

**English 740: Approaches to the Modern I: Gothic Revivals**  
**Spring 2023 Tuesdays, 4 - 6:40 P.M.**  
**Barrett Kalter ([bkalter@uwm.edu](mailto:bkalter@uwm.edu))**

The Gothic novel emerged in the late eighteenth century out of the upheavals and large-scale transformations that have come to be identified with modernity in the West: secularization, philosophical and scientific materialism, and what Max Weber refers to as the “reenchantment” of the world; critiques of aristocracy, monarchy, and slavery that foment revolutions in France, America, Haiti; industrialization and urbanization, which produced the alienations of labor under increasingly mechanized conditions and of life isolated from traditional networks of kinship and community; the continued expansion of print culture and the reading public, centered on the novel as mass entertainment; medical definitions of normal and deviant bodies and populations; the nation-state’s consolidation, and its extension through empire; and a changing sense of family that results from the separation of work from the private sphere and revised gender roles. The shock, anxiety, and fear that these changes provoked all find expression in Gothic fiction, which in turn makes the genre an ideal entry point for a critical examination of modernity.

In this course, we will discuss Gothic novels, from the eighteenth century to the present, in light of cultural theory that explores different aspects of modernity, often from a Gothic-tinted perspective. We will uncover the Gothic roots of psychoanalysis in Freud’s essay on “The Uncanny” and use Foucault’s analysis of the modern type of power exerted through discipline and surveillance to guide us through the prison-like spaces of Ann Radcliffe’s ruined castles. Derrida’s “spectrality” will provide a framework for thinking about the ghost as metaphor for non-linear conceptions of history and temporality. Wollstonecraft’s Gothic novel *The Wrongs of Woman* thematizes arguments made in her feminist treatise *Vindication of the Rights of Women*; more recently, the Marxist feminist Silvia Federici has examined the figure of the Witch as an embodiment of resistance to early capitalism. The Gothic has also been a central space for imagining queerness, through representations of monstrous sexuality (Halberstam), gay panic and the homosocial (Sedgwick), and a camp sensibility (Sontag). These readings show how enduring Gothic tropes and narratives have been, and how central they are to our understanding of politics, family, and self. We remain haunted by the Gothic.

Coursework will include participation in weekly class discussions and short response papers; two 10pp papers; an annotated bibliography on a topic related to course readings, to be presented in class.

This course will fulfill the pre-1800 requirement, as well as the 740/1 requirement.