This course examines both the horror genre and the theoretical discourses that have emerged to explain it. Since issues surrounding sexuality have been central to both emphasis will be placed on questions of gender and representations of women.

We'll explore the various ways in which horror has been explained: as sexual initiation rites for a primarily male adolescent audience; as cathartic release analogous to the nightmare; as an ideological vehicle which functions primarily in the interests of patriarchal capitalism. Specifically feminist perspectives on horror contribute to an analysis of horror's generally monstrous treatment of women. We'll also consider horror in the context of recent contributions to the study of popular culture as "contested terrain".

Films will be drawn from "modern horror particularly the inheritors of PSYCHO and THE EXORCIST. This analysis will explore post-PSYCHO "family horror" with its representations of monstrous mothers, children and sometimes fathers, and consider the ways in which horror represents the family as both threatened and threat. Post-EXORCIST "body horror" will be used to consider representation of the gendered body. Here we'll explore such themes as monstrous female sexuality, the relationships between the body and technology, and horrific instances of reproduction, both organic and inorganic. We'll conclude with a consideration of the 'conditions' necessary for feminist, or at least woman-positive, horror.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Seminar Participation........................................15%
Mid-Term..........................................................20%
Final Essay......................................................35%
Take-Home Final Exam.........................................30%

THIS COURSE MAY BE USED AS 3 LOWER DIVISION CREDITS IN COMMUNICATIONS.