

Course Description

Vampires

Dates	Thursdays 27 October and 3, 10, 17, 24 November 2016
Times	18.00–20.00
Location	Harry M Weinrebe Learning Centre
Level	All levels – some preparatory reading required
Class size	Maximum 16 participants

Course description

“Dearest, your little heart is wounded; think me not cruel because I obey the irresistible law of my strength and weakness” says Sheridan Le Fanu’s *Carmilla* to her fascinated victim. Seductive yet repellent, ancient yet new, the vampire is a creature of contradictions – hero, villain and victim all in one. An accomplished crosser of thresholds, the vampire has travelled from the page to the stage, and to screens both big and small.

Timed for Halloween, our five-week course is devoted to vampire narratives of the last 200 years. We’ll consider the vampire’s victims – those who are ‘innocent’, those who are negligent, and those who are made complicit by their confused and confusing desires. We’ll also discuss the often strangely unattractive characters who are the vampire’s would-be destroyers, the hinterlands they inhabit and the instruction manuals they take with them. And, of course, we’ll be looking at vampires themselves, following their transformations through time and across a variety of genres and media. Amongst those making an appearance will be vampires male and female; Byronic heroes; femmes fatales; the mixed-race vampires of Victorian fiction; vampires who threaten the very psychic survival of their all-too-willing victims; and (a more recent development) comic vampires.



This course is convened by Dr Emma McEvoy (University of Westminster). Contributors include Dr Stacey Abbott (University of Roehampton), Dr Catherine Spooner (Lancaster University), Professor Alexandra Warwick (University of Westminster), and British Library curator Greg Buzwell.

Week 1: Romantic Vampires (Dr Emma McEvoy, University of Westminster)

The figure of the vampire is a relative newcomer to Western Europe, only arriving in the 18th century and not making an appearance in the English literary tradition until the Romantic period. In our first session we'll look at the first wave of the Undead, taking note of references to vampires in Southey's *Thalaba* (1801) and Byron's *The Giaour* (1813) before looking at the enigmatic stranger of Coleridge's *Christabel* (1816). But our main focus in week one will be Polidori's story 'The Vampyre' (1819), which we'll examine in relation to Byron's fragment 'Augustus Darvell' (1819). We'll consider the figure of the Byronic hero; Romantic writing about Greece; vampires and sex; issues of agency, desire and sympathy; and the vampire's terrifying liminality.

Week 2: Vampires, Victorians and Women (Professor Alexandra Warwick, University of Westminster)

Our focus in week two will be J Sheridan Le Fanu's novella, *Carmilla*. First published in four magazine installments between 1871 and 1872, *Carmilla* represents some important developments in the emerging conventions of vampirism. We'll focus particularly on the female vampire and the transformations of the femme fatale in the Victorian period. We'll explore Le Fanu's text in the context of a number of other literary and visual texts, including Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1848), Florence Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire* (1897) and Philip Burne Jones' painting *The Vampire* (1897).

Week 3: The Cinematic Spectacle of Vampirism (Dr Stacey Abbott, University of Roehampton)

Ever since George Méliès featured a man transforming into a bat in his 1896 film *The Haunted Castle*, the vampire has held a significant place in the development of horror and fantasy cinema. In our third week, we'll examine the evolution of the vampire alongside key developments within cinema. We'll discuss the different incarnations, approaches and cultural meanings of the cinematic vampire through texts such as *London After Midnight* (1927), *The Vampire Bat* (1933), *Vampyr* (1932), *Dracula's Daughter* (1936) and the Hammer vampire films. Through a discussion of the cinematic spectacle and special effects that have come to inform the visualisation of the vampire, we'll consider how the vampire is inherently cinematic.

Week 4: Contemporary Vampires: Comedy and Romance (Dr Catherine Spooner, Lancaster University)

Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* (2005) has proved to be one of the most controversial vampire texts to date: adored by some readers, deplored by others. This session will ask how we got to *Twilight*, exploring the emergence of the 'sympathetic vampire' who may invite our desire, admiration, or even identification. Taking in film and television as well as fiction, we'll explore the transformations the vampire has undergone since the 1960s, from object of fear to subject of comedy and romance. Finally, this session will ask what makes vampires funny, and whether they have a sense of humour. Texts we'll consider include the TV series *Dark Shadows* (1966-71) and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003), the film *What We Do In the Shadows* (2014) and, of course, *Twilight* itself.

Week 5: Vampires in the British Library (Greg Buzwell, The British Library)

Our course concludes with a look at a selection of rare manuscripts, first editions, maps, penny dreadfuls and magazines from the British Library collections. These items will help us trace the rich and complex history of the vampire, highlighting how each generation has brought something new to the mythology surrounding this most nightmarish of Gothic creatures. We'll see manuscripts by Lord Byron, Bram Stoker, Robert Aickman and Angela Carter; sensational Victorian penny dreadfuls; rare illustrated editions of iconic vampire tales and 20th-century vampire-themed comics. We'll close with a look in detail at Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula*, exploring the Count's origins in eastern European folklore and looking at how he has been portrayed by subsequent generations in print and on the screen.

Tutors

Dr Stacey Abbott is Reader in Film and Television Studies at the University of Roehampton. She is the author of *Celluloid Vampires* (University of Texas Press, 2007), *Undead Apocalypse* (Edinburgh University Press, 2016), and co-author, with Lorna Jowett, of *TV Horror: The Dark Side of the Small Screen* (I.B. Tauris, 2013).

Greg Buzwell is Curator of Contemporary Literary Archives at the British Library. He co-curated the Library's *Terror and Wonder: The Gothic Imagination* exhibition in 2014, which explored the influence and legacy of 250 years of Gothic literature. He recently edited and introduced a selection of Mary Elizabeth Braddon's Gothic short stories and is currently working on an edition of Walter de la Mare's supernatural fiction to be published in 2017.

Dr Emma McEvoy is Senior Lecturer in the Department of English, Linguistics and Cultural Studies at the University of Westminster. Her research interests include Gothic theatre and music (particularly of the Romantic period). She is the author of *Gothic Tourism* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016) and co-editor, with Catherine Spooner, of *The Routledge Companion to Gothic* (Routledge, 2007).

Dr Catherine Spooner is Reader in Literature and Culture at Lancaster University. Her publications include *Fashioning Gothic Bodies* (Manchester University Press, 2004), *Contemporary Gothic* (Reaktion 2006) as well as three co-edited collections. Her next book, *Post-Millennial Gothic: Comedy, Romance and the Rise of Happy Gothic*, is forthcoming from Bloomsbury in January 2017. Catherine is currently co-president of the International Gothic Association.

Professor Alexandra Warwick is Head of the Department of English, Linguistics and Cultural Studies at the University of Westminster. Her research interests are in the field of 19th-century studies, particularly the fin de siècle, and she has published work on Oscar Wilde, on Gothic, on representations of the Whitechapel Murders, and on Andrew Lang.

Previous knowledge or experience

A willingness to participate in group discussion will help you get the most from this course. Though it will not be studied as a primary text, familiarity with Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1896) is essential!

Required reading

We ask that participants read the following texts in advance of the course. Recommended editions are listed below; you may however, use other editions:

J Sheridan Le Fanu, *Carmilla* in *In a Glass Darkly*, ed. Robert Tracy (Oxford University Press, 2008).

John Polidori 'The Vampyre' in *The Vampyre and Other Tales of the Macabre*, ed. Robert Morrison and Chris Baldick (Oxford University Press, 2008). This edition also contains Byron's 'Augustus Darvell'.

Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, ed. Roger Luckhurst (Oxford University Press, 2011).

British Library shop discount

Participants who wish to purchase available titles for this course from the Library shop will receive a 10% discount on production of their course ticket/confirmation email.

Facilities and Refreshments

Please note that the Learning Centre will open to participants 15 minutes before the stated start time. Tea, coffee and biscuits will be provided at each session.