

Carleton University  
**Fall 2024 Preliminary Course Outline**  
Department of English

ENGL 4607A: *Studies in 20<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup>-century Literature*  
Topic: *Childhood and Time in 20<sup>th</sup>-century Ghost Stories*

**Prerequisites:** fourth-year standing or permission of the department

**Instructor:** Adam Barrows  
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**\*\*\* This is a preliminary syllabus only—texts and assignments are subject to change.  
A complete version will be available closer to the start of the term. \*\*\***

**Course description:** Children and young adults have so often been situated at the core of stories of supernatural haunting and possession over the course of the twentieth century that the child as ghost, the possessed child, and the child communing with spectral figures have become clichés of film and television horror. A rich critical literature both within English literary studies and within child studies has explored the ways in which ghost stories about children and childhood touch upon changing social conceptions of childhood and innocence, anxieties about childhood agency and sexuality, and concerns over changing family structures. Less well explored, however, is what the haunting/haunted child trope reveals about changing socio-cultural conceptions of time and temporality in the twentieth century. As inherently temporal figurations (childhood as a temporal stage of becoming or developing, the ghost as a return of the past or the repressed), the child and the ghost both reveal fault lines in modernity's temporal integrity, touching upon anxieties over the experience and expression of time and temporality as well as concerns about historical progression and human development. In this course, we will read a range of Anglophone ghost stories (short fiction and novels) featuring children and young adults.

**Learning Outcomes:** Students will learn to: identify and discuss key themes and issues in the literary representation of children and youth; identify and discuss formal features of representative works of fiction by a range of English language writers; place works by English language writers within their historical, cultural, and political contexts.

**Texts:**

del Pilar Blanco, Maria and Esther Perren. *The Spectralities Reader*  
James, Henry. *The Turn of the Screw*  
King, Stephen. *The Shining*  
Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*

**Evaluation:**

**Attendance: 10%**

**Midterm Examination: 40%**

**Final Examination (or Course Essay): 50%**

**Attendance:** Students are expected to attend every class in person. To receive attendance credit, every student must submit (in hard copy or digital form) at least one discussion question pertaining to the day's assigned reading. These must be received before the day's discussion begins. No student will be allowed to pass the course with an attendance grade lower than 75% (you cannot miss more than a quarter of the class).

**Midterm Examination:** You will be asked to choose **three out of five** excerpts from the required readings and do the following for each of the three passages you choose: identify the title, author and time period of the work from which the passage has been excerpted; discuss the relationship of the passage to the larger work from which it has been excerpted; discuss the major themes and significant features of the text; as appropriate, situate the text within its larger historical, cultural, political, and/or literary historical contexts, and; meaningfully relate the passage to other works we have studied.

**Final Examination:** The final formally scheduled examination will be the same format as the midterm examination except that you will choose **four out of six** excerpts. It is non-cumulative and will cover course material studied after the midterm.

**Course Essay:** Students who receive at least 80% on their midterm examination have the option to replace the final exam with an essay. This assignment asks you to make an argument about the role of ghosts and childhood in the work of a twentieth- or twenty first-century author who is NOT represented on the syllabus. The paper should be thesis-driven, and the argument must be supported by close textual evidence and judicious use of secondary evidence (criticism and/or theory). You MUST situate your chosen text in relation to at least two texts from the syllabus. Papers should be between 8 and 10 pages long (double-spaced 12-point Times New Roman or equivalent).

**Optional Creative Submission:** You have the option of submitting an original ghost story of no more than 10 double-spaced pages. In addition, you must submit a discussion/analysis of your short story that explains how it relates thematically and/or stylistically to the course topic of childhood and time. The paper will be worth **20%** and can **replace your lowest 20% score on either the midterm or final examination/essay (whichever is lower).**