source of spiritual guidance. As well as bringing together and commenting upon a range of Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment discourses, *Frankenstein* subsequently became the medium through which general cultural and social anxieties were expressed. In this course we examine not only the story and its legacy, but the way in which the generation of a powerful cultural myth can become the container and vehicle for highly diverse anxieties and preoccupations across time.

We use the *Frankenstein* text of the 1818 first edition. If you purchase the book, pick this edition: Mary Shelley. *Frankenstein*. The 1818 Text. Contexts. Criticism. Second edition. Edited by J. Paul Hunter. New York/London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012.

Requirements

Basic knowledge of film history, film theory and film analysis.

Attendance is mandatory for all seminars and film screenings. Students are expected to come to seminars and film screenings punctually and prepared, to participate actively in the class discussions and to do all the course assignments on time.

* Please, do not use cell phones, smart phones or similar electronic devices during seminars and screenings!

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the staunchest regard for academic integrity and expects good academic practice from students in their studies. Instances in which students fail to meet the

expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section III Academic Misconduct.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory for all seminars and film screenings. Absences will significantly affect the grade for the course.

Absences are registered in all classes, and lateness is registered as absence. Students should notify the instructor if they are unable to attend class.

Please see the Student Handbook for college policies on absences due to serious illness or other important cause.

Assessment / Writing Assignments

Two screening reports (1000 words each) in the first half of the semester (week 3; deadline: Wednesday, Sep 19, 10.45 – and week 7; deadline: Wednesday, Oct 17, 10.45), short in-class writing assignments and presentations, and a final essay (3000-3500 words), due in week 15 (Deadline for final essay: Monday, Dec 17, midnight). The topic of this final essay will be a film analysis/interpretation, based on one of the films screened or discussed throughout the semester.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

All assignments and written work must be submitted electronically and on time. Essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

Grade Breakdown

Participation:	33,3 %
Screening reports:	33,3 %
Final essay:	33,4 %

If one of these components is graded F, the final course grade cannot be higher than C-. If two components are graded F, the final grade will be F (i.e. the whole class will be failed).

Schedule

Week 1

Introduction: Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, Monsters and “Mad Scientists” in popular culture

No Class on Wednesday, September 5, 2018!

Week 2

Enlightenment and its Dark Side
Romanticism and Gothic Horror

Gothic (1986, Ken Russell)

Week 3

Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus* (1818)
Aspects and Interpretations (1)

“In the name of God, now I know what it feels like to be God!” – Novel into Film:
Frankenstein (1931, James Whale)

Week 4

Mary Shelley’s novel *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus* (1818)
Aspects and Interpretations (2)

The story continues ...

The Bride of Frankenstein (1935, James Whale)

Week 5

Hammer Horror:

The Curse of Frankenstein (1957, Terence Fisher)

No class on Wednesday, October 3, 2018 (Public Holiday)!

Week 6

Who’s the monster?

The Revenge of Frankenstein (1958, Terence Fisher)

Week 7

Variations to Creation and Madness:

Frankenstein Created Woman (1967, Terence Fisher)

Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed (1969, Terence Fisher)

Week 8

“I am a scientist. I cannot sin.” – Mad Scientists

The Horror of Frankenstein (1970, Jimmy Sangster)

Frankenstein and the Monster from Hell (1974, Terence Fisher)

Frankenstein Unbound (1990, Roger Corman)

Metropolis (1927, Fritz Lang)

The Island of Dr. Moreau (1977, Don Taylor)

Re-Animator (1985, Stuart Gordon)

Fall Break: Oct 29 – Nov 2, 2018

Week 9

Body Genres:

Flesh for Frankenstein / Andy Warhol’s Frankenstein (1973, Paul Morrissey, Antonio Margheriti)

Week 10

Comedy & Childhood Memories:

Young Frankenstein (1974, Mel Brooks)

The Rocky Horror Picture Show (1975, Jim Sharman)

The Spirit of the Beehive (El espíritu de la colmena, 1974, von Victor Erice)

Week 11

A Touch of Shakespeare:

Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein (1994, Kenneth Branagh)

Week 12

Modern Creations: Monsters, Robots and A.I.
Ex Machina (2014, Alex Garland)

Week 13

“There is no such thing as *Frankenstein*, there are only *Frankensteins* ...” –
New Perspectives (1):
Frankenstein (2015, Bernard Rose)

Week 14

“There is no such thing as *Frankenstein*, there are only *Frankensteins* ...” –
New Perspectives (2):
Victor Frankenstein (2015, Paul McGuigan)

Week 15: Completion Week

Essay Deadlines

Deadline for screening report 1 (1000 words): week 3, Wednesday, Sep 19, 10.45
Deadline for screening report 2 (1000 words): week 7, Wednesday, Oct 17, 10.45
Deadline for final essay (3000-3500 words): week 15, Monday, Dec 17, midnight

Literature

We use the *Frankenstein* text of the 1818 first edition. If you purchase the book, pick this edition:
Mary Shelley. *Frankenstein*. The 1818 Text. Contexts. Criticism. Second edition. Edited by J. Paul Hunter. New York/London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012.

Literature:

Allen, Richard, and Murray Smith (eds.). *Film Theory and Philosophy*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Allmer, Patricia, Emily Brick and David Huxley (eds.). *European Nightmares. Horror Cinema in Europe Since 1945*. London/New York: Wallflower Press, 2012.

Altman, Rick. *Film/Genre*. London: British Film Institute, 2004.

Baudry, Jean-Louis. “The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in the Cinema.” In: Philip Rosen (ed.). *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology. A Film Theory Reader*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, pp. 299-318.

Bazin, André. “The Ontology of the Photographic Image.” In: André Bazin. *What Is Cinema?* Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1971, pp. 9-16.

Bazin, André. *What is Cinema?* Vol. I & II. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1971.

Benjamin, Walter. “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.” In: Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (eds.). *Film Theory and Criticism. Introductory Readings*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 731-751.

Blandford, Steve, Barry K. Grant and Jim Hillier. *The Film Studies Dictionary*. London/New York: Arnold, Oxford University Press, 2004.

Bordwell, David, and Kristin Thompson. *Film Art. An Introduction*. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2004.

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- Gelder, Ken (ed.). *The Horror Reader*. London/New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Gibbs, John. *Mise-en-Scène. Film Style and Interpretation*. London/New York: Wallflower Press 2003.
- Harkup, Kathryn. *Making the Monster. The Science Behind Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*. London/New York: Bloomsbury, 2018.
- Hayward, Susan. *Cinema Studies. The Key Concepts*. Third Edition. London/New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Hill, John, and Pamela Church Gibson (eds.). *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Hogan, David J. *Dark Romance. Sexuality in the Horror Film*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company 1997.
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See also the Google Classroom resources for this class.