

**Film and Literature: Storytelling Animals**  
**Course Number:** 1355, **Section Number:** 19480  
**TR, 12:15-1:30 p.m. (Irby Hall 303)**

**About the Syllabus:** I like to think of this syllabus as a roadmap. On the first day of class, we'll go over the Visual Syllabus (a vastly shortened form of this document), but you should definitely consult *this* roadmap early and often. Although I try to include only the information I find important, I especially recommend a careful read through of our online classroom (page 3) and assignment (page 4) policies within the first **two** days that you are enrolled in this course.

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## INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

**Instructor:** Kristen Figgins

**Office:** Irby XXX

**Office Hours:** MW, 10:30-11:30 (online) and TTH, 1:30-2:00 (hybrid)<sup>1</sup>

**E-Mail:** [kfiggins@uca.edu](mailto:kfiggins@uca.edu)

**Slack:** [ucaintro2poetry.slack.com](https://ucaintro2poetry.slack.com)

### Teaching Philosophy

My role in your learning is to be a mentor with the ultimate goal of helping you become the writer and scholar you want to be. I will guide you through difficult, complex, and complicated discussions meant to spark debate, deep thought, and deliberation. Some of these discussions will be about big ideas, while some will be about the translation of those ideas to the written form. I believe we learn best when we learn together (and I believe pedagogical data supports this), and so I will try to maximize opportunities for you to seek out guidance from myself and others.

### About Me

My research focus is in nineteenth-century British literary animal studies (which means that I study the way animals have been represented in literature). I'm currently working on a project about the ways in which nineteenth-century literary writers used scientific writing conventions and philosophies in their work.

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<sup>1</sup>Office hours this semester will be held through Slack, both synchronously and asynchronously.

## **Communication Policy**

I respond to emails between 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. You'll get a response from me within 24 hours of my receipt of that email. I'm slow and sometimes unresponsive in the evening and on the weekend, but I still welcome your questions and concerns and will respond to them as soon as I'm able.

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## **COURSE INFORMATION**

### **Prerequisites**

None

### **Course Purpose**

Jonathan Gottschall says that humans are storytelling animals. But the stories we tell don't always take shape on the page. In this course, we will consider the visual and the textual as being deeply interrelated, two ways of telling stories that feed on one another in a beautiful symbiosis. This course will compare written and cinematic narrative forms by considering classic and modern literary texts through the medium of film.

### **Specific Goals**

In accordance with the stated purpose of the course, students will learn, among other things, how to

- Read, interpret, and analyze visual and literary texts in order to recognize, understand, and process the different levels of meaning at work;
- As part of learning to read, interpret, and analyze texts in visual and textual forms, we will learn to express ideas both in discussion and clear and organized writing;
- Understand the ways in which different mediums not only offer affordances and constraints to the storytelling process, but also how the deliberation behind these different modes of storytelling is part of the storytelling process itself (regardless of how we might interpret the final narrative's "successes" or "failures").

### **Procedure**

Discussion; workshop; lecture; and the writing of response papers, essay, in-class exercises, and a final research paper. In addition to reading assignments due each week, students should expect to watch and engage deeply with a number of films.

### Required texts

- Bram Stoker's Dracula Starring Bela Lugosi (graphic novel), ISBN: 978-1681160641
- The Ballad of Black Tom by Victor LaValle, ISBN: 978-0765387868

### Recommended text

- *Understanding Movies* by Louis D. Gianetti, ISBN: 978-0134492087

### Required equipment

- Regular access to a computer with a relatively reliable internet connection.

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## CLASSROOM POLICIES

### Grades

#### Participation: 20%

This class will largely be driven by discussion, so you should plan on participating at least 80% of the time. One quiet day will not drive down your grade, but many days of silence or non-participation will.

#### Response Papers: 20%

You will have five reading response papers due throughout the semester, each worth 4% of your total grade. Criteria to make an A, B, C, D, or F will be listed on each of the assignments, with an A= 4/4%, B=3/4%, C=2/4%, D=1/4%, and F=0/4%.

#### Expanded Response Paper: 10%

You will revise and expand any one of your reading response papers from the semester. You may turn this in at any time before you leave for Thanksgiving Break. It should not be turned in after Wednesday, November 24.

#### Presentation: 10%

#### Final Paper: 40%

Your final paper will be worth a large percentage of your final grade. To prepare you for this, you will need to write a topic proposal and an annotated bibliography. You will also present your preliminary findings to the class in the last week of the semester. Criteria to make an A, B, C, D, or F will be listed on each assignment description.

**90%-100%= A, 80-89%= B, 70-79%=C, 55-69%=D, 55% or less=F**

## Clarifying Terms

At this point, you might want to clarify some of the terms in our syllabus. For example, what does participation look like to us? What does not participating look like? Is there anything else that needs clarifying or negotiating here?

## My Attendance

If I am feeling ill and anticipate moving class to remote instruction, I will notify the whole class via Slack and email by 10:00 a.m. on that day. You will be expected to attend class remotely.

## Your Attendance

Feeling sick? Do you have a cough, a fever, a sore throat? Lack of smell or taste? **Do not come to class.** Instead, do the following:

- Email or DM me by 10:30 a.m. that you will not be able to attend class in person.
- Attend class remotely using the provided Zoom link.
- Participate in the #zoom-live channel on Slack.

**Feeling too ill to participate?** It's time to take an absence.

You will be allowed three unexcused absences per semester. You can take these absences for absolutely any reason, and you don't need to provide me with any excuse. **I have found that students who attend class regularly do better in my class and that students who miss more than three classes do, on average, significantly worse in the class.**

## Flexible Attendance Policy

That said, sometimes we get sick or even just overwhelmed and need to take an absence. You will have the option to **make up absences.**

**When you have exceeded your allowed excused absences,** you can make up your attendance using the flexible attendance policy. You don't have to tell me why you're taking the absence, although you can if you want to. You cannot make up absences in advance (e.g. you cannot contact me after every single absence you take in anticipation of keeping your total number of absences at zero). You should only make up absences when you feel that you must miss class past your allowed three unexcused absences.

**Directions:** Within 72 hours, watch the class recording, and then email me to set up a meeting to discuss what you missed.

If you need to take an absence because you've decided to prioritize work in another class or because of recreational pursuits (i.e. "I stayed home to play Red Dead Redemption 2"), please don't ask to make up that absence with me in a chat. That's not in the spirit of this offer. If at any time, I feel that this offer is being abused *en masse*, I reserve the right to revert to a traditional attendance policy, in which documentation will be required to excuse any absence.

**If you don't make up your 5th, 6th, etc. absences, the Dean of Students's Office will be notified so that they can make sure you're well. Please reach out to me before this happens. Once you've had 7 or more absences without making them up, you have met conditions to fail the course.**

### Excused Absences

Examples of absences that might qualify as excusable are illness, family crisis, University-sponsored activities involving scholarship or leadership/participation responsibilities, jury duty or subpoena for court appearance, military duty, and religious observances. You do not need to make up an absence with me for any of these, but you **are required** to reach out to me within one week of an absence that you feel falls under the heading of excused, as I will not know the difference.

### Tardiness

I will take attendance within the first ten minutes of class every day. If you are not present at the time that I take attendance, please speak to me *that day* after class to change your absence to a tardy. Do a favor to your future self and don't wait until the end of the semester to resolve issues like this! :)

### Coronavirus Policy

Look, we're living in unusual times. If you, for any reason, feel that the current pandemic is affecting your performance in this class, please let me know ASAP. I have a responsibility to make sure that I'm not inflating grades— that is, I can't give everyone an A even when you don't deserve it<sup>2</sup>—however, I *will* be as flexible as possible on grading contract requirements when you need a helping hand. **Please do not wait until the end of the semester to ask for help.** While I can be *very flexible* in the moment ("Hey, my roommate is sick. Can I take some extra time on X?"), I can't do this very well retroactively ("I know I'm missing a lot of work and didn't do X, Y, and Z, but I've been really overwhelmed all semester").

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<sup>2</sup> This is for your benefit, not mine. Many of you have hopes for school or certification beyond the undergraduate degree: law school, med school, veterinary school, graduate school, etc. If I inflate grades for no reason, your "A" or "B" means less to those institutions.

## Advice on Dropping a Course:

While I recommend meeting with me first, if you become *truly* overwhelmed, you always have the option to drop a class. Dropping a course means that a failing grade will NOT go on your transcript and is a good idea in the following cases:

- You are doing poorly in multiple classes and have no scholarship or grant requirements to stay enrolled in a certain number of classes. Dropping will let you focus your attention on bringing up your grade in another class;
- You cannot recover from the missing work in a certain class. That is, it's mathematically impossible for you to pass the course; or
- It's early enough in the semester that dropping will allow you to receive a full or partial refund on the course. [See this calendar for those dates.](#)

**Before you drop this course, I strongly urge you to meet with me and/or your academic advisor, as we can give you advice on the best option for your circumstances.**

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## ASSIGNMENT POLICIES

### Major Assignment Definition

Major assignments can be distinguished from minor assignments in terms of effort needed to complete those assignments. For example, a minor assignment might be completed in an hour or afternoon, while major assignments will usually take days or even weeks to complete. There will be two major writing assignments in this course, spaced throughout the semester, one due no later than Week 15 and the other due during finals week.

### Major Assignment Submission

Major assignments will be submitted on Blackboard as .doc or .docx files. All assignments will be due at 11:59 pm. Late assignments will receive no credit toward the B conditions. Note that incomplete or imperfect assignments are better than missing assignments.

### Feedback

On major assignments, you will receive detailed feedback from me in order to get a sense of what a potential reader might be thinking, confused about, struggling with, needing clarification on, rejoicing over, sympathizing with, laughing at, etc. **This kind of feedback should be considered carefully, as it's the most valuable thing any instructor can give you.** Sometimes the feedback will be useful for understanding

that particular writing assignment, but often those considerations can be interpreted as patterns to look for in your future work (“My instructor commented on X last time, I wonder if I do X in this new assignment.”). Learning your own patterns and habits as a writer is *extremely useful* for any writer.

If you would like to receive any particular advice, I welcome you to ask for that: **always ask for what you need from me.** For example, you might include as a submission comment a request for feedback on your organization; you might on the last page of your essay list a few questions that you had about your ideas.. I’m happy to give you whatever you’d like as best as I’m able to help. Learning what kind of questions to ask yourself is another useful thing to learn as a writer and researcher.

I will try to give you feedback within a reasonable amount of time, usually around two weeks from the original due date. If it takes me longer than this, you will receive notice on Blackboard and/or Slack.

**Important: Late Work Policy**

All major assignments will be due within three days of the due date listed on the syllabus, in either direction (see example below). Assignments will be reviewed in the order in which they are submitted, with a promise to make extra effort to review the earliest submissions as quickly as possible.

Major assignments turned in after the grace period will not be accepted. Incomplete or imperfect submissions are encouraged over failing to submit anything, as failing to submit a major assignment guarantees that you will fail the course. **If for any reason you have questions or concerns about the submission of a major assignment, you should reach out to me.**

**See below for sample!**

**Sample Submission Timeline**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			Assignment may be turned in early	Assignment may be turned in early	Assignment may be turned in early	Due date
Assignment may be turned in with no penalty	Assignment may be turned in with no penalty	Assignment may be turned in with no penalty	Late (Any assignments turned in this date or after will receive a			



			zero)			
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**NOTE:** Homework assignments, presentations, time-sensitive minor assignments (such as your topic proposal/annotated bibliography), and reading are due on the date listed on the syllabus. They are often time-sensitive and so are not eligible for the self-scheduled deadlines detailed above. Otherwise, I hope that self-scheduling allows you to make deadlines fit within your schedule and eliminates the need for extensions on assignments (since your extension is built in).

Hi! If you've read this far, well done. Email or DM (on Slack) me a picture of **your favorite college meme** so that I know how amazing you are!

### **Response Paper Submission**

Response papers will be submitted on Blackboard and are also eligible for the flexible submission policy.

### **Major Writing Assignment Formatting**

All essays must be typed with black ink in Times New Roman 12-point font. Lines should be double-spaced and your essay should have one-inch margins. MLA documentation style will be used in this class unless you have a good reason for requesting an alternate format. The following must appear on the top left corner of the first page of each essay: Student's name, Instructor's name, Course Identifier, Date. Page numbers must appear at the top right corner of each page.

### **Personal Elaboration on Plagiarism Policy**

Plagiarism is the use of another person's words *or ideas* without giving them credit. Plagiarism can occur accidentally (due to infrequent citation, for example, or occasional failure to use quotation marks) or intentionally (like copying-and-pasting entire sentences/paragraphs/essays). You can give credit through citation/documentation, which can be tricky to learn how to do well. .

Please reach out to me if you ever have any questions. I never mind glancing over your essay to recommend more or different citation.

Note that penalties for deliberate or accidental plagiarism can range from a request to redo the assignment, a failing grade on the assignment, or even a failing grade in the course.

## **Diversity Statement**

I believe<sup>3</sup> in a respect for policies and practices that foster diverse voices and viewpoints, that protect all members of our community against discrimination, and that maintain appropriate professional boundaries which are integral to the success of my students.

I acknowledge that structures of historical oppression are still operational today, sometimes more visibly and sometimes less, and that efforts toward diversity and inclusion must permeate all levels of practice, from curriculum to teaching, from admissions to hiring, taking into account race and ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, religion, neurodiversity, country of origin, citizenship status, socio-economic status, physical and mental health, and other factors that can divide and disadvantage.

If you experience discrimination, please report it. If you notice opportunities for our course to become more inclusive, please feel comfortable to start that conversation with me.

## **Reporting Discrimination and/or Sexual Harassment**

If a student discloses an act of sexual harassment, discrimination, assault, or other sexual misconduct to a faculty member (as it relates to “student-on-student” or “employee-on-student”), the faculty member cannot maintain complete confidentiality and is required to report the act and may be required to reveal the names of the parties involved. Any allegations made by a student may or may not trigger an investigation. Each situation differs and the obligation to conduct an investigation will depend on those specific set of circumstances. The determination to conduct an investigation will be made by the Title IX Coordinator. For further information, please visit: <https://uca.edu/titleix>.

\*Disclosure of sexual misconduct by a third party who is not a student and/or employee is also required if the misconduct occurs when the third party is a participant in a university-sponsored program, event, or activity.

## **Receiving Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

The University of Central Arkansas adheres to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you need an accommodation under this Act due to a disability, please contact the UCA Office of Disability Services, 450-3613.

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<sup>3</sup> This diversity statement is adapted from the statement of the department of English at the University of Arkansas.

Students should familiarize themselves with all policies included in the Student Handbook, particularly the Sexual Harassment Policy and Academic Policies. You are responsible for acting in accordance with these university policies. If you have any questions about these policies and how they pertain to you, do not hesitate to ask me for clarification.

### **Bear Essential Food Pantry**

The University of Central Arkansas food pantry serves anyone suffering from food insecurity (if you've ever had to skip a meal or gone without *enough* food or without nutritious food, that's food insecurity) and their families. Any current UCA employee or student may come to the Food Pantry for their household needs. Please bring your UCA ID. Please comply with COVID-19 prevention guidelines. For more information, [click here](#).

### **Counseling Center**

College can be a very exciting time, but it can also be very lonely, isolating, and a time of upheaval for many people. In 2017, the United States Census Bureau reported that 75% of college students reported feeling overwhelming anxiety and 30% reported feeling it in the last two weeks. The University of Central Arkansas has a wonderful, low-cost counseling center at your disposal, and since I am a *big* advocate of taking care of our mental and emotional health, you should definitely take advantage of it.

The Counseling Center is located in the student health services center, and is open 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Fridays. For more information on how to make an appointment, [click here](#).

### **UCA Student Health Center COVID Testing and Vaccination**

If you ever feel ill, please visit your doctor or the UCA Student Health Center. If you need to schedule COVID-19 testing, [click here](#) and follow the directions.

The UCA Student Health Clinic is now vaccinating students, faculty, staff, and immediate family members of UCA faculty and staff by appointment. This includes any family members age 12 years and older who live in the house. To schedule an appointment, please call the UCA Student Health Clinic at 501-450-3136.

### **Center for Writing and Communication**

Although I am available as a guide and resource to you, you might want to seek out additional help with your writing. It's almost always a good idea to get other eyes on your work!

The Center for Writing and Communication helps students at **every** stage of the writing process (so they can even help you get started on an assignment). Note that they do not \*edit\* your work, although they will happily work with you to discover what kind of grammar or organizational issues might be present and will give you advice on how to improve your paper.

You can schedule an appointment, drop-in for an appointment (if they have tutors available), meet with a tutor online, or even meet with a tutor through online chat (esp. if you just have a quick question). Appointments tend to last for 30 minutes to 1 hour, depending on how much help you want/need. See <https://uca.edu/cwc/> or the link on our Blackboard for more information, including location, hours, etc.

Tip: Take the writing assignment directions with you to your appointment.

### **Academic Integrity**

The University of Central Arkansas affirms its commitment to academic integrity and expects all members of the university community to accept shared responsibility for maintaining academic integrity. Students in this course are subject to the provisions of the university's Academic Integrity Policy, approved by the Board of Trustees as Board Policy No. 709 on February 10, 2010, and published in the Student Handbook. Penalties for academic misconduct in this course may include a failing grade on an assignment, a failing grade in the course, or any other course-related sanction the instructor determines to be appropriate. Continued enrollment in this course affirms a student's acceptance of this university policy.

### **Inclement Weather**

When the university is closed, all classes are also cancelled. If a weather delay affects university operations, then class will be cancelled if it is scheduled before the university resumes operations.

### **Emergency Procedures**

Emergency Procedures Summary (EPS) for the building in which this class is held will be discussed during the first week of this course. EPS documents for most buildings on campus are available at <http://uca.edu/mysafety/bep/>. Every student should be familiar with emergency procedures for any campus building in which he/she spends time for classes or other purposes.

## **DISCLAIMER**

I reserve the right to make alterations to the syllabus or course schedule at my discretion, especially to enhance your learning. I will especially try to be adaptive as to our in-class activities and discussions as need arises.

Changes regarding due dates will always be made in your favor.