



Course Name

ENGL 4260:002 / Black Monsters: The Posthuman in Black Speculative Fiction

Course Description

What does it mean to be a monster—and who decides that, anyway? Is monstrosity innate—in other words, are monsters born that way? Or are monsters created, coming into being because of the way they are seen or imagined to be? How do monsters relate to human beings and other nonhuman animals? What does it mean to be posthuman or nonhuman? Do monsters have an identity or culture? How have Black writers, filmmakers, and artists imagined monsters and monstrosity? Why would Black folk, who have suffered centuries of dehumanization, *choose* to identify as monsters? Why would *anyone* want to be a monster? In this course, we're going to be reading and watching speculative narratives—fantasy, science fiction, and horror—that asks us to reimagine what it means to be human, how and why beings become or are monsters, and how we can make and form ethical and meaningful connections with one another in a world of radical differences. We will be reading theory, criticism, fiction, comic books, and watching film in order to better understand why the figure of the monster has so continuously captivated the Black imaginary. This course will help you focus and develop your writing and critical thinking abilities. You will complete film worksheets, critical annotations, a zine, two keyword maps, an annotated bibliography; and an unessay.

Course Structure

This 16-week course is face-to-face. The course is organized around five modules: Monster Theory; Monster Slayer I: Black Folk vs. Zombies; The Modern Black Prometheus; Monster Slayer II: Black Folk vs. the KKK; and Black Immortality and the Living Blood. Each module consists of a selection of literature, film, and secondary sources. The structure of the course is recursive and static—each week you will read the assigned work, complete the assignments, attend class, and participate in class discussion.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Describe major themes in African American primary source documents (film, literature, media) and culture.
2. Analyze secondary source criticism and critical theory.
3. Critique and interpret primary source documents using a wide range of different secondary sources.
4. Compose your own analysis and criticisms of primary source docs using secondary source criticism.
5. Produce analysis in various forms (research; writing exercises; class discussion; concept mapping; creative projects).

Materials

You are free to purchase any edition of these texts. Though you may choose to listen to an audiobook or use an e-book, this semester I am asking that you purchase a real book and bring it with you to class. You are responsible for streaming the films on your own (if there is sufficient student interest, we will host live film screenings on campus).

Books

- Justina Ireland, *Dread Nation*
- Victor LaValle, *Destroyer*
- P. Djèlí Clark, *Ring Shout*
- Jewelle Gomez, *The Gilda Stories*

Films

- *Frankenstein* (dir. Guillermo del Toro, 2025)
- *Blackenstein* (dir. William A. Levey, 1973)
- *The Angry Black Girl and Her Monster* (dir. Bomani J. Story, 2023)
- *Get Out* (dir. Jordan Peele, 2017)
- *Queen of the Damned* (dir. Michael Rymer, 2002)
- *Blacula* (dir. William Crain, 1972)
- *Ganja & Hess* (dir. Bill Gunn, 1973)
- *Blade* (dir. Stephen Norrington, 1998)
- *Sinners* (dir. Ryan Coogler, 2025)

Course Philosophy

In this course there will be no surprises—what you see is what you get! I firmly believe that it is my job to create conditions for each of you to pass this course, to learn something, and to be encouraged. I know how difficult it can be for you to complete assignments, keep up with all of your courses, make it to work, and also make certain that you have time decompress by yourself and with others. The goal of this course is not to become masters—of monsters, of the

horror cinema, of Black speculative fiction, or any other form of knowledge. Rather, the goal of this course is provide you with new ways of thinking about US American literature and culture.

Technical Requirements & Skills

Minimum Technology Requirements

- Computer
- Reliable internet access
- Microsoft Office Suite
- [Canvas Technical Requirements](#)

Computer Skills & Digital Literacy

- Using Canvas and email
- Using Canva or other graphic design software
- Uploading documents or attachments to email
- Downloading and installing software
- Using presentation and graphics programs

Getting Help

Technical Assistance

Part of working in the online environment involves dealing with the inconveniences and frustration that can arise when technology breaks down or does not perform as expected. Here at UNT we have a Student Help Desk that you can contact for help with Canvas or other technology issues.

UIT Help Desk: [UIT Student Help Desk site](http://www.unt.edu/helpdesk/index.htm) (<http://www.unt.edu/helpdesk/index.htm>)

Email: helpdesk@unt.edu

Phone: 940-565-2324

In Person: Sage Hall, Room 130

Walk-In Availability: 8am-9pm

Telephone Availability:

- Sunday: noon-midnight
- Monday-Thursday: 8am-midnight
- Friday: 8am-8pm
- Saturday: 9am-5pm

Laptop Checkout: 8am-7pm

For additional support, visit [Canvas Technical Help](https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10554-4212710328)
(<https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10554-4212710328>)

Student Support Services

UNT provides mental health resources to students to help ensure there are numerous outlets to turn to that wholeheartedly care for and are there for students in need, regardless of the nature of an issue or its severity. Listed below are several resources on campus that can support your academic success and mental well-being:

- [Student Health and Wellness Center](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center>)
- [Counseling and Testing Services](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services>)
- [UNT Care Team](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care>)
- [UNT Psychiatric Services](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center/services/psychiatry) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center/services/psychiatry>)
- [Individual Counseling](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services/services/individual-counseling) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services/services/individual-counseling>)

Other student support services offered by UNT include

- [Registrar](https://registrar.unt.edu/registration) (<https://registrar.unt.edu/registration>)
- [Financial Aid](https://financialaid.unt.edu/) (<https://financialaid.unt.edu/>)
- [Student Legal Services](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-legal-services) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-legal-services>)
- [Career Center](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/career-center) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/career-center>)
- [Multicultural Center](https://edo.unt.edu/multicultural-center) (<https://edo.unt.edu/multicultural-center>)
- [Counseling and Testing Services](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services) (<https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services>)
- [Pride Alliance](https://edo.unt.edu/pridealliance) (<https://edo.unt.edu/pridealliance>)
- [UNT Food Pantry](https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources/food-pantry) (<https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources/food-pantry>)

Academic Support Services

- [Academic Resource Center](https://clear.unt.edu/canvas/student-resources) (<https://clear.unt.edu/canvas/student-resources>)
- [Academic Success Center](https://success.unt.edu/asc) (<https://success.unt.edu/asc>)
- [UNT Libraries](https://library.unt.edu/) (<https://library.unt.edu/>)
- [Writing Lab](http://writingcenter.unt.edu/) (<http://writingcenter.unt.edu/>)
- [MathLab](https://math.unt.edu/mathlab) (<https://math.unt.edu/mathlab>)

Course Requirements

In this course you will complete periodical film worksheets and critical annotations of our assigned readings. You will complete five end-of-module projects, designed to stress creativity, adaptability, and information-processing: a zine, two keyword maps, an annotated bibliography, and an unessay.

| Assignment | Points Possible | Percentage of Final Grade |
|---|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Film Worksheet | 10 points (9) | 9% |
| Critical Annotation | 25 points (8) | 20% |
| Project One: Monster Theory Zine | 100 points | 10% |
| Project Two: Keyword Monster Map I | 100 points | 10% |
| Project Three: Annotated Bibliography, Frankenstein-Style | 100 points | 10% |
| Project Four: Keyword Monster Map II | 100 points | 10% |
| Project Five: Monster Unessay | 100 points | 10% |
| Class Attendance | 210 points | 21% |
| Total Points Possible | 1000 points | 100% |

Course Policies

Assignment Policy

All of the information you need for each assignment will be posted to Canvas. Occasionally the university will perform maintenance—if this schedule makes it impossible or difficult for you to get your work submitted on time I will always make accommodations for you. There are other problems that might arise on your end with accessing Canvas or the UNT system. Report any problems you have to me immediately and contact the UNT Student Help Desk:

helpdesk@unt.edu or 940.565.2324 and obtain a ticket number. The UNT Student Help Desk will work with the student to resolve any issues as soon as possible.

Instructor Responsibilities and Feedback

- It is my responsibility to help you grow and learn; to provide clear instructions for all assignments; to answer your questions about assignments; to provide you with guidance in understanding course materials; to review and update course content; and to grade your work.
- I will grade your assignments within 14 days of receiving them. I will provide feedback for all of your work in Canvas.

GenAI Policy

In this course, the use of GenAI tools is not permissible. No matter the approach, any attempt to represent GenAI output as a student's own work will be considered fabrication, cheating, and/or academic dishonesty as determined on a case-by-case basis.

This class is designed to help you become a better writer and thinker, on your own terms, for yourself, by yourself. Generative AI—ChatGPT and others—does not require you to think or write! It is bland, average, derivative, often inaccurate, strange, confusing. In this class, you will have to use your own mind, think your own thoughts, and find your own words. I have a zero tolerance policy for the use of AI for any purpose in this class—it is not acceptable to use AI programs to generate writing, scan for sources, plan or outline, or help produce ideas. If I discover that you have used it *in any capacity* in your work for this class, you will receive an automatic zero on the assignment. You must use your own mind this semester.

Late Work

Late work is accepted at the discretion of the instructor. If you have extenuating circumstances that prevent you from getting your work done on time, please contact me immediately—there is no problem we can't resolve together.

Academic Freedom

UNT has a robust policy regarding academic freedom and academic responsibility. Crucially, this policy encompasses not only the rights of faculty members but also the rights “of the student to freedom in learning.” As a student in this classroom, therefore, you have the right to encounter and debate new ideas, diverse forms of knowledge, and unfamiliar or contrary points of view. According to UNT policy, “it is not the proper role of the University to attempt to shield individuals from ideas and opinions they find unwelcome, disagreeable, or even deeply offensive.” At the same time, to encourage the free exchange of ideas, and to ensure that your right to learn is protected, the tone for such discussion must always be civil and respectful; hateful or discriminatory speech will not be tolerated. For more information, please consult the full UNT policy at <https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-035>.

Audio/Video Recording

Although UNT is a publicly supported institution, our classroom is not a public space. Therefore, in order to protect the intellectual property and privacy rights of both faculty and students, video and audio recordings are prohibited during class. The exception is for students who have been granted explicit approval as an ODA accommodation. For more information, please consult the full UNT policy at <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access/faculty/faculty-guide/accommodations-explained/Audio-Recording-Faculty.html>

UNT Policies

Academic Integrity Policy

According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University. [Insert specific sanction or academic penalty for specific academic integrity violation.]

ADA Policy

UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one's specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the [ODA website](https://disability.unt.edu/) (<https://disability.unt.edu/>).

Emergency Notification & Procedures

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Blackboard for contingency plans for covering course materials.

Retention of Student Records

Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work completed via the Blackboard online system, including grading information and comments, is also stored in a safe electronic environment for one year. Students have the right to view their individual record; however, information about student's records will not be divulged to other individuals without proper written consent. Students are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the University's policy. See UNT Policy 10.10, Records Management and Retention for additional information.

Acceptable Student Behavior

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The University's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including University and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. Visit UNT's [Code of Student Conduct](https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct) (<https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct>) to learn more.

Access to Information - Eagle Connect

Students' access point for business and academic services at UNT is located at: my.unt.edu. All official communication from the University will be delivered to a student's Eagle Connect account. For more information, please visit the website that explains Eagle Connect and how to forward e-mail [Eagle Connect](https://it.unt.edu/eagleconnect) (<https://it.unt.edu/eagleconnect>).

Student Evaluation Administration Dates

Student feedback is important and an essential part of participation in this course. The student evaluation of instruction is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. The survey will be made available during weeks 13, 14 and 15 [insert administration dates] of the long semesters to provide students with an opportunity to evaluate how this course is taught. Students will receive an email from "UNT SPOT Course Evaluations via IASystem Notification" (no-reply@iasystem.org) with the survey link. Students should look for the email in their UNT email inbox. Simply click on the link and complete the survey. Once students complete the survey they will receive a confirmation email that the survey has been submitted. For additional information, please visit the [SPOT website](http://spot.unt.edu/) (<http://spot.unt.edu/>) or email spot@unt.edu.