



EN 4933/6933

Survey of Contemporary Literature

BEYOND THE SOUTHERN GOTHIC

In this course, we will start by making our way into the haunted, grotesque, unhinged realm of the southern gothic literary tradition populated by such dark luminaries as Poe's raven and Faulkner's Emily Grierson. We will find a method in the madness by tracing how the southern gothic formed from a confluence of factors: transnational cultural influences; New South anxieties over Old South social, economic, and cultural practices; and that favorite American pastime of casting the South as the nation's internal Other, a zone of pathologies. We will spend most of the semester studying selected authors from the mid twentieth century to the present to explore overarching questions: How have contemporary writers responded to the established southern gothic literary tradition by interrogating, appropriating, revising, and reinventing its key features? To what extent are these writers able to work with or through the debilitating effects of historical trauma that haunted their literary predecessors? How might these writers challenge us to think beyond *the* southern gothic by opening our eyes to "other Souths" and to many ways of "southern" living, dying, or, in some cases, remaining undead?

We will study novels, short stories, poems, plays, and selections from a comic book series. Among the likely featured authors: Flannery O'Connor, Eudora Welty, Tennessee Williams, Walker Percy, James Dickey, Beth Henley, Larry Brown, Robert Kirkman, Jesmyn Ward, and Karen Russell.

FALL 2013

T.R. 2:00-3:15 PM

Dr. Ted Atkinson

