RUSN 309: Dracula: The History and Depiction of the Vampire in the West
Dept. of Modern Languages and Literatures College of William & Mary
Instructor: John Lyles Class Time: MW: 2:00 – 3:20 Washington Hall: 312
Office Hours: MW: 3:30-4:30, or by appointment Office: Washington Hall 232
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Schedule of Readings/Screenings
Note: The following abbreviations will be used to indicate where the day’s reading is found.
BB = available on Blackboard.
Casebook = The Vampire: A Casebook, ed. by Alan Dundes
Film Screening = a portion of class will be allotted to screening the films we will discuss this semester. Whatever we do not watch in class, you will be responsible for watching for homework before the next class period. Films will be on reserve in Swem, although many can be found online.
Article = a presentation by two of your classmates. You will have the opportunity to sign up for an article as an individual or as a group. See below for more details.

Readings should be completed before the day scheduled and read in the order listed. Thus, for Monday, September 5th, you should read “The History of the Word Vampire” and then “Origins of the European Vampire.”

Aug. 29th: Introduction: Who are the Slavs? What is a vampire? Why vampires? Syllabus and course expectations

Sept. 3rd: “Dracula the Vampire” (BB)
John Polidori, “The Vampyre” (BB)

Sept. 5th: “The History of the Word Vampire” (Casebook)
“Origins of the European Vampire” (BB)

Sept. 10th: “The Vampire in Roumania” (Casebook)
“East European Vampires” (Casebook)
Article: “Heretics as Vampires and Demons in Russia”

Sept. 12th: “Slavic Testimony” (BB)
Begin reading for the first assignment, due September 24th.

Sept. 17th: Article: The Vampire Film, pages 53-95
Film Screening: Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horrors

Sept. 19th: Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horrors (discussion)
“South Slavic Countermeasures against Vampires” (Casebook)
“The Killing of a Vampire” (Casebook)

Sept. 24th: First assignment due
Ways of explaining the vampire: summary of “Vampires of Hungary, Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia” and “Modern Vampirism,” from *Vampires of the Slavs*

Real-life Vampires – Elizabeth Bathory, Peter Kurten, Richard Chase, Gilles de Rais (BB)

*The Psychotic Vampire* (BB)

**Sept. 26th:**  
Film Screening: *Dracula*

**Oct. 1st:**  
*Dracula* (discussion)

*Scientific Explanation of Vampires* – “Forensic Pathology and the European Vampire;”

**Oct. 3rd:**  
Vampires and Belief (BB)  
*AIDS and Vampires* (BB)  
Film Screening: *The Horror of Dracula*

**Oct. 8th:**  
*The Horror of Dracula* (discussion)  
*In Search of Dracula*, pages 1-60  
Vlad the Impaler

**Oct. 10th:**  
*In Search of Dracula*, pages 61-132  
Vlad the Impaler  
**Article:** On the Gothic (TBA)

**Oct. 15th:**  
FALL BREAK

**Oct. 17th:**  
*Varney the Vampyre, or, the Feast of Blood* and “Carmilla” (BB)  
**Second Assignment Due**

**Oct. 22nd:**  
“Carmilla” (BB)  
**Article:** *The Vampire Film*, pages 97-121  
Film Screening: *The Hunger* (1983)

**Oct. 24th:**  
*The Hunger* (discussion)  
**Article:** *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*, pages 59-73

**Oct. 29th:**  
*Dracula* (pages 1-74)  
**Article:** “Purity and Danger: *Dracula*, the Urban Gothic, and the Late Victorian Degeneracy Crisis”

**Oct. 31st:**  
*Dracula* (pages 75-160)  
**Article:** “Suddenly Sexual Women in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*” (Dracula)
Nov. 5th:  *Dracula* (pages 160-228)  
**Article:** “*Dracula: The Unseen Face in the Mirror*” (Dracula)

Nov. 7th:  *Dracula* (pages 229-327)  
**Article:** “The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization” (Dracula)

Nov. 12th:  Film Screening: *Bram Stoker’s Dracula*  
**Article:** *The Vampire Film*, pages 143-175

Nov. 14th:  *Bram Stoker’s Dracula* (discussion)

Nov. 19th:  *Interview with the Vampire*, pages 3-104

Nov. 21st:  THANKSGIVING BREAK

Nov. 26th:  *Interview with the Vampire*, pages 105-200  
**Article:** “Blood Relations: The Gothic Perversion of the Nuclear Family in Anne Rice’s *Interview with the Vampire*”

Nov. 28th:  *Interview with the Vampire*, pages 201-342  
Film Screening: *Interview with the Vampire*

Dec. 3rd:  *Interview with the Vampire* (discussion)  
The Vampire in Other Mediums (no reading)  
**Third Assignment Due**

Dec. 5th:  Conclusion

Dec. 13th:  FINAL EXAM, 2:00 – 5:00 PM

**PURPOSE OF THE COURSE**

This interdisciplinary course will examine the origins of the vampire in Slavic and European mythology, as well as trace the evolution of the vampire in both Russian, European, and American culture. We will base our discussion on folklore, history, literature, and film. Key questions will include: How has the vampire changed over time, space, and medium? Why has the image of the vampire endured? What makes it so appealing to generation after generation? What does our fascination with the vampire tell us about ourselves? About our own beliefs?

While the immediate goal of this course is to give you a deeper understanding of the vampire as we know it – its origin, evolution, and various forms; its defining traits, strengths, and weaknesses; and how and why people from Macedonia to California are and have been fascinated with the vampire – this course has several long-term goals, as
well. First, as we study the changing beliefs and assertions about the vampire, students will become aware of the fluidity and mutability of seemingly static and defined concepts. If the vampire, a being that evokes a very fixed image in most of our minds, has changed dramatically over a short 1000 years, what other beliefs and concepts that we hold sacred or as truth have changed just as radically since their first inception? Second, as we explore the many ways the vampire serves as a gateway into the taboo, what does our own interest in the undead say about ourselves and our own identity?

Third, and less abstract, through the three writing assignments (detailed below), students will hone both their critical thinking and writing skills as they analyze a variety of vampire tales in a variety of genres. Students will be expected to follow an analysis plan and then make observations and assertions about the primary sources they are working with. These observations and assertions will need to be supported by textual evidence and this support must be demonstrated in the assignments.

Fourth, the pair work on a secondary source serves a variety of important purposes that will prepare students for life outside of the college. First, you will need to work together with a partner to make and give a presentation before the class. Working with others not of your choosing is a skill that will serve students well. Similarly, presenting on a topic in front of an audience in a calm, coherent, and interesting manner is likewise an important skill to cultivate. Second, students will be required to take a lengthy and dense article, reduce it to its main points, summarize its main support, and then pose questions and critique it. Synthesizing a secondary source with your own knowledge and presenting it to others in an easily digestible way is a valuable skill for most jobs.

Finally, the goal of this course is to explore a topic that most everyone finds appealing and intriguing in a way that will be both academically rewarding and, to put it simply, fun. After all, we are talking about vampires here.