IN 307 Advanced Elective Seminar: 
Frankenstein Across the Curriculum

Faculty: John Kimsey

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Day/Time: Mondays, 1/15 – 3/19, 5:45-9 pm

Location: DePaul Loop campus, Lewis Center 1312

Course Description:
Cultural historian Theodore Roszak has called Frankenstein — Mary Shelley’s tale of a brilliant, well-meaning intellectual who plays god to disastrous effect — “the central myth of modern society.” Beginning from that assumption, this course considers Mary Shelley’s story from three key perspectives: the literary/historical; the sociocultural; and the scientific/technological. In addition to the novel itself, we will focus on other cultural artifacts — e.g., films — that derive from or are related to Mary Shelley’s vision. We will also consider “Frankenstein” as a popular discourse — i.e., as a set of assumptions, metaphors and questions we commonly use to talk about ethical problems, social structures and technological applications. Our goal is twofold: 1) to become more familiar with this pattern of thought, its structure, power and pitfalls; and 2) to get an in-depth sense of the ways in which intellectual disciplines converge and diverge as they engage differing issues through a common cultural language.

Faculty:
John Kimsey received his Ph.D. in English from the University of Illinois at Chicago and specializes in modern literature and cultural studies. His essays have appeared in Interdisciplinary Literary Studies, the Journal of Popular Music Studies, The Journal of Prevention and Intervention in the Community, and The Cambridge Companion to the Beatles, among other publications. In 2014, he received DePaul’s Excellence in Teaching Award. A member of the SNL resident faculty, he thinks that Mary Shelley won the ghost story contest, hands down.
**Competencies:**

**E-1:** Understands and can synthesize interpretive perspectives on a cultural myth.

**E-2:** Can describe the dynamics of a cultural myth and analyze its impact on debates about [topic of student’s choice].

**Learning Strategies:**
A variety of learning strategies will be employed, including textbook readings; film screenings; classroom lectures and discussions; journals of the readings; group dialogues; and presentations by students.

**Required Textbook:**

**Reserve Readings:**
We will use numerous reserve Readings in this course. All are available in PDF form at the DePaul University Library website as electronic reserves in the Ares system. Just go to library.depaul.edu and click on the Services tab in the banner across the top. That will take you to the Services page, where on the left you’ll find the heading Course Reserves. Click on that and you’ll arrive at the Course Reserves Services page. Under the Ares Course Reserves heading there, click on the blue tab “Login to Ares Course Reserves”. That will take you to the login page for the Ares system. Log in using your Campus Connect User ID and password. You will then get a page listing the courses in which you’re enrolled that have readings posted in Ares. Click on the title of this course and the list of our electronic reserve readings will be displayed.

**Evidence Students Will Submit:**

**Class participation.** Students are expected to do the appropriate reading for each class session in a timely fashion. They are also encouraged to demonstrate that they have done so by participating in class discussion. In addition, students will submit the following pieces of written work:

**Journal entries.** Each week (excepting week 1), students will submit a journal entry (around a typed page in length) on a reading chosen from the list of readings scheduled for that week. This will make for a total of 10 journal entries by course’s end. These journal entries will be collected each week. A suggested format for journal entries is presented later in this syllabus.

**Midterm Paper.** Students will write a midterm paper, 7-10 pages in length, on a literary or historical aspect of Shelley’s work. The instructor will provide a choice of topics for this paper.

**Final Paper.** Students will also submit a final paper, 10-12 pages long, on an issue from a domain other than literature (e.g., parenting, science, ethics, sociology, psychology) which pertains to *Frankenstein*. In this paper, students will do three important things: 1)
describe the issue in question; 2) explain how it relates to *Frankenstein;* 3) discuss how *Frankenstein* informs or deforms (i.e., helps or hinders, clarifies or muddies) our thinking about the issue. Students will develop their own topics for this paper, in consultation with the instructor.

**Grading will be weighted as follows:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journal (10 entries x 3 pts)</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm paper</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
<td>30</td>
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**Criteria for Assessment:**
I expect the written work described above to conform to college-level standards of mechanics and presentation. I am happy to work with students on these points, on a draft-revision basis, if students so desire. In making such assessments, I strive to be clear, flexible, forthright and empathetic. Students are also encouraged to take advantage of the services offered by DePaul’s Writing Center. (For more info on the Writing Center, see the heading Writing Help, at the end of this syllabus.)

**Journal Entries**
A single journal entry is worth a maximum of 3 points, with 3 points indicating excellent work; 2 points indicating average work; and 1 point indicating work that is somehow lacking. In addition to allotting points, the instructor will provide written feedback on each journal entry. In journal entries, I am mostly looking for you to register a robust response to the reading experience in question.

**Papers**

**Papers** will be graded as follows:

**A designates work of high quality.** An A paper
- develops an argument cogently and creatively across the length of an essay;
- reflects thorough understanding of and engagement with pertinent texts (audiovisual and/or print) and the issues at hand;
- draws insightful connections and/or generates thoughtful questions concerning the topic and the specified materials;
- cites sources consistently in appropriate citation style;
- is virtually free of grammar lapses.

**B designates work of good quality.** A B paper
- develops an argument effectively across the length of an essay;
reflects adequate understanding of and engagement with pertinent texts (audiovisual and/or print) and the issues at hand;

draws clear connections and/or generates apt questions concerning the topic and the specified materials;
cites sources consistently in appropriate citation style;
is mostly free of grammar lapses.

**C** designates work which minimally meets requirements set forward in assignment.  
**A C paper**
develops some ideas but does so in a superficial or simplistic manner;
reflects limited understanding of or engagement with pertinent texts audiovisual or print) and the issues at hand;
draws connections, some of which are unclear, and/or raises questions, some which are inapt, concerning the topic and the specified materials;
cites sources inconsistently and/or occasionally uses appropriate citation style;
contains several grammar lapses.

**D** designates work of poor quality which does not meet minimum requirements set forth in the assignment.  
**A D paper** (16.3-18.9 pts)
shows little development of ideas;
reflects little or no understanding of pertinent texts (audiovisual and/or print) and the issues at hand;
does not draw clear connections or raise coherent questions concerning the topic and the specified materials;
does not cite sources appropriately;
contains numerous grammar lapses.

**Policy on Pass/Fail Grades:**
It is assumed you are taking the course for a letter grade (A, B, C, etc.). However, it is possible to take the course on a Pass/Fail basis if you wish to do so. If you do wish to take the course on a Pass/Fail basis, you must inform the instructor of your wish to do so in writing by the end of Week Two.

**Policy on late submissions**
Assignments that are submitted late will receive reduced points. Assignments more than one week late will receive zero points.

**Policy on attendance:**
Students attend are expected to attend all class sessions and to arrive promptly so that we may get underway with the evening’s (very intriguing) business. In the event of an absence it is imperative that you a) let me know ahead of time; and b) contact a classmate ahead of time to be your ‘tutor’ for the missed session. A student who misses more than two class sessions will not have met the requirements for a passing grade.

**Policy on Academic Integrity:**
This course abides by the university’s strictures against plagiarism and its policies on Academic Integrity as described in the DePaul Student handbook. All work done for this course must observe the Guidelines for Academic Integrity as outlined in the Code of Student Responsibility (in the DePaul Student Handbook). The code’s Plagiarism Policy reads as follows:

*Plagiarism is a major form of academic dishonesty involving the presentation of the work of another as one’s own. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to the following: The direct copying of any source, such as written and verbal material, computer files, audio disks, video programs or musical scores, whether published or unpublished, in whole or in part, without proper acknowledgement that it is someone else’s; copying of any source in whole or in part with only minor changes in wording or syntax even with proper acknowledgement; submitting as one’s own work a report, examination paper, computer file, lab report or other assignment which has been prepared by someone else; and the paraphrasing of another’s work or ideas without proper acknowledgment.*

*Plagiarism, like other forms of academic dishonesty, is always a serious matter. If an instructor finds that a student has plagiarized, the appropriate penalty is at the instructor’s discretion. Actions taken by the instructor do not preclude the college or the university taking further punitive action including dismissal from the university.*

**Policy on Incompletes:**
It is expected that students will complete course assignments by specified due dates within the quarter. In circumstances that the instructor determines to be exceptional, when the student is unable to complete required coursework by the established due dates, the student may request that a grade of Incomplete (IN) be issued. This request must be made formally, in writing, by completion of IN Request Form that the student signs. The form specifies the final date by which all outstanding coursework must be completed. Failure to submit outstanding work by the specified due date will result in a grade change from IN to W or FX for each enrolled competence, along with serious academic and/or financial consequences. After the final submission deadline, the student will have no further opportunities to submit work for a passing grade.
Schedule of Topics and Readings:

Note: (E) = The reading is posted on Electronic Reserve at the DePaul Libraries website (typically in Adobe, as a PDF file). Just go to library.depaul.edu and click on the Services tab in the banner across the top. That will take you to the Services page, where on the left you’ll find the heading Course Reserves. Click on that and you’ll arrive at the Course Reserves Services page. Under the Ares Course Reserves heading there, click on the blue tab “Login to Ares Course Reserves”. That will take you to the login page for the Ares system. Log in using your Campus Connect User ID and password. You will then get a page listing the courses in which you’re enrolled that have readings posted in Ares. Click on the title of this course and the list of our electronic reserve readings will be displayed.

Week One 1/15
Introduction to course; key figures, topics and questions; Historical overview; Screening of excerpt from *Haunted Summer*; Discussion of Annas & Juma excerpts

Week Two 1/22
The novel
Due: Journal entry on the novel
Readings:

Week Three 1/29
Contexts of the novel: Four perspectives on its meaning; Midterm paper assigned
Due: Journal entry on one of the readings listed below
Readings:
  - Percy Shelley, from *The Atheneum*, in Wolfson, 399-401
  - Sanford, “The Shadow” (E)
  - Mellor, ch. 2, “Making A Monster” (E)

Week Four 2/5
Contexts of the novel: Poets, Revolutionaries, Prometheans; Screening of *A History of Britain: Forces of Nature*; Listening to excerpt from *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*; Brief selections by Byron and Percy Shelley; The sublime, the beautiful & the picturesque
Due: Journal entry on one of the readings below
Readings:
  - Mellor, “Promethean Politics” (E)
  - Wollstonecraft, “Jemima’s Story,” in Wolfson, 228-244
  - “Aesthetic Adventures,” in Wolfson, 211-217 (includes Burke, Wollstonecraft, Gilpin)

Week Five 2/12
Contexts of the novel: Prometheus & Lucifer; Hermeticism & Gnosticism; Blake: Fourfold Vision and Newton’s Sleep
Due: Journal entry on one of the readings below

Readings:

“God, Adam and Satan” in Wolfson, 301-322
(excerpts from Genesis and Milton’s Paradise Lost)
Percy Shelley, selections in Wolfson
(excerpts from A Defence of Poetry & Prometheus Unbound)
Goodall interview, Secret Science (E)
Holroyd, “Gnosticism, Ancient and Modern” (E)
Blake, Excerpts from The Marriage of Heaven and Hell

Week Six 2/19
Frankenstein and ethics; Doing science: four short readings; Screening of Newton’s Dark Secrets
Due: Midterm paper
Journal entry on one of the readings below
Readings:
M. Wilson, “On Being A Scientist” (E)
Feynman, “The Value of Science” (E)
E. O. Wilson, from “Science and Ideology” (E)
Feyerabend, “Introduction…” from Against Method (E)

Week Seven 2/26
Biotechnology: debates and frames; Guest speaker Dr. Morry Fiddler
Due: Journal entry on one of the readings listed below
Readings:
Lander, “In the Wake of the Genetic Revolution. . .” (on web)
McKibben, “Too Much” (E)
Appleyard, “Eugenics 1: the Right To Be Unhappy” (E)
Pinker, “The Blank Slate” (E)

Week Eight 3/5
The nuclear predicament; screening of The Manhattan Project
Due: One-page proposal for final paper; Journal entry on one of the readings listed below
Readings:
Erikson, “Of Accidental Judgments and Casual Slughters”
Chaffee, “Two Historians’ Views on the Bombing of Hiroshima”

Week Nine 3/12
Frankenstein and visual culture; Screening of The Bride of Frankenstein; the Gothic—genre and gender
Due: Journal entry on one of the readings below
Readings:
Mellor, ch. 2, “My Hideous Progeny,” 52-7
Week Ten 3/19
Artificial intelligence; What’s “human”? How do you know?;
Screening of Blade Runner
Due: Journal entry on one of the readings below
Readings: Waldrop, “Can Computers Think?” (E)
Joy, “Why the Future Doesn’t Need Us” (E)
Due: Final paper

Format for Journal Entries

For the designated reading, fill up about a page responding to the following questions:

1. What is the reading about? (Be concrete and literal at this point. Try not to jump to “interpretation.”)

2. Describe something—anything—from your own experience that you are reminded of by the reading.

3. What is the most important passage in the reading? Why?

4. Which other reading seems most to agree with this one? Which other reading seems most to disagree with this one? Explain your choices.

5. Pretend the reading is not about whatever you said it was about in #1. Pretend it’s about something else, something hidden or unstated. What is this “something else”?

Appendix

For Students Who Need Accommodations Based on the Impact of a Disability

Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussions will remain confidential.

To ensure that you receive the most appropriate accommodation based on your needs, contact the instructor as early as possible in the quarter, preferably within the first week of class, and make sure you have contacted:

- PLuS Program (for LD, AD/HD) at 773-325-4239 in the Schmidt Academic Center, room 220 or;
- The Office for Students with Disabilities (for all other disabilities) at 773-325-7290, DePaul University Student Center, room 307.
Writing Help

For help with organizing your ideas, grammar, citing sources, avoiding plagiarism, sample SNL assignments and much more, see the Writing Guide for SNL Students at http://snl.depaul.edu/writing/index.html. For on-campus and online tutoring, see the DePaul University Writing Centers at http://condor.depaul.edu/~writing/. 