

Sophister Module Description Template 2026-27

Full Name: Demons, Devils and Ghosts: The Supernatural in Contemporary Fiction and Film

Short Name: Demons, Devils and Ghosts

Lecturer Name and Email Address: Bernice M. Murphy (murphb12@tcd.ie)

ECTS Weighting: 10

Semester Taught MT/HT: HT

Year JS/SS: SS

Module Content

Course Description:

This Sophister option focuses upon Supernatural literature and film from the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. We will study novels by authors such as Ira Levin, Shirley Jackson, Jay Anson, Paul Tremblay, Silvia Moreno-Garcia and Koji Suzuki. Selected films from a variety of national contexts will also feature.

Students will be introduced to the work of key critics and theorists dealing with the supernatural as a literary and filmic form and will be encouraged to consider the ways in which classic supernatural themes and tropes have been updated to reflect contemporary anxieties, social mores and cultural preoccupations. They also be asked to reflect upon the ways in which supernatural literatures from a range of global cultures (the USA, Wales, Spain, Ireland, Japan and England) might differ in their approach to depicting the otherworldly and the uncanny. The ways in which past national and personal traumas (and sources of guilt) can be refracted through supernatural narratives will also be considered, and issues pertaining to faith, identity, and modernity will also be discussed.

Learning Outcomes:

- Develop transferable skills in filmic and literary analysis to a high level
- Engage with relevant texts from a range of national and cultural contexts
- Engage with relevant historical, cultural and theoretical material

Learning Aims:

On successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- Demonstrate familiarity with major examples of supernatural literature and film from a number of different countries (including the UK, Sweden, the United States, and Japan) and with the historical and cultural factors which inform these texts;

- Recognise the origins and development of the contemporary Supernatural narrative, and be able to distinguish between major authors and recurrent generic tropes;
- Evaluate the position of supernatural literature and film within popular literature and culture, and describe the reasons why the supernatural continues to occupy such an important place within contemporary culture despite the fact that we supposedly live in a secular age.

Assessment Details:

- Number of Components: 1
- Name/Type of Component(s): Exam
- Percentage Value of Component(s): 100%

Preliminary Primary Reading/Viewing List:

Please note: this is a PROVISIONAL outline – Not all of these texts will be in the final module version and there definitely be additions/deletions before term begins – BMM.

F = Film

The Haunting of Hill House (by Shirley Jackson, 1959, USA)

The Babadook (Dir: Jennifer Kent, 2014, Australia)

Rosemary's Baby (by Ira Levin, 1967, USA)

The Exorcist (Dir: William Peter Blatty, 1973)

The Amityville Horror (by Jay Anson, 1977, USA)

The Orphanage/El Orfanato (Dir: Juan Antonio Bayona, Spain, F)

Ring (by Koji Suzuki, 1991, Japan)

Poltergeist (Dir: Tobe Hooper, 1982, USA F)

Mexican Gothic (by Silvia Moreno-Garcia, 2020, Mexico)

The Conjuring (Dir: James Wan, USA F)

A Head Full of Ghosts (by Paul Tremblay, 2015 USA)

The Slender Man Mythos (2009 –)

Let the Right One In (John Ajvide Lindqvist, 2004, Sweden)

School of English

A Ghost Story (Dir: David Lowery, 2017, USA F)

The Apparition Phase (Will Maclean, 2020, UK)

Hereditary (Dir: Ari Aster, 2018, USA F)

Weapons (Dir: Zach Cregger, 2025, USA F)

Fréwaka (Dir: Aislinn Clarke, 2025, Ireland)

Please note:

- **Curricular information is subject to change.**
- **Information is displayed only for guidance purposes, relates to the current academic year only and is subject to change.**