

The Exotic and the Feminine in French Supernatural Literature

Instructor: Cynthia Laura Vialle-Giancotti

Pronouns: She, her, hers

Room:

Day and Time:

Office Hours: TBD

Course Description:

Why are people in all times and cultures fascinated by the supernatural? What is this form that is so essentially intriguing? What kind of narratives have been used to tell stories of the supernatural? What kind of repressions, taboos, secrets and desires transpire from supernatural narratives? In this class we will explore texts spanning from 17th century fairy-tales to the fabulous Arabian Nights to early 20th century novels playing with the enchantment of technology. The exotic, a phantasmatic space twice removed from reality, and the feminine, the space of desire par excellence, will be at the center of our readings. (Taught in French)

Calendar

Week 1: Introduction and Supernatural Literature

Section 1 Class Presentation

Johann Heinrich Fuessli (1741-1825), *Nightmare* (1781)

Francisco Goya (1746-1828), *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters* (1797-1799)

Section 2 The Supernatural Genres

Selections from Christian Chelebourg (1958-), *Le surnaturel: Poétique et Écriture* (2006)

Week 2: French Marvelous at Court: a pastime galant

Section 1 Charles Perrault (1628-1703), *Contes* (1697),

« Peau d'Âne », « La Barbe Bleüe »

Section 2 Madame d'Aulnoy (1651-1705), *Les Contes de Fées* (1698),

« Le Nain jaune »

Week 3: Oriental Marvelous

Section 1 Antoine Galland (1646-1715), *Les Mille et une Nuits* (1707-1714), (vol. II)

« Histoire d'Aboulhassan Ali Ebn Becar et de Schemselnihar »

Section 2 Antoine Galland (1646-1715), *Les Mille et une Nuits* (1707-1714), (vol. III)

« Histoire d'Aladdin »

Week 4: 18th Century Variations on Supernatural Literature: the Exotic South

Section 1 Alain-René Le Sage (1668-1747), *Le Diable Boiteux* (1707) (Selections)

Encyclopédie (1751-1772), article « Merveilleux » (attributed to Marmontel)

Section 2 Jacques Cazotte (1719-1792), *Le Diable Amoureux* (1772)

Week 5: The Disquieting Other: Female and Oriental Characters

Section 1 Jean Potocki, (1761-1815), *Le Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse* (1810) (Selections)

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Section 2 Edward Said (1935-2003), *Orientalism* (1978)

“Imaginative Geography and its Representations”

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), *The Uncanny* (1919) (Selections)

Week 6: Phrenology and Folly

Section 1 Charles Nodier, (1780-1844), *La Fée aux Miettes* (1832) ch. I-XV

Section 2 Charles Nodier, (1780-1844), *La Fée aux Miettes* (1832) ch. XVI-end

Week 7: Gothic Kinship

Section 1 Victor Hugo, (1802-1885), *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1833) (Selections)

Selections from Agnes Andeweg & Sue Zlosnik, *Gothic Kinship* (2013)

Section 2 Victor Hugo, (1802-1885), *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1833) (Selections)

Selections from Kate Ferguson Ellis, *The Contested Castle* (1989)

Week 8: Ghosts of the 19th Century

Section 1 Alexandre Dumas, (1802-1870), *Les Mille et un Fantômes* (1849) (Selections)

Section 2 George Sand (1804-1876), *Contes d'une Grande-Mère* (1873-6)

« Le Château de Pic Tordu »

Week 9: The Supernatural in a World of Technology

Section 1 Auguste Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, *L'Ève Future* (1886) (Selections)

Section 2 Jules Verne (1828-1905), *Le Château des Carpathes* (1892) (Selections)

Week 10: Poster Presentations & Movie

Section 1 Poster Presentations

Section 2 Rupert Julian, *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925),

An adaptation of Gaston Leroux's *Le Fantôme de l'Opéra* (1910)

Course Objectives and Learning Goals

By the end of this course, you will:

Language

- Strengthen your ability to express yourself orally in French;
- Gain some familiarity with academic reading and writing in French;
- Become familiar with discussions in an academic setting in French (formulating and defending one's opinion, hypothesizing, use of the passive and the subjunctive);

Literary and cultural analysis

- Learn to analyse both fictional and critical texts in their social and historical contexts;
- Learn to research a social and historical phenomenon, using a variety of resources from different fields;
- Become more comfortable using the vocabulary of literary analysis;
- Learn to develop and present your interpretations both of fiction and social change, both orally and in writing;
- Learn to identify Gothic Themes and Tropes and understand their function within the narrative;

Evaluations

3 Units

- **Class Participation (20% of the Grade)**
- **Short Oral Presentation (20% of the Grade)**, on assigned topic to kick off discussion.
- **One Page Paper (40% of the Grade)**, four in total, in French.
- **Poster Presentation (20% of the Grade)**, in groups of 2, 3 or 4

4 Units

- **Class Participation (10% of the Grade)**
- **Short Oral Presentation (20% of the Grade)**, on assigned topic to kick off discussion.
- **One Page Paper (20% of the Grade)**, four in total, in French.
- **Poster Presentation (20% of the Grade)**, in groups of 2, 3 or 4.
- **Final Paper or Final Quiz (30% of the Grade)**, 5-6 pages in French, it can be a more in depth research on a subject explored in the one-page papers. // 5 essay questions to be prepared over a week.

5 Units

- **Class Participation (10% of the Grade)**
- **Short Oral Presentation (20% of the Grade)**, on assigned topic to kick off discussion.
- **One Page Paper (20% of the Grade)**, four in total, in French.
- **Poster Presentation (20% of the Grade)**, in groups of 2, 3 or 4.
- **Final Paper or Final Quiz (30% of the Grade)**, 8-9 pages in French, it can be a more in-depth research on a subject explored in the one-page papers. // 6 essay questions to be prepared over a week.

Details on the Evaluation Format

1. Class Participation: reading the assigned materials, participating actively in the class discussions;

2. Short Oral Presentation: 15min max presentation on an assigned topic, decided together with the instructor, to kick off class discussion. Presentation Suggestions:

1) Paraphrase the text (summarize it and describe its logical sequence/narrative structure). Or present an overview of the issue at hand, when the presentation is about background information.

2) Present the two or three passages you find most relevant, and analyze them. If you are not presenting about readings on the syllabus, bring mini-excerpts from relevant written material.

3) Suggest insightful questions for our class discussion.

Make your presentation a lively one, with or without props such as Powerpoint, handouts, etc.

3. One Page Paper: written in French, (3-500 word count), due for section 2 of the week. It will be the starting point for Section 2's class discussion. The content should be pertinent to the week's readings: you can expand on a theme presented in a text, contest an author's/critic's perspective and/or representation, compare different texts, etc. You will have to submit four throughout the quarter, it is up to you when you'll

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do so. **Advanced possibility: find a critical text in French on the week's assigned reading and comment it in your paper. (+5% bonus grade each time).**

4. Poster Presentation: Students get together in groups of 2, 3 or 4 and present one theme or object priorly agreed with the instructor. Prepare a poster presentation (Paper format / / digital format) and be ready to walk your classmates and instructors through your poster. The poster should explain the object and how it relates to one of the themes discussed in class. Examples may be the devil, fairy tales, the exotic woman, oriental representations, ghosts, supernatural technology, etc. Feel free to be as creative as you want. Visual prompts are strongly encouraged.

5. Final Research Paper: Length of the paper will depend on the number of Units. You will expand on a theme or a work explored in class, analyse it critically by using the appropriate concepts and vocabulary learnt in class. The topic is to be discussed in advance with the instructor. Quote at least one French source.

OR Final Quiz: You will pick 5/6 essay questions out of the 10 proposed and answer with 4-600 words to each one of them. The questions will be announced on the last day of class and you will have one week of time to submit them. Spelling accuracy, good grammar, good structure and syntax are fundamental, considering the allotted time.

Affordability, Sensibility and Inclusion

Since I believe in the importance of free education, I am committed to making this class financially accessible to all students, therefore: **all of the material for the class will be available on Canvas, you are not expected to buy anything.** You are, on the other hand, expected to read all the material **in French** and for this you will be able to find the readings in the respective week-folders on Canvas. You can use where needed English translations with particular difficult texts (such as *Les Mille et Une Nuits* or *L'Éve Future*) to help your reading in French.

The works we are reading are literary fictions. In taking this class, please be aware that these fictions represent subject matter that can be difficult intellectually and emotionally. I will not warn students about particular topics, because sensitivity to different topics varies from person to person, and because topics may arise unexpectedly in class discussion. If you anticipate or experience acute distress as a result of encountering a particular topic, please talk to me so I can arrange an alternate assignment. As you may know, there is a difference between feeling personal distress and feeling uncomfortable. Feeling uncomfortable (and sometimes even angry or offended) is part of intellectual growth. Feeling distress is not. I encourage you to take care of yourselves and each other, and to let me know how we can help, within the scope of my role as educator.

Given the sensitive and challenging nature of the material discussed in class, it is imperative that there be an atmosphere of trust and safety in the classroom. We will work on fostering an environment in which everyone feels safe to speak and is open to listening to what the other has to say. The Supernatural, as we will see in the class, is the space of the "Other" in all its multiple facets: we will explore what it means to be "other" at different times in different contexts, observe it and study, and hopefully, at the end of our way, recognize ourselves in this other.