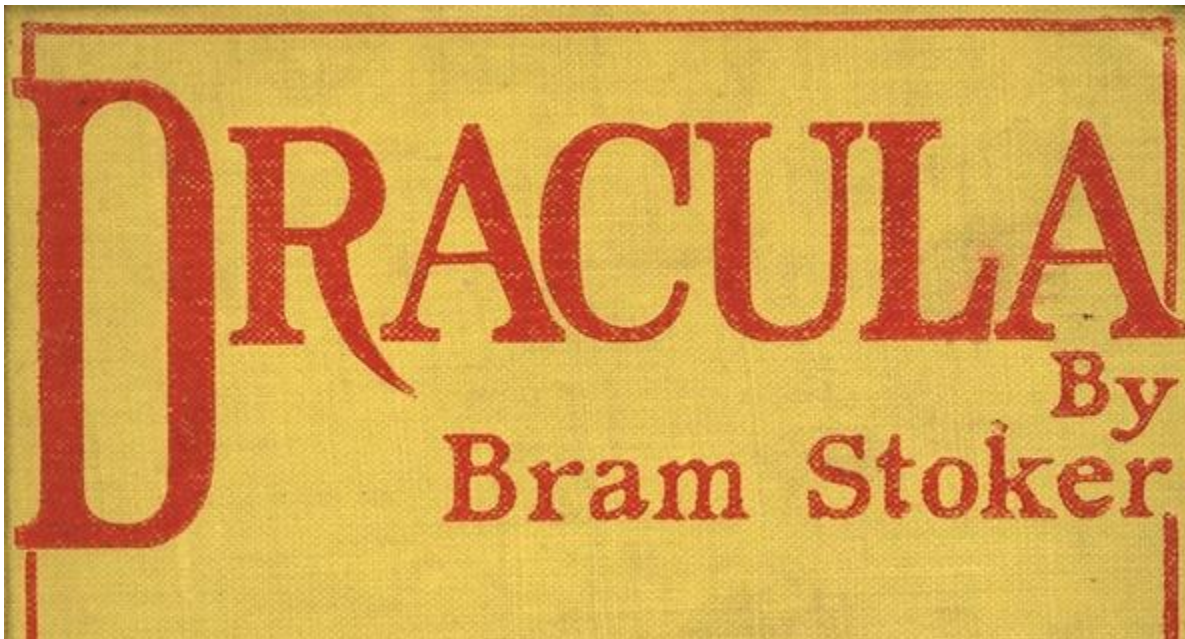


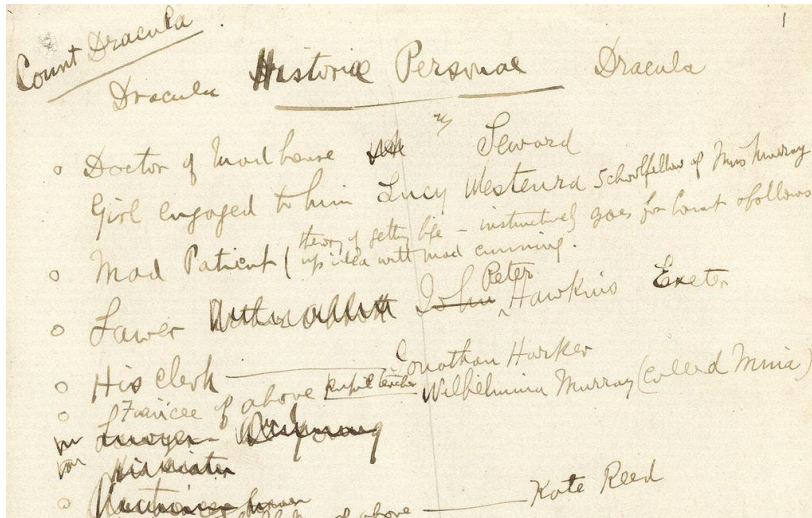
Dark and Bloody Nights: a Literary History of Vampires



6 monthly sessions: Wednesdays November 14, 2018 – April 10, 2019 | 6:00–7:45 p.m.
Tuition: \$300
Led by Edward G. Pettit, Sunstein Manager of Public Programs at the Rosenbach

“There are such beings as vampires; some of us have evidence that they exist. Even had we not the proof of our own unhappy experience, the teachings and the records of the past give proof enough for sane peoples.” Thus Dr. Abraham Van Helsing lectures his team of would-be vampire hunters. They have come face to face with the vampire of the legendary past. Yet the vampire of folklore was a very different monster than the one that haunts the pages and screens of our contemporary world. When nineteenth century authors took up the pen and created stories of the blood-sucking beast, they reinvented the vampire in ways that reflected their own anxieties and their vampires, in turn, have come to represent for us, the legends of the past.

In this course, we will read some of the seminal texts of vampire fiction and see how the legend grew and developed since the nineteenth century. We’ll also look at some accounts of the vampire in folklore and compare myths of the past with myths of the present (can there be such a thing as a present-day myth?). We’ll see how the texts of vampires highlight the fears and anxieties of the cultures that produce them and discover that vampire stories (like all monster stories) are just as much about themes of difference and otherness, race and ethnicity, sexuality and gender, as they are about thrilling horror.



The Rosenbach collection contains some very significant items of vampire literature, including first editions of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, the first paperback edition containing the first illustration of the Count, as well as Stoker's notes (detail pictured at left) for the novel, which provide a fascinating record of an author creating one of the most enduring legends of modern culture. Also in the collection

is a first edition of John Polidori's *The Vampyre*, the first vampire story in English fiction. Some class time will be spent exploring these books and manuscripts.

Required texts:

- *Dracula* by Bram Stoker (1897)
- *Carmilla* by J. Sheridan Le Fanu (1871-72) (I will also provide a pdf of this novella)
- *I Am Legend* by Richard Matheson (1954)
- *Let the Right One In* by John Ajvide Lindqvist (2004)

Any edition of these books is okay to use for class. I will provide pdf files for other readings, include the session two texts (vampire folklore and Polidori's *Vampyre*).

Session One, November 14:

Dracula, Part One. For this class we will talk about vampires as we know them today and our impressions of their literary history. Then we'll look at the greatest of all vampire stories, *Dracula* (1897), which influences all the vampire stories told since and also colors our impressions of all the stories that came before it. We will discuss the first four chapters of *Dracula*, comprising the journal entries of Jonathan Harker while he was in Transylvania.

Session Two, December 12:

Dracula, Part Two. We will finish our discussion of Stoker's novel and see some of the first editions and notes from the Rosenbach's collection.

Session Three, January 16 (note this is the third Wed of the month):

We'll look at some of the earlier folkloric accounts of vampires that inspired the fiction of the 19th century, as well as the first vampire of English fiction, Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819), the story that recast the vampire of folklore into the monster we recognize. I will provide pdf files for this week's readings.

Session Four, February 13:

The day before Valentine's day, we'll discuss one of the more thrilling and bizarre love stories of vampire fiction, J. Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1871-72). Le Fanu was an Irish author of supernatural tales that heavily influenced Stoker and many others.

Carmilla's plot still shocks (and titillates modern audiences). I will provide a pdf of this novella, but it is readily available in many editions if you would like to buy your own paper copy. (image to the right is an illustration from the first publication of the story).



Session Five, March 13:

Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend* (1954) is the seminal monster story of the 20th century in how it reimagines the plague of vampirism, but also how it comes to create the entire subgenre of that other undead monster, the zombie. *I Am Legend* began life as a 25-cent pulp paperback on the spinner racks in drugstores, but is a deft and inventive take on vampires by an author who knew how to exploit the nightmares of the modern age.

Session Six, April 10

We'll read *Let the Right One In* (2004), a 21st Century vampire novel by the Swedish author, John Ajvide Lindqvist, to see how the vampire legend has changed (or not) in our own day.

About the instructor

Edward G. Pettit is the Sunstein Manager of Public Programs at the Rosenbach. Among other courses, he has taught Dickens, Austen, Poe, Frankenstein, and Sherlock Holmes at the Rosenbach and for ten years he taught writing and literature at La Salle University, where he specialized in monster studies. While Pettit would *not* enjoy drinking (only) blood to survive, he is attracted to a life spent (only) in the nighttime hours, especially if it were an immortal life (think of all the books you could read!).