Course Title: 19th-Century Gothic Novels: *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*
Course Code: Literature 64
Instructor Name and Bio: Rebecca (Becky) Richardson
Rebecca Richardson received a Ph.D. in English from Stanford and is an Advanced Lecturer in the Program in Writing and Rhetoric. She has published articles on a range of 19th-century authors—from Jane Austen to Charles Dickens—and her most recent work is a book titled *Material Ambitions: Self-Help and Victorian Literature*.

Class Sessions and Recording
Meeting days and times: Tuesdays, 7:00 - 8:50 pm (PT). 6 weeks, September 27 - November 1
Meeting location: Zoom

The class sessions will be recorded. To get the most out of the course, I encourage participants to engage across formats as they work with their schedules from week to week. In addition to attending class live to be active parts of discussions and Q&A sessions, participants can also use our Canvas site to watch or revisit lectures, raise ideas in the discussion threads, and explore further readings and resources. In the past, courses have very much benefited from the collective wisdom of the class community, with participants sharing their reading responses and unique projects inspired by the novels we’re reading.

Course Features
- Live session
  - Lecture, discussions, and Q&A
  - Guest speaker on Gothic novels and the Minerva Press
  - An informal drop-in time for student Q&A
- Assignments & Coursework
  - Assignments and course materials posted in Canvas
  - Optional discussions in Canvas

Course Summary
In this course we will read the texts that have inspired and redirected the trajectory of the Gothic, science fiction, and horror genres. We will re-center the texts themselves, considering what exactly made these fictions so amenable and adaptable,
allowing them to become myths that transcended their original contexts and forms. No prior reading or experience required.

*Please see course page for full description and additional details.

**Grade Options and Requirements**

- **No Grade Requested (NGR)**
  - This is the default option. No work will be required; no credit shall be received; no proof of attendance can be provided.
- **Credit/No Credit (CR/NC)**
  - Students must attend and/or watch at least 5 out of 6 class sessions.
- **Letter Grade (A, B, C, D, No Pass)**
  - Students must attend and/or watch at least 5 out of 6 class sessions and complete 5 reading response papers (approx. 2 double-spaced pages each), which can respond to the weekly discussion questions or a prompt of the student’s own design.

*Please Note: If you require proof that you completed a Continuing Studies course for any reason (for example, employer reimbursement), you must choose either the Letter Grade or Credit/No Credit option. Courses taken for NGR will not appear on official transcripts or grade reports.

**Textbooks/Required Materials**


*Please note: you may choose to use a different edition, but these are the editions that we'll use to be “on the same page” with page number references and for supplementary/optional readings beyond the text itself. As you’ll see if you do look up and eventually purchase the Norton editions, they include a wealth of materials beyond just the texts of the novels, including contemporary reviews, excerpts from related texts for a sense of literary/cultural context, and modern critical interpretations.

**First Assignment**

Recommended but not required for first session (this info. is repeated below under “Week 1”): *Volume 1 of Frankenstein* plus optional, supplementary context about the novel’s origins - Mary Shelley’s introduction to the 1831 edition, Polidori’s account of the novel’s origins, and excerpts from Mary Shelley’s journal (p. 217-243 in the Norton edition).
Tentative Weekly Outline

Week 1 (Sept. 27): “Making the creature.” The context and catalyst for these classics of science fiction and horror, and an introduction to Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*.

Reading for today’s class: Volume 1 of *Frankenstein* (encouraged but not required); Vol. 1 runs through p. 62 of the Norton edition.

Optional reading for this class: Mary Shelley’s introduction to the 1831 edition, Polidori’s account of the novel’s origins, and excerpts from Mary Shelley’s journal (p. 217-243 in the Norton edition)

An introduction to the scientific and literary context of *Frankenstein* as well as to Mary Shelley and her most famous novel.

Themes to watch for: the role of philosophy, science, and literature; education and miseducation; frame narratives in literature and resulting effects (for suggesting parallels as well as for questioning subjectivity and reliability).

Week 2 (Oct. 4): “Making the monster.” The education and miseducation of the creature - and Shelley’s assemblage of the novel, making/re-making the Gothic, the creation myth, and modern science.

Reading for today’s class: Volume 2 of *Frankenstein* (through p. 110 in Norton ed.)

Optional reading to contextualize Shelley’s highly allusive text: Brief excerpts from Genesis and Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (p. 171-178 in the Norton edition); PBS’s “Mont Blanc,” description of the sea of ice, and “Mutability” (p. 204 - 209 in Norton edition); Coleridge’s *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (p. 184-203 in Norton edition).

An exploration into the literary and philosophical context behind Shelley’s depiction of the creature’s education and miseducation - and what exactly makes a “monster.” Including a guest lecture by Hannah Doherty Hudson, Associate Professor of English at Suffolk University and author of the forthcoming book from Cambridge University Press, *Romantic Fiction and Literary Excess in the Minerva Press Era*.

Themes to watch for: the power to create and its resulting responsibilities; growth and education; the role of family, society, and nature; ethics and the social contract; obedience and rebellion.

Week 3 (Oct. 11): “Who is the monster?” The conclusion of *Frankenstein*. Reading for today’s class: Volume 3 of *Frankenstein* (the final section of the novel).

The legacies and afterlives of Shelley’s questions in Frankenstein - a novel that has become a modern myth for the dangers of scientific advancements and unintended consequences.

Themes for the week: the power of creation and of rhetoric; scientific narratives, science fiction, and myth; reception and adaptation history.


Optional reading for more context and more vampires: brief excerpts from Emily Gerard’s Transylvania Superstitions (p. 347-354 in Norton edition) and from literary precursors (p. 355-367 in Norton edition).

From Shelley’s Frankenstein to Stoker’s Dracula via that Romantic ghost story competition during the “Year Without a Summer”: the literary and cultural context for creating the modern vampire from the stuff of folktales and superstition.

Themes for the week: From myth to modernity, from gothic settings to bustling London, from oral folktales to the technologies of the late-nineteenth-century novel.

**Week 5 (Oct. 25): Horror and social commentary in Dracula.**

Reading for today’s class: up to p. 208 in the Norton edition.

Even as Dracula depicts the fantastical, the novel also reflects and comments on real Victorian fears - from ideas about disease, to fears of sexuality, to racism and xenophobia.

Themes for the week: disease and contagion; gender and sexuality; race and racialized depictions; ideas about the domestic vs. the foreign or exotic.

**Week 6 (Nov. 1): Undead afterlives and the (horror) stories we tell ourselves.**

Reading for today’s class: complete Dracula.

Optional: For more on Dracula’s initial reception, “Reviews and Reactions” to Dracula (pages 395-406 in the Norton edition); for more on the critical reception over time, Jarlath Killeen’s “Stoker, Dracula, and the Critics” (pages 455-470 in the Norton edition)
With both these texts freshly read, how can we better understand why they spoke to their initial audiences - and how they still speak to us today?

Themes for our concluding discussion: the genres of the gothic, science fiction, and horror then and now; the development and evolution of myths; fearing the undead past and the advancements of the future.