

English 461-02 - Capstone Seminar I
Fall 2020
Thursday, 4-6:45pm
Prof. B. Pauley

Imagining Monsters

What are you afraid of?

We've always told stories about monsters. Whether they haunt the fens at the edge of civilization or hide under children's beds, monsters embody what we fear most about what we understand least.

This seminar examines the stories we've told about monsters and monstrosity in an effort to understand both the nature of our fears and the ways we have tried to articulate—and dispel—those fears. In looking at the monstrous others we've imagined, it's ultimately ourselves we see.

We will consider representations of imaginary monsters from different periods and media (from Grendel to the Zombie Apocalypse). But we will also examine the rhetoric of monstrosity in real life: what are we saying when, for example, we call a crime “monstrous” or the person who commits it a “monster”?

The first semester of the course will provide students with a conceptual framework for developing individual projects in the second semester. Our discussions will prepare students to pursue projects in whatever form interests them most: literature or film criticism, cultural studies, rhetorical criticism, or creative writing.