

EN 8333: Studies in Southern Literature

HORRORS AND HAUNTINGS:

The Gothic in Southern Literature and Culture

Fall 2016 Wednesdays, 6:00-8:50 p.m. Dr. Ted Atkinson



This course will explore the horrific and haunted realm of the gothic in southern literature and culture. We will seek a method in the madness by studying works of fiction, drama, and poetry by a diverse group of authors from the nineteenth century to the present: Edgar Allan Poe, William Faulkner, Flannery O'Connor, Tennessee Williams, Zora Neale Hurston, Carson McCullers, Beth Henley, Randall Kenan, LeAnne Howe, Natasha Trethewey, among others. We will also read relevant theory and criticism and draw on print culture, film, television, and other media to situate the literary texts in instructive cultural contexts.

Key questions will inform our approach: How did “Southern Gothic” evolve from a disparaging label into a legitimate topic of scholarly debate? How do gothic elements distort and destabilize depictions of social norms governing race, class, gender, and sexuality? How do contemporary variations on the gothic resist and revise established conventions? How might the gothic enable us to move beyond a monolithic conception of region to explore many Souths, where diverse ways of “southern” living, dying, or remaining undead are possible?

