

## **The Supernatural South:**

### Haunted Plantations, Confederate Vampires, and Debates over Southern Memory

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:30–3:45pm

Keck Hall 107

Spring 2025

#### **Contact Info**

*Instructor:* Emily Lampert

*Office:* Fondren 534

*Email:* [ea112@rice.edu](mailto:ea112@rice.edu)

*Office Hours:* Thursdays, 10–11am and by appointment

#### **Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes**

##### *Description:*

The American South seems to be unquestionably haunted. Countless ghost tours and ghost investigations boast of bona fide paranormal phenomena attached to southern sites, from rural plantations to urban hospitals and saloons. Ghosts, however, are not the only supernatural entities to roam the southern landscape. Tales of creatures stalking along the bayou or found deep in the swamp are common, and Texas had its very own “wild woman,” stories of whom can be traced back to the early nineteenth century. Then there are the more modern creations, such as the southern vampire, who more often than not also fought for the Confederacy. Regardless of whether or not one believes in spectral slaves, southern bigfoots, or Confederate vampires, all can agree that there is something uncanny, something unsettled here, something that lurks behind mega churches and lingers in the shadows of southern hospitality.

In this course, we will examine and analyze the meanings of supernatural stories—both historical and contemporary—set in the American South. In doing so, we will discuss what these stories tell us about southern history, culture, and ongoing debates over southern memory.

##### *Content-Related Course Goals:*

- Students will be able to critically analyze supernatural stories set in the American South. In this analysis, students will set aside ideas of “true” and “false,” of “real” and “fake,” and instead focus on what these stories tell us about southern history, culture, and most importantly, longstanding and ongoing debates over southern memory.

- Students will be able to analyze common tropes, such as the “jilted slave lover” and “confederate vampire,” and place such tropes within larger debates about southern memory and the Lost Cause.
- Students will also apply their knowledge and understanding of southern hauntings and ghost tales in an analysis of southern ghost tourism. Students will be able to engage in public history debates about southern dark and ghost tourism.

#### *FWIS Course Goals:*

- Enhance their understanding of the central place of writing and communication in the learning process and in academic life.
- Learn strategies for analyzing, synthesizing, and responding to college-level readings.
- Improve their ability to communicate correctly and effectively in writing and in speech, taking into account audience and purpose.
- Become comfortable with writing as a process and learn strategies—for instance, prewriting, outlining, and revision—for working through that process.
- Learn appropriate use of the work of others and, where necessary, specific practices of citation.
- Learn to articulate oral arguments and to respond productively to arguments of others in formal presentations and in class discussion.

### **Required Texts and Materials**

The majority of our readings will be available online via Canvas. However, you will be required to have a copy of Tiya Miles’ *Tales from the Haunted South: Dark Tourism and Memories of Slavery from the Civil War Era* (2015). You will also be required to have your own copy of Octavia Butler’s *Kindred* (1979, but any unabridged edition is fine).

You will also be required to have two different colored highlighters.

### **Papers, Projects, and Assignments**

#### *Short Responses*

On weeks that we do not have larger writing assignments due, you will be required to submit a short writing assignment via Canvas which will be due on Fridays. You may reuse prompts, but each prompt may only be used TWICE.

In 1-2 paragraphs please answer one of the following prompts:

- Relate one of our class materials (readings, podcasts, videos, etc.) from this week to something we’ve looked at for a previous week (related material must not be from the same source). Explain why you’ve put these two materials in conversation, and what we get from doing so.

- Offer a critique of one of the week’s materials. Please keep in mind that critique is not just criticism—don’t simply say you didn’t like it. Instead, evaluate an aspect of the material. Perhaps you believe the author should have used other sources, or maybe you disagree with their conclusions, or had a different interpretation, etc.
- Discuss something you found particularly interesting from this week’s classes or readings, and why.
- Pose a discussion question that you thought of for that week’s classes and attempt to answer it.
- Relate an in-class discussion or lecture to a reading we’ve done; did our time in class clarify the reading? Make you realize something you hadn’t before? Brought up new questions about the reading?

### *Book Review*

For this assignment, you will read *Kindred* and write a 1.5–3-page double-spaced book review. To prepare for the book review, you will form small discussion groups in class in the week leading up to the due date, during which you will discuss several reading questions with your peers. We will also have a peer review day the class before the paper is due. For the purposes of this assignment, since it is quite short, please bring at least a well fleshed out outline or, ideally, a nearly-full draft. We will discuss in class how to organize a book review.

### *Podcast Script and Recording*

For this assignment, you will choose from a selection of southern vampire media. You will then create a podcast script that introduces your audience to the primary material (your chosen media) and the phenomenon of “Confederate vampires,” and also analyzes and breaks down specific characters, narrative arcs, and scenes that you believe would be important for your audience to understand. In breaking these elements down, you will also be analyzing your material using secondary source readings and lectures from class. After your script is completed, you will record your delivery of it. In all, your script will be 4-5 pages, and your recordings will be roughly 8-10 minutes long.

### *Final Paper*

For your final, you will form an original argument about southern ghost tourism and defend that argument in a 5–7-page paper. We will have plenty of peer review leading up to its due date, as well as in-class work time.

### **Extra Credit**

As a general rule, individual extra credit assignments will not be granted as they are unfair to the rest of the class. However, there are several standing extra credit opportunities that you can take advantage of:

- Attending any talk or lecture hosted by the History Department or the Center for African and African American Studies. If another department is hosting a talk that you feel is somehow applicable to our course, be it about the South, southern history and memory, hauntings, etc, please email me ahead of time about it and I will determine if attending counts for extra credit. Attending one of these talks will earn you 1 point of extra credit, and writing a 1-2 paragraph summary of the talk and your thoughts on it will earn you an additional 2 points. You must email me proof of your presence at the talk (a selfie will work) along with your write up within a week of attending the talk.
- Take a local ghost tour (there are ones in Houston, Galveston, and Old Spring, but if you find one somewhere else just email me about it first) and write a 1-2 paragraph review of your experience. Did you notice any of the tropes we've talked about in class? What historical discussions took place? What is your evaluation of the tour in general? This opportunity will earn you 3 extra credit points. You must email me proof of your ghost tour (tickets would be great) and your review within a week of taking the tour.
- Find and watch a TV episode or movie that deals with supernatural themes set in the South. Do NOT use one of the options for the Vampire Media assignment. After watching, write up 1-2 paragraphs of your thoughts and analysis. Don't simply summarize the plot, but instead use what we've discussed and read in class to analyze the story. Some initial suggestions: episodes of Supernatural, Scooby-Doo, etc.

There may be other opportunities that come up during the semester, which I will inform you of. Extra credit points will be added to your participation grade.

### Turn-in Policy

For this class, all papers (unless otherwise noted) should be turned in at the beginning of class on the due date. Papers must be printed and stapled ahead of time. All papers should be typed in Times New Roman, 12 pt font, with standard 1-inch margins; preferably, they should be printed double-sided, though this is not required. All papers must have an original title (not simply "Book Review"), and your full name and date must be at the top of your first page. All papers (unless otherwise stated beforehand) must have proper citations and either a Bibliography or Works Cited page, depending on style of citation. If these conditions are not met, you will automatically be deducted 5%, as if you had turned it in late.

I will return your graded papers to you approximately 1–1.5 weeks after you turn them in. Please **take 24 hours to read your comments and digest them before emailing me** any questions, concerns, or to set up a meeting with me.

### Revision Policy

This is a class in which writing can be worked on, revised, and improved. All papers (not including the Initial Paper or Short Responses) may be revised after receiving a grade, provided that you either A) visit me during office hours to discuss feedback and next steps or B) visit the CAPC to discuss your paper with a writing consultant there. Importantly, however, revised drafts must be turned in within 2 weeks of getting the original grade back from me. You must also email me within 72 hours of receiving your grade, stating your intent to revise.

If you choose to revise, your original grade and revised grade will be averaged, and that will be your new grade for the assignment. For example, if you received an 84 on the original draft and a 92 on the revised draft, your new grade will be an 88.

## Late Policy

You may turn in late work (without an official excuse or extension) up to ONE WEEK after the assignment was originally due. You may email me your late paper, and your assignment will decrease by 5% for each day that it is late (i.e., if your paper was originally a 90, you will now receive an 85). This policy does NOT apply to your Short Responses, which can be turned in late but will automatically receive half credit.

Extensions will be considered depending on the circumstances. If you are in such a position, please email me as soon as you are aware of your situation so we can work together to figure out a solution. However, unless circumstances are extreme, **extensions most likely will not be granted if asked for less than 24 hours before the due date.**

## Office Hours

I highly encourage you to take advantage of my office hours. I will be on the fifth floor of Fondren Library, in office 534, from 10-11am every Thursday. While these are my official office hours, you can also always email me to see if I am on campus and available, or to set up a meeting in advance. Office hours are a chance for you to ask any lingering questions about assignments or class readings, to discuss topics from class further, think through connections between the readings or materials/experiences you've encountered outside of class, and to get additional help.

I also highly encourage you to visit the Center for Academic and Professional Communication on the second floor of Fondren! Your writing center is there for YOUR USE—it is a great resource that you should definitely take advantage of, in this class and beyond!

## Grade Policies

*Grade Breakdown:*

In-Class Assignments, Participation, and Peer Review: 25%

Short Responses: 10%

Essays: 25%

Oral Presentation: 20%

Final: 20%

*Grading Scale:*

A	= 93% and above	A-	= 90-92%
B+	= 88-89%	B	= 83-87%

B-	= 80-82%	C+	= 78-79%
C	= 73-77%	C-	= 70-72%
D+	= 68-69%	D	= 63-67%
D-	= 60-62%	F	= 0-59%

## Absence Policies

Attendance is required in this class. However, students may have up to 2 absences for any reason. Any further unexcused absences will reflect on your final grade; for every unexcused absence after your allowed 2, your final grade will be dropped by a half-letter grade (i.e., if you have a B+ and miss a 3rd class without a legitimate excuse your grade will drop to a B, then a B-, and so forth).

## Rice Honor Code

In this course, all students will be held to the standards of the Rice Honor Code, a code that you pledged to honor when you matriculated at this institution. If you are unfamiliar with the details of this code and how it is administered, you should consult the Honor System Handbook at <http://honor.rice.edu/honor-system-handbook/>. This handbook outlines the University's expectations for the integrity of your academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process.

## Disability Resource Center

If you have a documented disability or other condition that may affect academic performance you should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with the Disability Resource Center (Allen Center, Room 111 / [adarice@rice.edu](mailto:adarice@rice.edu) / x5841) to determine the accommodations you need; and 2) talk with me to discuss your accommodation needs.

## Syllabus Change Policy

This syllabus is only a guide for the course and is subject to change with advanced notice.

## Course Schedule

### *What is a haunting, and where is the South?*

#### **Tues, January 14**

Introductions + Syllabus overview

#### **Thurs, January 16**

Reading: Kindred, read to page 33  
No short response due

**Tues, January 21**

Reading: Kindred, read to page 81

**Thurs, January 23**

Reading: Kindred, read to page 117

Short Response due Friday

**Tues, January 28**

Reading: Kindred, read to page 178

**Thurs, January 30**

Reading: Kindred, read to page 209

Short Response due Friday; instead of a normal short response, please come up with one discussion question for our large group discussion on Tuesday.

**Tues, February 4**

Reading: Kindred, read through Epilogue; come ready to discuss the book with your peers! Make sure to have access to your copy of the book in class.

**Thurs, February 6**

Peer Review: Bring FOUR COPIES of your Book Review (need at least one full page)

No Short Response Due

*Confederate Vampires*

**Tues, February 11**

Due: Book Review

No Reading

**Thurs, February 13**

SPRING RECESS, NO CLASS

No Short Response Due

**Tues, February 18**

Read: Frenette; “On ‘Twilight’ and Fiction’s History of Confederate Vampires,”  
<https://www.teenvogue.com/story/on-twilight-and-fictions-history-of-confederate-vampires-fan-service>

Quiz on chosen Vampire media today!

**Thurs, February 20**

Reading: They Say/I Say

Short Response Due Friday

**Tues, February 25**

In-Class Work Day; this is a good opportunity to work on your podcast outline, intro and thesis, and to ask me any questions you may have about the assignment. You may also pair up with other students who are working on the same piece of media as you to discuss thoughts and get content-specific feedback.

**Thurs, February 27**

Peer Review: Intro + Thesis for Podcast Script

Instead of a Short Response, email me a full outline of your podcast script by Friday.

**Tues, March 4**

Peer Review: Partial Draft of Podcast Script

**Thurs, March 6**

Peer Review: Full Draft of Podcast Script

*Haunting Statues*

**Tues, March 11 — lecture about confederate statues. Use SPLC**

Due: Podcast Script

**Thurs, March 13**

Reading: Epps and “Empty Pedestals”

No short response, but submit your podcast recording by 5pm Friday!

**Tues, March 18 – Thurs, March 20**

SPRING BREAK, NO CLASS

*Ghost Tourism in the South*

**Tues, March 25**

Reading: Miles, Intro and Ch 1

**Thurs, March 27**

Reading: Miles, Ch 2 OR 3; be prepared to discuss and share your chosen chapter with a partner!

Short Response Due, Friday

**Tues, April 1**

Reading: Gentry and Alderman

**Thurs, April 3**

Reading: Pirok

Short Response Due Friday

**Tues, April 8**

Group Brainstorm Session—come with ideas for your final!

**Thurs, April 10**

In-Class Work Day

No Short Response Due

**Tues, April 15**

Peer Review: Intro + Thesis

**Thurs, April 17**

Peer Review: Full outline

No Short Response Due

**Tues, April 22**

Peer Review: Partial Draft of Final

**Thurs, April 24**

Last Day of Class

Peer Review: Full draft of Final

**Friday, May 2**

Final Paper Due