Social Policy and Social Fear: Course Number

This undergraduate course evaluates and analyzes horror films as social criticism to understand contemporary social policy issues. Horror can highlight our flawed social structures, injustices, and inequities. Horror can also reflect our fears of social and political change. We will structure our critical reflections on connections between horror and policy. This course requires in-depth discourse on intersections of oppression that shape U.S. social policy with a focus on race and gender. Graduate students interested in enrolling should contact the instructor to make arrangements to meet their learning objectives.

Contact Details

Jamie Morgan   Office location: Building/Room/URL
Email: morgan@brandeis.edu

Communication
Email is the fastest method way to reach me and I will typically respond within 24 hours, excluding weekends and holidays. Students may book a time to meet individually using this booking link <insert link>.

Continuity
Any changes to readings or assignments, or logistical rearrangements in case of weather or illness, will be communicated through Latte announcements (http://latte.brandeis.edu). All lectures, in-person and online, will be recorded to provide continuity of instruction for students. Expect the announcement of guest lectures as schedules are coordinated and confirmed.

Learning During COVID
Adapting to COVID-19 requires that we be deliberative, creative, and agile. We will do our best within the situation we find ourselves in to learn and care for ourselves. Your safety and well-being are at the foremost of course planning. This class is a place for you to learn and grow, I have taken steps to ensure your time with us is a stimulating and invigorating experience.

It is important that you spend the necessary time working on this course to achieve your expected outcomes. If you face challenges in fully participating at any time, please let me know, and we will work together to identify resources and accommodations.

Content Warning

This section provides a content and trigger warning for the entire semester. Students should be aware that the films we will be watching and discussing often contain loud, graphic, violent, and frightening content that could trigger emotional or physical responses. Plots and summaries of all the movies we view can be readily found online and I am available to discuss content concerns.

We all have different limits and sometimes we don't always know where those limits are exactly. Should you find yourself nearing one of your limits, please let me know and we can discuss strategies for coping with the assignment or developing an alternate assignment if possible.

We will not screen or discuss violence without a purpose. Over the course of the semester, students will be asked to examine if the creator's content was an effective method of communicating the underlying social and political fears presented in the film or if their work was gratuitous and exploitative.

Students who anticipate discomfort while screening these films should sit near an exit so that, when necessary, they may step out of the room. Students will also have the option of screening movies from their homes, or library, if they need a private viewing experience that allows for fast forwarding.

Meeting Times and Locations

Class Format
This class is designed for a hyper-flex mode of instruction. Students can attend synchronous live video of lecture and film screenings, complete the course through asynchronous online learning, or choose a combination of modes of instruction throughout the semester.

Class Schedule
Monday and Wednesday, 5PM – 7:30PM   <Building/Room/URL>
Mondays are lecture days; Wednesdays are film screening days

Student Hours
Students can book appointments for one-on-one Zoom meetings through the scheduling link <insert booking link from Doodle>.

Accommodations

Brandeis seeks to create a learning environment that is welcoming and inclusive of all students, and I want to support you in your learning. If you think you may require disability accommodations, you will need to work with Student Accessibility Support (SAS) (781-736-3470, access@brandeis.edu). You can find helpful student FAQs and other resources on the SAS website, including guidance on how to know whether you might be eligible for support from SAS. If you already have an accommodation letter from SAS, please provide me with a copy as soon as you can so that I can ensure effective implementation of accommodations for this class. In order to coordinate exam accommodations, ideally you should provide the accommodation letter at least 48 hours before an exam.

Course Description

Course Prerequisite(s):
This course does not have any formal prerequisites. Students must be willing to conduct an original research project that demonstrates fact finding using scholarly resources, effective persuasive communication, and clear advocacy goals.

Teaching Philosophy
I teach using a progressive education philosophy that focuses on active thinking skills rather than relying on memorization. As such, students are expected to exercise their critical thinking and analytic skills while exercising creativity. I consider our course materials as tools, not authorizes, and students will be asked to reflect on curriculum. I am also a critical theorist and we will examine multiple perspectives as our process of inquiry. Our work will focus on social justice, action, and change.

Learning Goals:
Throughout this course you will develop the following core skills as part of your university learning goals:
- Communication: clearly express facts, ideas, opinions and beliefs
- Critical Thinking: analyze, interpret and synthesize information and ideas from diverse sources; evaluate the relevance and validity of information, solve challenging problems and arrive at reasoned conclusions
- Knowledge Production: use knowledge to raise and explore new questions; apply different analytic lenses to understand complex issues
- Social Justice: engage in self-reflection; act as socially and ethically responsible members of the class community, understand the interdependence of people; follow the example of Justice Brandeis by contributing to the creation of a just society

How the course will impact you and your career:
- The course will make you a better policy analyst and researcher enabling you to better understand problems from various perspectives and evaluate potential solutions with context.
- The degree of inherent commitment to the status-quo in the political system and how this commitment is expressed through popular culture.
- This knowledge will put you in a better position to be an agent for change.

Credit Hours:
Success in this four-credit course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of nine hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, assignments, films, etc.).

Commitment to an inclusive learning environment:
Each of us enters the classroom from diverse backgrounds and perspectives that strengthen our intellectual community. This class is designed to present materials and activities to enrich and enhance our understanding of the world across numerous factors including but not limited to race, ethnicity and national origins, gender and gender identity, sexuality, class, and religion. To help us set expectations for standards of behavior for discourse and critique, we will work together the first day of class to create a social contract that holds us accountable to an inclusive learning environment.

Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups. In addition, if any of our class meetings conflict with your religious events, please let me know so that we can make arrangements.

Acknowledgements:
Learning is a process, and I am grateful for those who helped me conceive and design this course. Special thanks to Kyéra Sterling, MA for her sharing materials for her 2020 course on Black Horror at the Coolidge Theater; Professor H. Marshall Leicester for their course LIT155H (connecting Horror film to critical texts) at UC Santa Cruz that has stayed with me since 2004; and Professor Rebecca Kreitzer at UNC Chapel Hill for sharing the framework that led to our policy research assignment. I am also grateful for the mentorship of Deborah Garnick at Brandeis University for the training I received as her teaching assistant in the fall 2022 course Viewing Medicine and Health Policy Through the Lens of Literature.

Course Requirements

<u>Attendance</u>
This course is designed around a weekly lecture and film section and it will be difficult to meet the learning objectives if you do not keep up with our schedule. Each week, I will host a live lecture on Mondays and a film screening on Wednesdays. All lectures will be recorded, and films will be available should students require an asynchronous option. I will not record attendance, students are responsible for their own scheduling to ensure course success.

<u>Participation</u>
Graded opportunities for participation will be in the form of asynchronous assignments. Students will contribute posts and responses to a Discussion forum on Latte as outlined in the assignments section. Discussion forums are intended to help students develop critical skills by composing reflections on class materials with an opportunity for asynchronous peer engagement.

Student attending live lecture sessions are welcome to ask questions (in-person or through the Zoom hand raise tool) as soon as ideas or concepts become unclear. A monitored chat (watch party) will be available during film sessions should students want to engage with each other or ask questions during the screenings. You will not be graded on your ability to contribute to any live sessions.

<u>Readings</u>
Students are expected to complete weekly readings before class. Weekly readings will provide policy context and framing required to understand the lecture, film screening, and participate in the discussion forum. You are required to acquire one textbook, additional course readings will be posted on Latte.

> Required Text (purchase, borrow, or rent): Leon-Guerrero, Anna. *Social problems: Community, policy, and social action*. Sage publications, 2018.

<u>Assignments</u>
All assignments must be submitted through links provided Latte. This syllabus provides an outline of the course assignments, grading rubrics will be provided separately. This course consists of three types of assignments: 1) Weekly Critical Reflection and Responses, 2) Film Review, 3) Advocacy Research Project.

Weekly Critical Reflection
As a social critic, you will use the context provided in the readings and lecture to evaluate and analyze if/how the film reflects the policy area we are studying this week. This assignment is not a movie review; you will not need to provide your opinion of it the film, summarize the plot, or avoid spoilers.

Assignment Details
- I will provide 13 prompts over our 13 weeks of class.
- You will complete 6 posts that are submitted to the Discussion Forum on Latte for that week.
- In your post, aim for 250 words of concise writing that clearly states your 1-2 main points supported by evidence from the lecture, readings and film.
- Submission for posts will closed at the end of week 13. While can be completed at any point over the course of the semester, I'd advise that you complete the posts while the material is fresh and try to avoid making a zombie hoard of posts at the end of the course.

- Your posts will be available for the entire class to read and you are welcome to comment on each other's posts. While I will not grade the comments, I do enjoy reading them and will monitor the Forum to ensure we are meeting the terms of our class contract.

Film Review (Due End of Week 10)
Horror film is a rich and robust media. We will spend time at the start of the course on the ways the film industry promotes, restricts, excludes, and privileges the voices and visions of creators. In keeping with commitment to an inclusive classroom, each of you will be asked to find a film and prepare a review that advocates for why the film should be considered in the context of this course.

Assignment Details
- Search and identify a scary film that you think would contribute to this syllabus because the film expresses or highlights a social policy or problem.
- Selections can be connected to the policy you select for your advocacy project, a course topic, or something completely different.
- Prepare a 600-to-1200-word review of the movie that argues why it should be included in the syllabus by articulating factors of policy relevancy, cultural significance, and film elements.
- Using the discussion forum, students will post their reviews by the end of Week 11. Students are welcome to complete this assignment earlier.
- Interact with at least three posts; replies could "up-vote" the film and advocate for inclusion in the syllabus, analyze how the film relates your selection, or evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the film in relation to the policy connection.

Advocacy Research Project
The best antidote to fears is facts. Your Advocacy Research Project will be completed over the course of the semester and accomplishes two goals, 1) become an expert in a specific policy area, 2) craft a brief that advocates for your solution(s). This assignment is modeled, with permission, after an assignment created by Professor Rebecca Kreitzer for her Politics of Public Policy course at UNC Chapel Hill. You can view examples of student work from Dr. Kreitzer's class here.

Assignment Elements
1. Problem and Policy Proposal (Due End of Week 5): Submit a paragraph outlining a specific social problem and policy of your choosing. When choosing, remember that you want to demonstrate that you know a lot about a very narrow policy area – depth over breath. For example, if you are interested in housing policy in general, then you may consider focusing on rental assistance programs during COVID-19. You will not be graded on your selection; however, it is needed to proceed to the next phase of the project, and you will receive feedback to help you conceptualize.
2. Annotated Bibliography (Due End of Week 8): Find, analyze, and summarize 8-10 sources (6 of which must be academic and peer-reviewed) relevant to your policy area. We will have a workshop with the library to help you prepare for this assignment and frame how citation is a powerful way to promote ideas and center voices in knowledge production.
3. Infographic (Due End of Week 11): Visual communication is a way help us define the top-level takeaways of our work. Using the discussion forum, students will prepare a policy infographic and provide peer-review feedback. We will have a workshop with a graphic designer/visual librarian to help prepare for this assignment.

4. Advocacy Brief (Due Finals Week): Prepare a 6-8-page (double spaced) brief that argues in favor of your policy or a set of actions that changes your policy; sections for this brief will address the policy problem, myths and misconceptions about the problem, and your solutions.

Evaluation and Grading

Students can monitor their progress on Latte and are welcome to make an appointment to discuss grading. Grading rubrics will be provided separately for each assignment.

Class Element	Grade Percentage
Weekly Critical Reflection and Responses	20%
Film Review	10%
Annotated Bibliography	15%
Infographic	15%
Advocacy Research Project	40%

The Weekly Critical Reflection and Responses will be reviewed by the instructor and graded as either complete or incomplete; each post is equivalent to one point. Grading for the prompts will be ongoing as you have until the end of week 13 to complete six reflections. This assignment is designed to strengthen your ability to ask and answer engaging critical questions with your peers in a thoughtful and constructive way.

The Advocacy Research Project will be graded by the instructor on a points scale based on the rubric. This assignment is designed to strengthen your ability to conduct an original research project that demonstrates fact finding using scholarly resources, effective persuasive communication, and clear advocacy goals. This research project is designed for you to make manageable progress throughout the semester, should you be unable to meet one of the deadlines, please let me know so we can work together on an updated timeline. The final due date is firm as it reflects the time, I need to complete your course grade, we will talk more about this as the due date approaches.

Course Schedule

The course schedule is an outline by week of our class topic, readings, viewings, and prompt for your Weekly Critical Reflection. Any changes to this outline will be announced via Latte. You are required to acquire the Leon-Guerrero book, all other readings and videos will be available on Latte.

In general, lectures will be held on Mondays and film viewings on Wednesdays. The exception will be weeks with workshops when viewings and lectures will be held on the Wednesdays and workshops on Mondays.

1	Greetings, Syllabus Review, Classroom Contract	No assigned readings for the first day of class
	Intro Social Policy and Problems	Leon-Guerrero, pp. 1-19
		Dean, "What is Social Policy?"

Critical Reflection: How does the framing of social problems and social policy help us talk about complex issues?

| 2 | Discourse and Critique | "Why the Scariest Thing About Horror Movies is Us", Rewire (2019)
Nelson, J. S. (2005). Horror films face political evils in everyday life. Political Communication, 22(3), 381-386.
Erigha, M. (2015). Race, gender, Hollywood: Representation in cultural production and digital media's potential for change. *Sociology Compass*, 9(1), 78-89.
Viewing: Nightmares in Red, White, and Blue (documentary) |

Critical Reflection: How do the sociological perspectives in Leon-Guerrero contrast and completement the critical horror film discourse?

| 3 | Bases of Inequality | Leon-Guerrero, pp. 25-75
Kee, J. B. (2015). Black masculinities and postmodern horror: Race, gender, and abjection. *Visual Culture & Gender*, 10, 47-56.
Viewing: Land of the Living Dead
Optional Viewing: Night of the Living Dead |

Critical Reflection: How does Romero create tension in the film and highlight inequality due to scarcity, insecurity, and social hierarchy?

| 4 | Urban Legends and Urbanization | Leon-Guerrero, pp. 307-328
Best, J., & Horiuchi, G. T. (1985). The razor blade in the apple: The social construction of urban legends. *Social problems*, 32(5), 488-499.
Kee, J. B. (2015). Black masculinities and postmodern horror: Race, gender, and abjection. *Visual Culture & Gender*, 10, 47-56.
Viewing: Candyman |

Critical Reflection: How do urban legends reflect social problems?

| 5 | Gender, Sexuality, and Family | Leon-Guerrero, pp. 77-112 and 137-160

"Margaret Atwood on the real-life events that inspired The Handmaid's Tale and The Testaments", Penguin Books (2019)
Humphrey, D. (2014). Gender and sexuality haunts the horror film. *A Companion to the Horror Film*, 38-55.
Viewing: Handmaid's Tale S1E1 |

Critical Reflection: Atwood bases her stories on historical happenings, what are the benefits and pitfalls of using history to inform horror?

DUE END OF WEEK 5: Problem and Policy Selection

| 6 | *Workshop* | *Annotated Bibliography* |
| | Health and Bodies | Leon-Guerrero, pp. 213-234
Sobande, F. (2020). 'We're all in this together': Commodified notions of connection, care and community in brand responses to COVID-19. European Journal of Cultural Studies, 23(6), 1033-1037.
Sutton, T. (2014). Avenging the body: Disability in the horror film. *A Companion to the Horror Film*, 73-89.
Viewing: The Masque of the Red Death (1969, 10 mins) |

Critical Reflection: How does fear associated with health and body standards influence policy decisions?

7	Work and Technology	Leon-Guerrero, pp. 189-210
		Ruha Benjamin, "Race after technology", Introduction
		Viewing: Sleep Dealer

Critical Reflection: What does Sleep Dealer tells us about the future of labor?

8	Housing	Leon-Guerrero, pp. 307-328
		Richard Rothstein, "The color of law: A forgotten history of how our government segregated America", Introduction #LovecraftCountry Syllabi from Langston League
		Viewing: Lovecraft Country, S1E3

Critical Reflection: How effectively does a haunted house to convey historical trauma?

DUE END OF WEEK 8: Annotated Bibliography

9	*Workshop*	*Infographic*
	Environment	Leon-Guerrero, pp. 331-354
		Viewing: The Midnight Sun, The Twilight Zone (30 mins)

Critical Reflection: Does climate change fear lead to climate change policy, why or why not?

10	Media and Information	Leon-Guerrero, pp. 237-254
		Douglas, K. M., Uscinski, J. E., Sutton, R. M., Cichocka, A., Nefes, T., Ang, C. S., & Deravi, F. (2019). Understanding conspiracy theories. *Political Psychology*, *40*, 3-35.
		Viewing: They Live

Critical Reflection: In the years since They Live was released, how has distrust in information evolved?

DUE END OF WEEK 10: Film Review

| 11 | States and Social Movements | Leon-Guerrero, pp. 357-395 |
| | | Viewing: Pan's Labyrinth |

Critical Reflection: How can stories be a form of political protest?

DUE END OF WEEK 11: Infographic

12	Blaxploitation	Benshoff, H. M. (2000). Blaxploitation Horror Films: Generic Reappropriation or Reinscription? Cinema Journal, 31-50.
		Yvonne Sims. "Women of blaxploitation: How the Black action film heroine changed American popular culture." Introduction
		K. Sue Jewell. "*From mammy to Miss America and beyond: Cultural images and the shaping of US social policy*." Introduction
		Viewing: Get Out
		Optional Viewing: Horror Noire: A History of Black Horror (documentary)

Critical Reflection: How does the horror genre reinforce and challenge social control and exclusion?

| 13 | Final Girls | Weaver, A. D., Ménard, A. D., Cabrera, C., & Taylor, A. (2015). Embodying the moral code? Thirty years of Final Girls in slasher films. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, *4*(1), 31. |

Farrimond, K. (2020). 'Being a horror fan and being a feminist are often a conflicting business': Feminist horror, the opinion economy and Teeth's gendered audiences. Horror Studies, 11(2), 149-168.

Viewing: Teeth

Critical Reflection: How are slasher films depictions of gender, sexuality, and violence a reflection of our society?

DUE END OF WEEK 13: All Critical Reflections and Film Review Responses

DUE FINALS WEEK: Advocacy Brief

Important Policies and Resources

Academic Integrity

Every member of the University community is expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. A student shall not submit work that is falsified or is not the result of the student's own effort. Infringement of academic integrity by a student subjects that student to serious penalties, which may include failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension from the University or other sanctions. Please consult Brandeis University Rights and Responsibilities for all policies and procedures related to academic integrity. Students may be required to submit work via TurnItIn.com or similar software to verify originality. A student who is in doubt regarding standards of academic integrity as they apply to a specific course or assignment should consult the faculty member responsible for that course or assignment before submitting the work. Allegations of alleged academic dishonesty will be forwarded to the Department of Student Rights and Community Standards. Citation and research assistance can be found at Brandeis Library Guides - Citing Sources.

Breaks

Each meetings of 90 minutes will include a 10-minute break.

Classroom Health and Safety

- Register for the Brandeis Emergency Notification System. Students who receive an emergency notification while attending class should notify their instructor immediately. In the case of a life-threatening emergency, call 911. As a precaution, review this active shooter information sheet.
- Brandeis provides this shuttle service for traveling across campus or to downtown Waltham, Cambridge and Boston.
- On the Brandeis campus, all students, faculty, staff and guests are required to observe the university's policies on physical distancing and mask-wearing to support the health and safety of all classroom participants. Face coverings must be worn by all students and instructors in classes with in-person meetings. Students and faculty must also maintain the appropriate 6 feet of physical distance from one another when entering, exiting, or being in the classroom and continue to sit in seats assigned by the professor to assist the university in its contract-tracing efforts. All faculty and students must also clean their work areas before and after each class session, using the sanitizing wipes provided by the University. (Classrooms will also be professionally cleaned by Brandeis custodial staff multiple times per day.) Review up to date COVID-related health and safety policies regularly.

Course Materials/Books/Apps/Equipment

If you are having difficulty purchasing course materials, please make an appointment with your Student Financial Services or Academic Services advisor to discuss possible funding options, including vouchers for purchases made at the Brandeis Bookstore.

LATTE
LATTE is the Brandeis learning management system. Login using your UNET ID and password. For LATTE help, contact Library@brandeis.edu.

Library
The Brandeis Library collections and staff offer resources and services to support Brandeis students, faculty and staff. Librarians and Specialists from Research & Instructional Services, Public Services, Archives & Special Collections, Sound & Image Media Studios, MakerLab, AutomationLab, and Digital Scholarship Lab are available to help you through consultations and workshops.

Our librarian for policy studies is Aimee Slater, aslater@brandeis.edu, please reach out for assistance on resources and research tips.

Privacy
To protect your privacy in any case where this course involves online student work outside of Brandeis password-protected spaces, you may choose to use a pseudonym/alias. You must share the pseudonym/ alias with me and any teaching assistants as needed. Alternatively, with prior consultation, you may submit such work directly to me.

Student Support
Brandeis University is committed to supporting all our students so they can thrive. If a student, faculty, or staff member wants to learn more about support resources, the Support at Brandeis webpage offers a comprehensive list that includes these staff colleagues you can consult, along with other support resources:
- The Care Team
- Academic Services (undergraduate)
- Graduate Student Affairs
- Directors of Graduate Studies in each department, School of Arts & Sciences
- Program Administrators for the Heller School and International Business School
- University Ombuds
- Office of Equal Opportunity.