

**FSSY 1850:**                   **Encountering the Uncanny**  
**Instructor:**               James Newlin                   **Term:**                   Fall 2017  
**Times:**                    MW 8:00 – 9:15 a.m.           M 12:45 – 2:00 p.m. (“Fourth Hour”)  
**Classroom:**             Clark Hall 205 (MW 8 a.m.)   Thwing 201 (4h)  
**Email:**                    jtn33@case.edu               **Website:** <http://www.jamesnewlin.com>  
**Office Hours:**         By appointment via the WRC website at: <https://case.mywconline.com/> or  
by e-mail.

### **Course Description and Objectives:**

Have you ever experienced *déjà vu*? Or, have you stepped into a room and felt as though it was a little *too* quiet? Have you ever mistaken a stranger for a close friend or relative? Are you creeped out by extremely life-like dolls or robots? If so, you may have felt a sense of the unsettling combination of familiarity and strangeness known as the uncanny. Most of us have experienced the uncanny at one time or another, yet psychologists, philosophers, literary critics, and scientists have been unable to fully explain how or why it happens. In this seminar, we will explore this interdisciplinary conversation, reading analyses of the uncanny by figures such as Sigmund Freud and the roboticist Masahiro Mori, and by exploring its representation in literature, contemporary art, and horror films. Why has the uncanny intrigued so many thinkers? Is one academic discipline better suited to exploring the uncanny than others? Most importantly, what can we learn about ourselves when we study the uncanny? By looking closely at examples of the uncanny, we will attempt to unearth the personal and cultural anxieties at the root of this experience of fear or unease.

### **Required Course Texts:**

Graff, Gerald and Cathy Birkenstein. *They Say, I Say*. Third edition. ISBN: 9780393935844

Various articles, handouts, etc. available via class list-serv and Google Drive.

*NB: You must use **print**, i.e. not digital/tablet/etc., editions of these texts!* This includes the materials provided on Google Drive or *via* e-mail, which *must be printed out*.

### **Participation and Attendance**

This course is a seminar and requires careful reading of a number of texts, which will be discussed in detail in class sessions. Students must come prepared to discuss the assignments (assignments read, with annotations in the course text or on a separate outline, etc.). Everybody is expected to speak during every class period – if you do *not* speak up in class, you may be marked absent.

Dr. N does not distinguish between “excused” and “unexcused” absences. Excessive absences (i.e. more than four class periods) will affect your final grade. Generally, five or more absences will result in a grade penalty of one letter grade. If you are aware of any reason why you will miss more than four class periods, please contact Dr. N within the first week of class.

### **Classroom Behavior**

Please keep in mind that students come from diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Some of the texts we will discuss and write about engage controversial topics and opinions. I

absolutely require that you demonstrate respect for your classmates and for ideas that may differ from your own. Our goal is for dialogue to occur, not conflict or proselytizing.

### **Late Work and Revision Policy**

Late work will generally be penalized by a letter grade per calendar day. I do not accept work submitted over a week after the due date. If you anticipate that a paper will be late, email me *immediately* to make arrangements to submit your paper as soon as you can, lest too many penalties accrue. I do not accept late quizzes, in-class writing assignments, or “minor” writing assignments such as the abstract/proposal or “selfie” assignments.

During the course of the semester, you may rewrite one individual assignment of your choosing, after discussing the matter with me during office hours. (Your new grade, *which may be lower than the original grade*, will replace the previous one.) In addition to the revised project, you must also write a one-page memo addressed to me in which you detail what, how, and why you’ve revised. You must also attach the original, graded project with my annotations. There is no re-write option for quizzes, presentations, or the annotated bibliography and abstract assignments. Exceptions will be made for documented medical emergencies or ongoing medical conditions, religious observance, etc.

### **Special Accommodations**

Students who require special accommodations for test-taking, presentations, etc., are requested to contact Educational Services for Students (470 Sears Building, 216-368-5230, [essinfo@case.edu](mailto:essinfo@case.edu)). All personal information shared with the office of disability resources will remain confidential, but the professor will be instructed on what specific accommodations the student requires.

### **Format Guidelines**

All essays must follow MLA guidelines. Additionally, they must be typed, printed in black ink, double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font or equivalent; one inch margins, stapled, numbered pages with your name, course, and section number at the top of the page. Also, unless requested specifically by the instructor, all papers *must be handed in as paper copies*. ***Electronic submissions will not be accepted.***

### **Electronic Devices**

Unless otherwise instructed by Dr. N, you are *not* permitted to use lap-tops, tablets, or cell-phones. The use of these devices distracts your instructor and your fellow classmates, and it is an inefficient way to take notes. (See Robinson Meyer’s essay “To Remember a Lecture Better, Take Notes By Hand” on Dr. N’s personal website.) You are expected to take notes in a notebook.

### **Syllabus**

Depending on time constraints, availability of readings, and other factors, the instructor may alter the syllabus during the semester. Students will be given ample notice of such alterations. Alterations will be distributed to students *via* e-mail.

## Plagiarism

You commit plagiarism when you present the ideas or words of someone else as your own. You commit plagiarism if you use without crediting the source:

- a) any part of another person's essay, speech, or ideas
- b) any part of an article in a magazine, journal, newspaper, any part of a book, encyclopedia, online www. page, etc.
- c) any idea from another person or writer, even if you express that idea in your own words.
- d) any part of *your own* work submitted to another class.

Important tip: *There should never be a time when you copy and paste something from the Internet and do not provide the exact location from which it came.* All acts of plagiarism will result in failure of the assignment and may result in failure of the entire course. Plagiarism can occur even without any intention to deceive if the student fails to know and employ proper documentation techniques. Unless otherwise indicated by the instructor for class group work, all work must be your own. Please consult CWRU's academic integrity policy here:

<https://goo.gl/uS0QVT>

## Writing Assignments and Grading Criteria

*Diagnostic Writing Assignment – Observer Review* (2 pages) 5% of final grade

Write a short essay reviewing a recent film, album, book, or concert. You must write your review as though it could be published in *The Observer*, the CWRU student newspaper. You should consult a copy of *The Observer* before you begin writing your review. Consider this audience as you draft and complete your review. You will be evaluated on how persuasive your piece is, and by how well you address this particular audience. This first essay will provide a basic impression of your writing style and skills and will be a starting point for the semester. It is complemented by the “reflective” assignment (see below).

*Observer Review Reflective Assignment* (1 page) 4% of final grade

In addition to the movie review assignment, you must also submit a separate, brief reflection on the choices that you made as an author. Read through examples of reviews published in *The Observer*. Identify an example of a specific rhetorical technique, formal choice, or stylistic feature from one of those reviews. Identify a moment in your own review where you made a similar choice. Why did you make the choices that you did when you wrote your review for this audience?

*The “They Say, I Say” Paper* (3 pages) 12% of final grade

Drawing upon the templates in *They Say, I Say*, write an analysis of Jordan Peele's film *Get Out*, focusing on a single detail or motif from the film, clarifying why the film is or is not uncanny. You must also cite either Jentsch, Freud, or Wood. Possible claims include: the film is uncanny according to Jentsch's definition, but not Freud's; the film is not uncanny, but it is a progressive horror film; the film is uncanny, but it is also reactionary; and so forth.

*The “So What?” Paper* (3 pages) 12% of final grade

Write a close analysis of one of the objects we have considered in readings, in class, or in one of the fourth hours: e.g. one of the robots from the CWRU lab, one of the artworks in Mike Kelley's *Uncanny* exhibition, a film at the Cinemateque, *et cetera*. Citing at least one of the

course readings, argue that object is uncanny – and why that matters. You should draw upon the templates in chapters 7 and 10 of *They Say, I Say*.

*Timed Writing Assignment (75 minutes)*

6% of final grade

Later in the semester, you will be provided with an essay prompt regarding the “class’s choice” text/film. You will have 75 minutes to complete your essay, to be completed either in class, during the fourth hour, or at home.

*Panel Proposal (1 page)*

5% of final grade

Many academic conferences require panel coordinators to submit a formal summary, or abstract, of the project. Working with your group members, prepare a single-paged proposal abstract of your panel, summarizing your projects and clarifying the theme or “purpose” of the overall panel. (Hint: review *TSIS* chapter seven). It may be helpful to think of the proposal assignment as a “promo” or advertisement for your final projects. Advice on how to plan a conference panel can be found here: <https://goo.gl/SPwH7g> and advice on how to prepare a paper abstract, as well as examples, can be found here: <http://goo.gl/DJcJxR>

*Final Paper (5 pages) + Academic Conference Panel*

15% of final grade

For the class’s final activity, we will put on a three-day long academic conference. Working with a group of two or three partners, prepare an academic panel *ala* those you have seen while attending the English department colloquia or other intellectual events on (or off) campus. Each member of the panel must present an individual paper fitting within the stated theme of the panel. You are welcome to use audio-visual equipment. Your panel must have a moderator and a question-and-answer session.

In addition to your presentation, you must submit an individual, five-paged paper related to the topic of the uncanny. (NB: you may have to abbreviate your full five-paged paper for the panel presentation). You are allowed to write about any subject matter you choose, provided you address the theme of the uncanny. Your paper must cite at least one outside, academic source that you accessed using the research techniques addressed during our class’s library visit.

*Writing Folder (~20 pages)*

15% of final grade

In lieu of a final exam, prepare a writing folder comprised of each paper completed for the class. The writing folder is meant to be a rehearsal of the writing portfolio, which you will submit upon completion of your second university seminar next year. One of these assignments must be significantly revised (i.e. at least 40% new material). Be sure to include the original draft (or a Xeroxed copy thereof) with your instructor’s markings, for comparison. Prepare a single-paged memo indicating the changes that you made, your reasoning for those changes, arguing why you believe the paper has been improved.

In addition to these documents, you must also provide a two-paged self-assessment, in which you reflect upon your development as a writer throughout the course of the semester. Review all of the written work you have completed for this course, and consider the comments from your instructor and peers. Some questions to consider: what patterns have emerged from your writing? What goals do you have as a writer? How will you continue to strengthen your effectiveness? What strengths have you demonstrated this semester? What weaknesses? How have you tried to

use feedback from your instructor and peers to improve your writing? What aspects of the writing process have you struggled with and why?

*Presentation on an Example of the Uncanny*

10% of final grade

Once during the semester, working alone or with a partner, you will be required to deliver a roughly ten-minute long presentation to the class, in which you will introduce us to an example of the “uncanny” from your own reading, personal interests, or other coursework. Examples might be from music, architecture, philosophy, mathematics, dance, film, television, and so on. Your presentation should summarize the performance or text from a critical perspective – why is this an example of the uncanny, according to which definition, and why does that matter? Ideally, your presentation should help shape the class’s discussion of our course material. Your presentation should include a multimedia component.

*“Selfies” and Fourth Hour Event Attendance*

6% of final grade

In addition to a handful of required “fourth hour” events—movie screenings, the Choices Fair, guest lecturers, etc.—our class will have the opportunity to attend several artistic and intellectual events and performances this semester, both on-campus and off. You are required to attend three of these events. You are also responsible for recording your own attendance. At each event you attend, take a “selfie” of yourself standing next to the event poster, holding the event program, etc. (Extra credit for creativity!) At the end of the semester, send a *single* e-mail to Dr. N, listing the events that you attended, and with these selfies attached.

Dr. N has listed a number of possible events or performances that you may attend—including colloquium sessions, lectures, and conferences—on the syllabus. You are also welcome (and encouraged!) to visit any of University Circle’s cultural resources for credit for this assignment, such as the Cleveland Botanical Garden, the Dittrick Medical History Center and Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art – Cleveland, or the Cleveland Museum of Art. (FYI – the CMA is hosting a special exhibit of Yayoi Kusama’s *Infinity Mirrors* installation, which would be of particular interest to our class!).

Dr. N is happy to arrange for transportation and tickets to any of the listed events (or a relevant event that may *not* be listed) provided there is enough interest and advanced notice. If you are aware of a cultural event or resource that may be of interest to the class, alert Dr. N!

*Class Participation*

10% of final grade

Students are to complete all assignments in advance, to take notes on the assigned readings, and to be able to discuss the readings in class. To receive full credit for class participation, students must participate in class frequently, thoughtfully, and voluntarily. Pop quizzes will be assigned on an as-needed basis. If in-class discussions are energetic, thoughtful, and demonstrate that students are completing the reading adequately, quizzes may not be necessary. As a result, it is in every student’s best interest to actively participate and contribute during class time!

*NB:* It is the student’s responsibility to keep track of his or her progress in the course. Hold on to your graded assignments and use them to gauge your “current” grade in the course.

## Class Schedule

NB: "TSIS" refers to readings from *They Say, I Say*. All other readings available on class list-serve or Google Drive.

WEEK 1	8/27 – 8/31
M	Course intro. Watch <i>Twilight Zone</i> episode "The Dummy" or "The Living Doll"
M (4th)	Optional fourth hour. Discuss diagnostic writing assignment, watch <i>Simpsons</i> "Treehouse of Horror" spoof of "The Living Doll," etc.
W	<b>Reading due:</b> <i>TSIS</i> introduction, "Creepy Clowns" by Eberle, and "My Son is Afraid..." by Hills. <i>Highly recommended but not required reading:</i> <i>TSIS</i> chapter 12 ("Entering Class Discussion") Discuss diagnostic assignment.
F	<i>Optional selfie event:</i> English department colloquium.

WEEK 2	9/3 – 9/7
M	No class. Go to the beach!
W	<b>Reading due:</b> <i>TSIS</i> chapter 14 ("Reading for the Conversation") and Jentsch "On the Psychology of the Uncanny."
F	<b>Review and Reflection essays due.</b> Submit hard copies to Dr. N's mailbox on the second floor of Guilford House by 2 p.m. <i>Optional selfie event:</i> Lecture by Jonathan Culler, Tinkham Veale Senior Classroom, 3:15.

WEEK 3	9/10 – 9/14
M	<b>Reading due:</b> Freud, "Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through" and Camden, "The Past Is a Foreign Country" Guest lecture by Valentino Zullo.
M (4th)	
W	<b>Reading due:</b> Hoffmann, "The Sandman." Finish discussing Jentsch.
TBD	<b>Fourth Hour Activity:</b> Go as a class to see <i>The Woman in Black</i> in Playhouse Square between 9/15-10/7. Will arrange specific performance together as class.

WEEK 4	9/17 – 9/21
M	<b>Reading due:</b> Freud, "The Uncanny," pt. 1.
M (4th)	
W	<b>Reading due:</b> Freud, "The Uncanny," pt. 2.
F	<i>Optional selfie event:</i> English colloquium "roundtable" session: "The Way We Write Now." (It is <i>highly</i> encouraged that you attend this event, since it will closely resemble the format of the conference panels of your final assignment).

	<i>Optional selfie event:</i> Cleveland Orchestra performs “Swan Lake” at Severance Hall.
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WEEK 5	9/24 – 9/28
M	<b>Reading due:</b> Freud, “The Uncanny,” pt. 3. Discuss presentation assignments. Begin <i>Get Out</i> (2007, dir. Peele)?
M (4th)	Begin/Finish <i>Get Out</i> (2007, dir. Peele)
W	<b>Reading due:</b> Wood, “Introduction to the American Horror Film.” Finish <i>Get Out</i> . Discuss <i>Get Out</i> and Wood. <i>Optional selfie event:</i> Judy Bloom speaks at Maltz Performing Arts Center.
T	<i>Optional selfie event:</i> Cleveland Orchestra performs Prokofiev and Bartok.
F	<b>Presentation topics due to Dr. N by e-mail, 2 p.m.</b> <i>Optional selfie event:</i> Writing Resource Center workshop (“Beyond the Five Paragraph Essay”), Bellflower Hall. <i>Optional selfie event:</i> Craig Lucas’s <i>Reckless</i> , at the Eldred Theater (until 10/7)

WEEK 6	10/1 – 10/6
M	Guest lecture from Bill Doll and Sarah de Swart.
M (4th)	Picnic! Finish discussing <i>Get Out</i> and horror. <i>Recommended but not required reading:</i> Clover, “Her Body, Himself”
T	<b>Extra credit.</b> E-mail the first two paragraphs of your “They Say”/ <i>Get Out</i> paper to Dr. N by 3 p.m.
W	<b>Reading due:</b> <i>TSIS</i> chapters 4 and 5 (“Three Ways to Respond” and “Distinguishing What You Say from What They Say”). Writing instruction. Crafting a thesis. Workshop first two paragraphs of “They Say”/ <i>Get Out</i> paper. <i>Optional selfie event:</i> Lecture by Elina Gertsman, “Ex nihilo/In nihilum: Contending with Medieval Void”
F	<b>Required.</b> Attend choices fair. <i>Optional selfie event:</i> Cleveland Orchestra performs Mahler, Symphony no. 2.
S	Email 150-200 words re: the Choices Fair to Dr. N. <i>Optional selfie event:</i> Cleveland Opera Theater performs <i>The Barber of Seville</i> , at Maltz Performing Arts Center.

WEEK 7	10/8 – 10/12
M	Robotics and the Uncanny Valley. <b>Reading due:</b> Mori “The Uncanny Valley.”
M (4th)	Visit Robotics lab.
W	Discuss Mori and the lab visit. Review critiques of Mori in class.

	<i>Optional selfie event:</i> Chekhov's <i>The Seagull</i> at Cleveland Playhouse.
F	<b>"They Say, I Say"/Get Out Paper due.</b> Submit hard copies to Dr. N's mailbox on the second floor of Guilford House by 2 p.m.

WEEK 8	10/15 – 10/19
M	The Uncanny and Identity. <b>Reading due:</b> excerpt from Kristeva, <i>Strangers to Ourselves</i> . Read excerpt from Bhabha, "The World and The Home" in class.
M (4th)	Meet at KSL. Introduction to library resources by Mark Eddy.
T	<i>Optional selfie event:</i> Lecture by Robert Bullard, "The Quest for Environmental and Climate Justice: Why Race and Place Still Matter."
W	<b>Reading due:</b> Gozlan "The Transsexual's turn," <i>TSIS</i> chapters 6 and 7 ("Planting a Naysayer" and "Saying Why It Matters"). Discuss "So What?" paper. <b>Presentations.</b>
F	Nominations for <b>Class's Choice</b> activity due, email to Dr. N by 2 p.m. Some suggestions: go to a haunted house, go see a scary movie at the Cinemateque, go see Annie Baker's <i>John</i> at the Dobama Theater, pot-luck and watch a movie at Dr. N's (such as Alex Garland's <i>Ex Machina</i> or <i>Annihilation</i> ), read Henry James's <i>The Turn of the Screw</i> , etc.

WEEK 9	10/22 – 10/26
M	No class. Fall break.
W	<b>Reading due:</b> <i>TSIS</i> chapter 8 ("Connecting the Parts") + OWL Purdue handout. Writing instruction on rhetorical appeals. <b>Presentations.</b>
F	Class's choice votes <b>due</b> to Dr. N by email, 2 p.m. Rank your top 3 choices. <i>Optional selfie event:</i> Writing Resource Center workshop ("Considering The Source: Using Evidence Effectively") at Bellflower Hall. <i>Optional selfie event:</i> <i>The Lodger</i> at Severance Hall.

WEEK 10	10/29 – 11/2
M	The Uncanny and the Visual Arts. <b>Reading due:</b> Excerpts from Mike Kelley <i>The Uncanny</i> exhibit catalog. Read Kelley's new introduction and "Playing With Dead Things" pieces. All other intro pieces are optional. Identify three-to-four of your favorite (or least favorite) pieces from the exhibition to discuss in class. (NB: you do not have to print out the images, but please print out the Kelley essays and bring them to class for discussion)
M (4th)	



T	<b>Extra credit.</b> E-mail the first two paragraphs of your “So What?” paper to Dr. N by 3 p.m. <i>Optional selfie event:</i> Lecture by Cara Byrne, “Why Black and Not Blue?: Revising and Reimagining Children’s Picture Books” in Clark Hall, 4:30 p.m.
W	<b>Reading due:</b> <i>TSIS</i> chapter 7 <i>again</i> . Writing instruction. Workshop first two paragraphs of “So What?” paper. <b>Presentations.</b>
F	<b>“So What?” Paper due.</b> Submit hard copies to Dr. N’s mailbox on the second floor of Guilford House by 2 p.m.
TBD	<b><i>Class’s choice fourth hour activity.</i></b>

WEEK 11	11/5 – 11/9
M	Discuss class’s choice.
M (4th)	Screening of class’s choice?
W	Continue to discuss class’s choice. <b>Presentations.</b>
F	<i>Optional selfie event: The Drowsy Chaperone</i> opens at Eldred Theater (until 11/16)
S	<i>Optional selfie event: Cleveland Orchestra</i> performs Debussy, etc. at Severance Hall.

WEEK 12	11/12 – 11/16
M	Last day to discuss class’s choice (if necessary). Discuss final project and conference panels. Writing instruction: how to draft an abstract or proposal. <b>Presentations.</b>
M (4th)	Timed writing assignment for class’s choice (either during class or at home).
T	<b>Extra Credit.</b> Email a formal paper abstract, describing your final project, to Dr. N by 3 p.m.
W	<b>Reading due:</b> <i>TSIS</i> chapters 9 and 10 (“Voice” and “Metacommentary”). Writing instruction. Discuss final papers, workshop abstracts.
F	<b>Panel proposal due.</b> Email to Dr. N by 3 p.m.

WEEK 13	11/19 – 11/23
S	<b>Extra credit.</b> Email the first two paragraphs of your final paper to Dr. N by 3 p.m.
M	<b>Reading due:</b> <i>TSIS</i> chapter 11 (“Using the Template to Revise”). Writing instruction. Review paper drafts. Discuss writing folders and reflection essays.
M (4th)	
W	No class.

	<i>Optional selfie event:</i> Georgia O'Keefe exhibit at the Cleveland Museum of Art.
F	<i>Optional selfie event:</i> Cleveland Orchestra performs Vivaldi's <i>Four Seasons</i> at Severance Hall.

WEEK 14	11/26 – 11/30
M	Work with your group. Consult with Dr. N regarding final panel projects.
M (4th)	<b>Conference day one!</b>
W	<b>Conference day two!</b>
F	<b>Individual final papers due.</b> Submit hard copies to Dr. N's mailbox on the second floor of Guilford House by 2 p.m. <i>Optional selfie event:</i> Langston Hughes's <i>Black Nativity</i> at Karamu Theater (until 12/30).

WEEK 15	12/3 – 12/7
M	<b>Conference day three!</b>
M (4th)	Additional conference panels? Meet with Dr. N to discuss final writing folders.
W	<b>Selfies due.</b> Email to Dr. N by 2 p.m. Course evals, wrapping up.

WEEK 16	12/10 – 12/14
M	<b>Writing folders due.</b>