

**Horror Appreciation House  
Program Proposal for the Academic 2011-2012 Year**

Program Directors:

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## **Overview:**

Do you like horror movies? Are you interested in the progression from early gothic horrors, to the gore fests and remakes we are presented with today? Then come join the Horror Appreciation House!

Horror is a fascinating genre. These movies serve as snapshots of the fears, hopes, and beliefs of our society. In the program we will explore horror as we survey the genre from its earliest contributions, to the films now in theaters. We will develop a thoughtful, considerate and accepting community as we discuss and learn about the films presented. Our interests will spread outside the program as we use our combined perspectives and opinions to develop a database of the films we watch available for the community.

## **Learning Objective 1**

Members will learn to be able to identify the major genres of horror, as well as their origins and key contributors. They will discuss the various genres and reflect on some of the commonalities. Portrayals of violence will be explored in tandem with advocacy against violence and education on its impacts.

### **Action Steps:**

- A) Throughout the semester, the house will showcase notable films from the various genres as well as accompanying presentations, and post-viewing discussions. A special public event will be held in November to examine the role of women in horror films with a particular emphasis on female empowerment in Buffy the Vampire Slayer. We will also hold a number of other special events, such as special Halloween showings, production workshops, and guest lectures. All showings will be open to the public, and we hope to more formally advertise the special events to enhance community involvement.
- B) Members will be part of a mailing list (and any interested parties), from which they will receive relevant information to the topic at hand, as well as articles and documentaries pertaining to the horror genre in general. Reading these documents will not be required but will be encouraged in order to promote productive and educational exchanges at meetings. From these discussions we hope to further our knowledge, and develop a more open mind in order to understand the issues related to the Horror genre; these issues range from violence and discrimination to communism and ethics.
- C) Guest lectures by students and faculty will be held, which will provide more authoritative looks into the genre. We have arranged for Professor Tony Magistrale to provide multiple lectures, covering the gothic horror genre, and

novelist Stephen King. Professor Jamie Williamson will also be presenting a lecture focusing on the sci-fi/horror author Ray Bradbury.

- D) Members will select and research a short story, film and/or genre of their choice and present their findings to the community at the end of each semester. Members will be expected to demonstrate an understanding of any social issues related to their selections.
- E) As a house, we will develop a database of horror film and literary horror reviews. Members of the house and interested members of the community will provide these reviews.

## **Learning Objective 2**

At the Horror Appreciation House, we know and understand that the horror genre is not merely a product of film; rather, these films find their roots in early literature and folklore. As such, we will extend our investigations to explore horror in novels and short stories as well as the legends and myths to which their common skeletal themes may have originated. This includes, defining literary devices unique to the horror genre, and the literary context in which the horror genre was birthed.

### **Action Steps**

- A) Throughout the semester members will be required to read several short stories, by parental figures of the horror genre. There will also be a list of suggested readings to be read, as members are able. Examples of literature we hope to address will be, but are by no means limited to:
  - a. Stephen King's, The Children of the Corn (1977)
  - b. Edgar Allen Poe's, The Masque of Red Death (1842)
  - c. H.P. Lovecraft's, The Tree (1921)
  - d. Ray Bradbury's, The Scythe (1943)
- B) Guided discussions will be held to cover various literary themes and horror themes found in assigned works. The context of the works will be explored as well as possible influences and bias of the author. Some of these discussions will be supplemented by lectures, given by UVM professors, on the material read.
  - a. Professor Tony Magistrale will provide an in depth look at the short story Children of the Corn, as well its author, Stephen King.
  - b. Professor Jamie Williamson will also give a lecture on author Ray Bradbury, and his own journey through the horror genre.

- C) Members are encouraged to recreate and utilize horrific literary themes in their own pieces to be shared with the community via the same means as the horror review database.
- D) There will be special meetings held to explore folklore and legends, which have relevance to the horror genre. This will be emphasized in collaborative efforts with the Mythology House and the Wilderness Adventure and Naturalist Skills house.

### **Learning Objective 3**

To broaden understanding of both the horror genre and beyond members will become well versed in the historical context of turning points in horror, on film and in a literary and legendary form. This includes identifying key figures and motivators of the horror genre, such as Alfred Hitchcock, and central events like the Cold War and the Industrial Revolution.

#### **Action Steps**

- A) Each discussion will include thorough exploration of context, regardless of topic piece. Members will be asked to recall their own knowledge which, when needed, will be supplemented by research from the program directors.
- B) Professor Tony Magistrale will give a presentation discussing Stephen King's short story Children of the Corn. In his presentation he will discuss the themes and influence of the Vietnam War in the story, as well as a general discussion on how history is represented in literature, even if it is not intentional.
- C) As a L/L community, we will examine horror media and use historical background to interpret its messages and themes. We believe that these media have multiple meanings and perspective can alter conclusions radically. Having diverse perspectives (historical, cinematic, social, etc.) within viewings of the horror genre will hopefully allow members to apply these techniques in everyday life.
- D) The program will work to promote awareness for violence against women. Horror films have often portrayed females as defenseless objects that need to be saved. As a house we will track the progression of the role of women in the content we view, as well as their place in society when the film or story was produced. This step will be taken further as we advocate for awareness, and volunteer at the women's center (Specific actions detailed in our Community Service Section) throughout the semester.

- E) At the end of the semester, when members give their presentations, they will be required to conduct research with regards to the historical context of the topic.
- F) The weekly mailing list will also include documents pertaining to the key events and history, which influenced the genre. These are documents will not be horror related and members will be encouraged to make connections to the horror genre on their own. We hope students will use this knowledge to enhance discussions.

#### **Learning Objective 4**

Horror films, and films in general, would be nothing without the technology and processes used to produce them. As such, we believe that no survey of the horror genre can truly be complete without looking at how they are made. As a house, we will explore the elements that go into the creation of a horror film; examples of topics will explore include music selection and/or creation, filmography, developing and procuring funding, effects and make-up artistry, as well screenwriting and casting.

#### **Action Steps**

- A) At weekly meetings, when films are shown, we will discuss their production, conception, and any specific issues such as production code and censorship.
- B) Among the supplementary materials mailed to members, we include information on the production films; this will include articles, documentaries, and interviews. These resources will be developed into a master list available for members who wish to further their own knowledge.
- C) In association with the UVM Film Club, members will be encouraged to participate in the UVM Film Festival, as well as to produce any film they wish with full support from program directors and members of the Horror Appreciation House. If members are interested, the house may choose to submit a group entry in the UVM Film Festival.
- D) As an optional project, members of the house will be encouraged to produce an informational blog-type media discussing various aspects of the horror genre (from literature, film, history, ethics and new events). This media will be educational materials that share our knowledge with the greater community. If media is presented in a video form, newly learned production methods should be utilized in its making.
- E) For those interested we will hold effect and make-up workshops in which we explore different techniques and effects used throughout the history of film making, with particular emphasis on those used in the horror genre. This will give members hands-on experience and understanding of what goes into

making a horror film. This event will be open to the community and will be collaboration with the proposed Tech-House.

### **COMMUNITY SERVICE:**

The Horror Appreciation House is committed to the practice of blood donation, and will support and promote any drives in the area.

Horror movies are a constant source of media violence and objectification of women. As such, we would like to dispel idea that these acts should be condoned. In order to operationalize this message we would like to give an informative presentation regarding the real issue of violence towards women in our society. This presentation would be held in the Fireplace Lounge, and will be open to the greater UVM community. We plan to follow the presentation with a showing of a horror movie (“Buffy the Vampire Slayer” (1992)), which promotes an empowered woman, prevailing as a hero rather than struggling as a victim. However this focus will not be a one-time event, as we, as a house, will track the changing role of women in the materiel viewed, as we work our way up through time, as well as their role in history at the period the media was produced.

We also hope to volunteer in a number of ways in order to directly help the cause against violence against women.

- As a house we will volunteer at the Vermont Mardi Gras Festival. This festival is celebrated every year, and all profits go towards the Women’s Rape Crisis Center
- All members will be required to submit to the Women’s center “Get Involved” listserv. The Center will e-mail students with volunteer opportunities as they arise, and all students will be required to attend one event per semester. If students wish to not submit their e-mails, we will have a posting of events as they are announced that both the house members, and UVM community can access.
- The Women’s Rape Crisis Center offers volunteer opportunities for students to serve as Crisis Hotline Support. The students will answer phones and act as councilors to callers. However, this program does require a time commitment of at least 20 hours for personnel training. Thusly this will not be a REQUIRED service but will be encouraged, and promoted as opportunities arise.

### **Planning Timeline:**

Please see attached Planning Timeline for a schedule detailing our program activities.

### **Program Advisor:**

The head of the English Department here at UVM, Professor Tony Magistrale, has agreed to act as our program advisor. His can be reached at [anthony.magistrale@uvm.edu](mailto:anthony.magistrale@uvm.edu). Professor Magistrale is a horror enthusiast who is well versed in the genre. He has written multiple books on the horror genre, with many focusing on the films and novels of American horror author Stephen King. Professor Magistrale has agreed to guest lecture on the genre throughout the year, covering topics on the gothic horror era, as well as the works of Stephen King.

### **Special Facilities:**

We request the use of a classroom in the Living Learning Complex equipped with a projector for showings. These showings will be weekly, and we hope to host our guest lectures in the same room if possible.

We would also request use of the fireplace lounge at some point so we can hold our “Violence Awareness” presentation and film showing.

### **Housing:**

We request two six or seven-person suites with co-ed rooming, though understand housing is limited and would be more than happy with one suite.

### **Plans For Interacting With Other L/L Programs:**

Given our accessible genre, we would like host a number of showings with different houses;

- Anime is a great form of media, and allows for many devices that we can't easily use in live-action films. As such, we would love to do some combined showings with Anime as an Art Form to display those devices, as well as the unique style of Japanese Horror.
- Horror films, especially those in the monster sub-genre deal largely with a deviation, or perversion of old mythos, and monsters the people of the time encounter. We would like to do some combined showings with the Mythology house in hopes to discuss both the themes of horror, as well as the accuracy of the mythos presented.
- A number of the language houses also allow for many opportunities to combine our interests and educational goals. Horror is a genre understood around the world, and as such every culture has its own interpretation and method of expressing the genre. By coordinating with the different language houses, we can select appropriate films that both promote the language and culture of the country, as well as serve to diversify our experience with the genre. As such, we hope to collaborate with Russian house in a showing of the film “Night Watch” (2004). This Russian film is one of the first blockbuster hits in horror to come from the country, and will provide a look into the diversity in films from other countries.
- An outdoor excursion with the Wilderness Adventure and Naturalist Skills house would provide a cross educational experience as members of our program can

- learn about the outdoors, while we can contribute to their knowledge of horror as we discuss the origins of the common campfire legends and terrors that lie in the skeletons of most horror films.
- We also plan to work with the proposed Tech-House, utilizing their mechanical knowledge to hold fun and educational events for not only our combined houses, but for the UVM community.
    - o In a public workshop, we hope to construct our own movie props, and experiment with technologies such as fake blood as well as look at the variety of technologies used to create the effects we see in film. We also hope to construct an early model of a camera using commonly found supplies.
    - o We also hope to do a combined showing of the film “2001: A Space Odyssey”. We hope to discuss the possibility of these complex machines, presented in the film, actually being created, and how far we are from such advances.

### **Program Member Recruitment:**

I have talked with several fellow students who are interested in the program. Their names are in the “Names of Students Interested in the Program” form attached. As a member of film club, and leader of the Horror Club, if accepted, I will advertize the program to both organizations. I will also request that Professor Magistrale offer the house to the students in his classes that deal with the horror genre, as well as any film courses.