

First-Year Seminar Proposal 2018-2019

1. Course Department: French, Francophone, and Italian Studies

2. Faculty Member: Robert Sapp

3. First Year Seminar Title: Ghost Stories

4. Semester Offered: Fall '18 **X** **Spring '19**

Signature of Faculty Member

 Date: 1-23-18

Signature of Department Chair/ Program Director

 Date: 1-23-18

5. Course Description (Please limit to 120 words):

Note: This description is for the review committee and will also be used in the online FYE course listings.

This course turns a critical eye on the familiar figure of the ghost. We will explore, through a variety of media (traditional ghost stories, ghost tours, “eye-witness” encounters, cultural and religious practices with regard to the dead, and representations of ghost in literature and film) the figure of the ghost in an attempt to uncover a poetics of haunting, that is the unspoken rules that allow for something like the notion of a ghost to exist. Ultimately we will consider what the figure of the ghost and the notion of haunting reveals about humans and our relationship with death.

6. Suggested Peer Facilitator(s)?

- Please nominate a student(s) you believe will be a good role model for students in your FYE course. Nominees must be undergraduates in good academic standing.
- If you are teaching in the Fall, we will need a nominee by November 15th. If you are teaching in the Spring, we will need a nominee by March 15th.

7. How will you address FYE Learning Outcomes in your seminar?

The Synthesis Seminar, taught by a Peer Facilitator, will address and assess the first Learning Objective. First-Year Seminar courses are expected to incorporate aspects of Learning Objectives 2 and 3 as they relate to the particular discipline(s) that the seminar focuses on. *Beneath each Learning Objective, please provide information that indicates how these outcomes will specifically be addressed in the course, including the type of assignments that may be used and how these assignments will be assessed.* While a syllabus is not required for the proposal, a detailed description will greatly assist the Faculty review committee.

Learning Objective 1: Campus Resources

By the completion of their First-Year Experience course, a student will be able to...

- *Identify and use the appropriate academic resources and student support services at College of Charleston. These would include the library, information technology, the Center for Student Learning, the Career Center, and other appropriate academic resources, student support services, and cultural resources;*

Learning Objective 2: Information Literacy

By the completion of their First-Year Experience course, a student will be able to...

- *use appropriate tools and search strategies for identifying particular types of information specific to the discipline*
- *evaluate the relevance, quality, and appropriateness of different sources of information*
- *recognize and classify the information contained within a bibliographic citation.*
- *access and use information ethically and legally*

How will Learning Objective 2 be addressed in your course?

Starting from the first day, I will promote critical interest in the topic by asking students what questions they have and would like to have answered about ghosts. What are they? Where are they seen? What do they do? How do they act? Do all cultures have some form of ghost? When were the first ghostly encounters recorded?

Then ask students how they would answer these questions. Follow up with the initial search, presumably on websites, and ask students to evaluate the validity and relevance of what they find. Does it seem credible why? Why not?

This would be the moment to talk about how researchers answer questions in his/her respective fields. I would explain how my research in Francophone Postcolonial Studies is conducted and how initial questions develop and how researchers attempt to answer them interacting with scholarly articles and how I use databases in the library to identify these sources.

We would then take a tour of Addlestone Library and meet with a research specialist to discover the resources available at the library. We will devote one class meeting to a tour of Addlestone library exploring the research tools offered and taking part in a demonstration on how to access these tools. After this meeting students will understand the difference between primary and secondary sources, be able to locate these resources through databases, and make use of software such as Refworks that helps students compile a bibliography. Following the presentation by the librarian, the students will be given an assignment that asks them to identify five secondary sources relevant to ghosts and to compile them in a bibliography that adheres to MLA guidelines.

Later in the semester students will assess the quality of these sources through the creation of an annotated bibliography. To achieve this goal, I will talk to students about how to read scholarly texts to quickly grasp the main idea and evaluate its relevance. I will also encourage students to explain why a particular text might not be relevant to their interest in the topic.

However, scholarly articles will not be the only texts and we will talk about the different ways one reads and writes a journal article, a blog post, or relates an experience with a ghost (tells a ghost story). We will discuss reading strategies that help students identify the main idea of the text quickly so that they can then make a judgment as to whether or not it is applicable to their area of interest.

We will also take time to review the College's statement on plagiarism and look at some examples, identifying bad practices that students (and faculty!) may fall into and how to avoid them. To this end, I will show students how I note a text when I am reading for citations that I might use in a scholarly journal.

Learning Objective 3: Integrative Learning

Faculty will use writing, speech, or media in innovative ways to achieve integrative learning by students. By the completion of their First-Year Experience course, a student will be able to...

- *Use appropriate critical thinking skills and problem-solving techniques in appropriate*

disciplinary contexts

- *Make connections across disciplines and/or relevant experiences*

How will Learning Objective 3 be addressed in your course?

In my Introduction to Francophone Civilization course (FREN 326), I ask students to keep a viewing journal when they watch films. The aim here is to prevent them from slipping into the role of passive viewer and to develop their critical eye and an actively engaged critic.

Likewise, during the course of the semester I plan to schedule at least one ghost tour that we will attend as a class and analyze for genre norms. In class, before taking part in the tour, we would talk about our expectations. What would they expect to see while on the tour? How do they imagine a ghost tour to be conducted. Then during the tour, I will encourage students to resist the urge to be a passive viewer, but to take notes on the subject matter, the location, the ambiance, their feelings and how the story is related to break down the genre of the ghost tour and identify the practices that constitute the genre. Afterward, in class, we would discuss what makes a good ghost tour and how they might improve the tour in which we took part.

I will also have students consider the telling of a ghost story as a performative act. I will schedule a class meeting with colleagues in the theater department who would guide us on best practices in telling/performing a ghost story. We will watch examples of performances from storyteller conventions and analyses the elements of storytelling that the speakers effectively or ineffectively employ. I will ask students to record themselves and then offer a criticism of their own performance.

I would also like to reach out to colleagues in Religious Studies and Hispanic studies to lead a discussion on Haitian Vodou and *Dia de los muertos* respectively. This would occur during our segment on cultural practices with regard to death.

8. Please provide a list of 3-5 books and readings that would be appropriate for first-year students that you may use in your course. Briefly, describe the reasoning for your choices.

***A Christmas Carol*, Charles Dickens.** We will begin by considering this text's original title as it posits the centrality of ghosts: *A Christmas Carol in Prose, Being a Ghost-Story of Christmas*. The task here would be to examine this story with which students are presumably familiar, and analyze it from a critical perspective. For example: how does Dickens use ghosts as narrative devices in the novella?

***Hamlet and Macbeth*, William Shakespeare.** (extracts). Here the same idea as with *A Christmas Carol*: to uncover the important role ghosts play both within the narrative and as a means of propelling the narrative, in a story with which students may already be familiar. In both examples (Hamlet's father and the ghost of Banquo) ghosts serve as emissaries of vengeance. Again we will take a critical perspective, asking what rules/norms, if any, govern the behavior of ghosts in Shakespeare's text.

***Beloved.* Toni Morrison.** A more recent example of a ghost in literature that allows us to further the study of haunting in the context of the American South and slavery. Morrison's ghost is not that of an ancestor, but a descendant, a child murdered by her mother.

***13 Alabama Ghosts and Jeffrey.* Kathryn Tucker Windham** (extracts). We will examine these traditional stories both as genre studies but also as historical treatises. We will consider the importance of ghost stories as a performative art, but also an oral tradition.

***Charleston Ghosts.* Margaret Rhett Martin** Same as the Windham text, but this text will give us references, both historical and geographical, relevant to Charleston.

***The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory.* Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren** (extracts). This compendium of theoretical texts will come into play later in the semester and show students ways in which researchers and philosophers (ex. Agamben and Derrida) have examined ghosts as sites of critical inquiry.

9. Please describe what types of writing assignments (general or discipline-specific) might be incorporated into your course. We would encourage you to incorporate a variety of writing assignments into your courses. If you are planning to assign a larger research paper for the end of the course, we recommend scaffolding in pieces of the assignment throughout the semester. *Please indicate how these assignments would connect with your course material.*

Journal: Throughout the semester I will ask students to take part in this low-stakes writing assignment to emphasize expression over organization. I will assign them specific topics for reflection relevant to ghosts and haunting.

Reaction papers: More organized and formal than the journal writing, students will arrange their thoughts in a cohesive narrative that details their experience. This assignment will be employed after visiting a "haunted" site in Charleston or a local monument that embodies a spirit of the past.

Genre analysis: To encourage critical thinking, I will be asking student to view familiar items as cultural practices and as genre. This may begin with an activity like highlighting the genre norms that define an email or a text, then progressing to something more complex like a ghost story.

Peer evaluation: Turning the tables on student, allowing them to "grade" or evaluate the work of their peers will offer great insight into their own writing style. Before submitting any written assignment students will spend time offering anonymous feedback to their classmates

Scaffolded research project: This project will be more discipline specific. Students will learn the research practices associate with literary criticism and cultural studies. Beginning with a tour of the library, students will identify possibly secondary sources, organize them in a bibliography following MLA style, read and evaluate these sources in an annotated bibliography and ultimately present their findings to the class. This presentation will synthesize their own reactions/ideas with those of experts in the field of their chosen study relevant to this course.

