

**English/Film Studies 383: Cinema and Genre—Horror Films, 1960 - 1985**

**Professor Gilberto M. Blasini**

**Monday & Wednesday, 5:00 – 7:30 PM**

**Curtin Hall 104**

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**Office hours: Monday & Wednesday, 12:30 – 1:30 PM and by appointment**

**Course Description:** The course surveys the gradual transformation of horror films—mostly but not exclusively in the U.S.—from B-movie status to a popularly and critically praised genre during the 25-year period between 1960 and 1985. The release of Alfred Hitchcock’s *Psycho* and Michael Powell’s *Peeping Tom* in 1960 marks a transition in terms of thematic, ideological and narrative approaches to conveying horror filmically. The historical changes that took place after 1960 (the Vietnam War, the Watergate scandal, the women’s movement, the sexual revolution, the civil rights movement, the end of the Hays Code and the appearance of the MPAA ratings system, among others) further transformed the cinematic configuration of the horror genre, giving many directors the opportunity to create socially relevant and aesthetically challenging texts that were able to engage a wide variety of audiences (e.g., the youth, African Americans). We will study a number of filmmakers who emerged as horror *auteurs* during these years—Wes Craven, George A. Romero, Brian de Palma, Larry Cohen, Tobe Hooper, and David Cronenberg. In addition, we will explore some of this period’s horror subgenres: demonic entities/possessions, haunted houses, science-makes-nature-run-amok, and the slasher/stalker films. In order to understand the social relevance of these films as cultural artifacts, the course will pay close attention to these films’ relationship to their historical context. Thus, we will examine how these films engage discourses related to age, race, class, gender, sexuality, and nationality, among others.