

Gothic Novel Final Project Information for Spring 2015

For the final project for this course, you need to choose a gothic novel that is not on the syllabus. Then you'll be doing an in-class presentation on it during the final week of class and writing a final paper on it (to be turned in during the final exam period). There is no final exam for the course; your paper & presentation are the "Final Project" for the course. As explained on the syllabus, the presentation is 5% of course grade; the paper is 25% of course grade. I have a list of pre-approved books, but I am very much open to you finding something else on your own. Before you get your heart set on a particular novel, drop me an e-mail or ask me in class about your proposed text. ***I will only allow one student for any given book, so be sure to let me know what book you're planning to do (even if it's on the "pre-approved" list).*** If you're having trouble finding a book, or don't know where to begin in choosing, please let me know. If you tell me about what authors/themes/time periods interest you, I can help you to find something that you will (hopefully) enjoy.

The final project will have two parts, a presentation and a paper, as described below:

PRESENTATION

Presentations will happen during the last week of class on **Tuesday, April 26th and Thursday, April 28th**. We'll try to do about half the presentations each day (sign-ups will happen closer to that time).

At the time of the presentation, you are not required to have finished reading your novel (although that might make it easier for you to present). The main point of the presentations is to share what you've learned on your own with the rest of the class. You do not have to stand up in front of the class (unless you wish to do so). The presentations can be relatively informal – basically, we sit in a circle and the presenter talks about the novel that he/she read. Here is what you should do in the presentation:

- ❖ **Provide a visual:** Create a handout (we have 19 students) OR a poster OR a PowerPoint slide (NOT all 3!). The handout/poster/slide should include basic publication data (title, author, date, etc.) and a short summary. Other than that, the handout design and content should follow your own interests. You could include quotes from the text, create or find related images, make a family tree or narration diagram, offer bullet-pointed notes about the text, or explain how it connects with other novels we've read in the class. At the very least, you should provide me with a hard copy of your handout or PowerPoint slide.
- ❖ **Provide your classmates with a roughly 5-minute presentation (7 minutes MAXIMUM, but shoot for 5).** You'll be able to use what you have on the handout as a guide to your talk – again, go with what interests you most about the book. In part, you'll need some level of plot summary, as well as your own response or review (thumbs up, thumbs down, and WHY!). It would also be useful to connect the book you read with what we've learned about the Gothic tradition in this course. What book(s) from the syllabus have similar (or very different) styles, tones, or content? What makes this novel gothic? You can consider the presentation a forum for you to try out some ideas you may have for your final paper. Doing your own presentation and watching those of others should help to give you ideas for your own final paper, and help us all reflect on what we've learned about the gothic tradition in literature over the course of the semester.

FINAL PAPER

The final paper should be about 8 to 10 pages on your selected novel. You should read the novel and connect it to the history of the gothic as we have explored it in the course. This paper is not a plot summary; it should focus on an *analysis* of the novel, including how it fits into the larger genre of the gothic. You might want to think of this paper as an argument for why this book is a part of the Gothic, or perhaps even why we should read it in this course.

In your final paper, you must also include at least one scholarly source – an academic article that focuses on the novel you’re discussing. As you begin your research, you should start at the LIBRARY website, not at Google or other general search engines. You may of course use more than one secondary source, but you are not required to do so. Basically, I want you to be engaging with the larger critical debate surrounding your chosen text (or the Gothic more generally). If you’re not sure your source is appropriate, please ask. Scholarly sources are published in peer-reviewed journals, such as the *PMLA*, or the *Journal of American Literature*, or *Gothic Studies*. Such journals typically require subscriptions (often quite expensive!). Our library (and thus your tuition dollars) pays for access to many very expensive databases that will give you access to these journals. You need to get good scholarly, academic sources. About.com, Wikipedia, and other web sites of that nature are not appropriate for this assignment. If you need help with the research part, visit the library’s web site, talk to a librarian, or ask me for help!

Here are some of the things you should do in the paper (in no particular order here; however, you SHOULD develop an order that works for your own paper!):

- ✧ Thumbnail sketch of plot summary (a paragraph or so – really! Don’t do too much of this!)
- ✧ Your response/recommendation – what you liked or disliked about the novel. BE SPECIFIC and explain why you had the reaction you did.
- ✧ Close reading of a few passages: You should have quotes (properly cited of course!!) from the text to illustrate your points and ideas.
- ✧ Connect the novel to what you know of the gothic tradition. This might include connections with specific novels from the class, or with various gothic ideas we’ve discussed. How does your novel connect with or depart from the gothic tradition as you understand it?
- ✧ Introduce your scholarly source. You’ll need a few quotes from it, and, more importantly, you will need YOUR RESPONSE to this critic’s analysis. Do you agree? Disagree? Why?
- ✧ A Works Cited list. This might include only the outside novel itself plus the one required scholarly article. Keep in mind that if you quote other books or articles or sources of other kinds, you should cite the properly and include them in the Works Cited. You should cite ALL material that came from outside sources; do not plagiarize!

I strongly recommend that you work on multiple drafts and that you have someone else read your paper; talk to a peer in class or go to the Writing Center (3rd floor O’Leary)! Having a draft and revising is the best way to develop a strong paper; try to make a good start on the paper early (which is ALWAYS a good idea).

The final version of the paper is due during the time the registrar has set for our final exam, which (at the moment) is listed as Monday, May 2nd, 11:30 – 2:30. **I will accept papers in hard copy until 3pm on Monday May 2nd.** (More on paper collection process/details as we get closer to the end.)

Some “pre-approved” novels you might consider for your final project:

- William Beckford *Vathek* (1786)
- Ann Radcliffe *The Romance of the Forest* (1791)
- Ann Radcliffe *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794)
- William Godwin: *Caleb Williams* (1794)
- Ann Radcliffe *The Italian* (1798)
- Regina Maria Roche: *Claremont* (1798)
- Clara Reeve: *The Old English Baron* (1778)
- Charles Brockden Brown: *Ormond* (1798)
- Charles Brockden Brown: *Wieland* (1798)
- William Henry Ireland: *The Abbess* (1799)
- Maria Edgeworth: *The Castle Rackrent* (1800)
- Jane Austen: *Northanger Abbey* (1803)
- Sydney Owenson: *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806)
- Charlotte Dacre: *Zofloya or the Moor* (1806)
- Percy Shelley: *Zastrozzi* (1810)
- Percy Shelley: *St Irvyne* (1811)
- Lady Caroline Lamb: *Glenarvon* (1816)
- Thomas Love Peacock: *Nightmare Abbey* (1818)
- Mary Shelley: *Matilda* (1819)
- Charles Maturin: *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820)
- Maria Monk: *Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu* (1836)
- James Hogg: *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824)
- George Lippard: *Quaker City* (1844)
- Emily Bronte: *Wuthering Heights* (1847)
- Nathaniel Hawthorne: *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851)
- Wilkie Collins: *The Woman in White* (1860)
- Sheridan LeFanu: *Uncle Silas* (1864)
- Sheridan LeFanu: *The Wyvern Mystery* (1869)
- H. Rider Haggard: *She* (1887)
- Oscar Wilde: *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891)
- Jules Verne: *The Castle in Transylvania* (1892)
- William Godwin: *St. Leon* (1899)
- Bram Stoker: *The Lair of the White Worm* (1911)
- Flannery O’Connor: *Wise Blood* (1952)
- Shirley Jackson: *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959)
- Shirley Jackson: *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (1962)
- Joyce Carol Oates: *Bellefleur* (1980)
- Theodore Roszak: *The Memoirs of Elizabeth Frankenstein* (1995)
- Poppy Z Brite: *The Exquisite Corpse* (1996)
- Ann-Marie MacDonald: *Fall on your Knees* (1997)
- Dennis Lehane: *Shutter Island* (2003)
- Elizabeth Kostova: *The Historian* (2005)
- John Marks: *Fangland* (2007)

You may use a book that does not appear on this list, but you must get it approved by me!

Frequently Asked Questions:

Can I do a movie instead?

No.

Why not? Do you hate movies?

Of course I don’t hate movies. We’re writing about novels because we’re working on novels, not movies, and you need practice in writing about literature. There are other courses that focus on film, and I recommend you take those (they are great and will give you a whole other set of important skills).

Can I choose a book that isn’t on this list?

YES! But you absolutely MUST talk to me about it first!

I don’t know how to choose a book.

That’s not a question, but I am very happy to help you select a book. E-mail me or talk to me after class! Seriously! We will find you a great book!