

Preliminary Syllabus**Instructor:** Dr. Çiğdem Buğdaycı**Class hours:** W 5; F 2-3**Classrooms:** VB 201 | TB 121 | TB 121**Office:** TB 450**Office Hours:** Wednesdays and Fridays by appointment**E-mail:** cigdem.bugdayci@bogazici.edu.tr**Course Description:**

This course examines spectrality—a critical approach emerging in the 1990s that analyzes ghostly presences in literature and theory. Specters, ghosts, revenants, and phantoms are approached not as literal phenomena, but as conceptual metaphors that reveal absent presences.

A specter, in this sense, is not an apparition, and this is not a course on ghost stories. The specter is whatever has no proper place in the present and yet continues to act upon it: the disappeared who were never buried, the object that belongs somewhere it is not, the experience a life never accounted for, the future that was promised and cancelled.

The course examines how spectral presences—including repressed memories, traumas, forgotten histories, and abstract phenomena like ideologies—continue to shape our understanding of the present. This concept is crucial for understanding how literature engages with social injustices, personal and collective trauma, and repressed histories, and is applicable across various literary genres, including modernist, postcolonial, and contemporary fiction, as well as in trauma studies and gender studies, and beyond literature into film, image, and sound.

Students will engage with key theoretical texts to critically examine the politics of memory, colonial histories, and the ideological specters between past, present, and potential futures through selected novels and visual materials.

Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- ➔ Define the key concepts of spectral criticism, including hauntology, the revenant, the absent presence, and the lost future.
- ➔ Distinguish spectrality as a critical concept from the Gothic and the supernatural as narrative devices.
- ➔ Analyze a literary text by identifying a specific object, place, or figure within it and explaining its spectral function.

- ➔ Apply spectral criticism to non-literary material, including film, conceptual art, and recorded sound.
- ➔ Interpret literary and visual works in relation to the politics of memory, colonial history, and forgetting.

Course Structure and Requirements:

- ➔ Attendance is not graded. However, students who miss more than 20% of class meetings (that is, more than seven meetings) without a valid medical report will not be permitted to take the final exam.
- ➔ Reading the assigned texts carefully before coming to class is mandatory.
- ➔ Films are screened during class hours, in the sessions marked in the weekly schedule. Screenings count as class meetings for attendance.
- ➔ You will have **two (2)** in-class response papers, each worth 15%, written in class in response to a prompt given on the day. The first responds to a topic drawn from the assigned material. The second is an object analysis: you will be asked to take a single object, place, or figure from one of the assigned novels and give a spectral account of it. **Their dates are not fixed in advance and will be announced during the term.** There are no quizzes and no take-home writing assignments.
- ➔ There will be one midterm and one final exam, both of which are required.
- ➔ A student who misses an exam or a response paper must submit a medical report, and no other grounds for absence will be considered.
- ➔ Students who arrive more than ten minutes after the start of class, or who leave before the session ends without a valid documented reason, will be marked absent for that session.

Course materials:

You may purchase a course pack from the Kuzey Fotokopici. The link to the materials is announced on Moodle.

Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight*, Moss's *Ghost Wall*, and the Kincaid stories are all short and readable. Iris Murdoch's *The Sea, The Sea* is not difficult but is considerably longer than the other texts and will be assigned selectively—begin it early. Please check the Moodle course page regularly for detailed reading instructions.

Grading Scale:

AA (100-90), BA (89-85), BB (84-80), CB (79-75), CC (74-70), DC (69-65), DD (64-60), (fail) F (59-0)

Assessment

- ➔ In-class response paper 1: 15%
- ➔ In-class response paper 2: 15%
- ➔ Midterm Exam (Friday, 13 November): 30%
- ➔ Final Exam: 40%

Theoretical Material

- María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren (2013), "Introduction: Conceptualizing Spectralities," in *The Spectralities Reader*, pp. 1–19.
- Jacques Derrida (1993), "Exordium" (pp. xvi–xx) and "Injunctions of Marx" (pp. 1–8) in *Specters of Marx*.
- Colin Davis (2005), "État Présent: Hauntology, Spectres and Phantoms," *French Studies* 59.3, pp. 373–379.
- Mark Fisher (2012), "What Is Hauntology?" *Film Quarterly* 66.1, pp. 16–24.
- Sigmund Freud (1919), "The Uncanny," selected pages.
- Julian Wolfreys (2002), "On Textual Haunting," in *Victorian Hauntings*, pp. ix–xiv.
- Julian Wolfreys (2018), *Haunted Selves, Haunting Places in English Literature and Culture: 1800–Present*, selected chapter.
- Achille Mbembe (2003), "Necropolitics," excerpt.
- Saidiya Hartman (2008), "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe* 12.2, 14 pp.

Literary Works

- Paul Celan, "I Can See You Yet" ("Ich kann dich noch sehn"), trans. Michael Hamburger or Pierre Joris
- Virginia Woolf (1921), "A Haunted House"
- Jean Rhys (1939), *Good Morning, Midnight*
- Sarah Moss (2018), *Ghost Wall*
- Jamaica Kincaid (1983), *At the Bottom of the River* (selected stories); and (1988) *A Small Place* (excerpt)
- Virginia Woolf (1939–40), "A Sketch of the Past" (selections)
- Iris Murdoch (1978), *The Sea, The Sea* (selections)

Visual Material

All visual material is shown during class hours. Screening sessions count as class meetings for attendance.

- *Atlantique* (2019), dir. Mati Diop — excerpts shown in class, Week 5.
- *Dahomey* (2024), dir. Mati Diop, 68 min. — screened in full in class, Week 9.
- Sophie Calle, *Ghosts* — shown in class, Week 1.
- Banu Cennetoğlu, *List* — shown in class, Week 9.

Suggested Readings

- María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren (2013), *The Spectralities Reader*.
- Bianca DelVillano (2007), *Ghostly Alterities*, "Introduction: The Meaning of Spectrality," pp. 1—26.
- Julian Wolfreys (2002), *Victorian Hauntings*, Introduction, pp. 1—24.
- Avery Gordon (1997), *Ghostly Matters*.
- Nicolas Abraham (1975), "Notes on the Phantom: A Complement to Freud's Metapsychology."
- Katy Shaw (2018), *Hauntology: The Presence of the Past in Twenty-First Century English Literature*.
- Mark Fisher (2009), *Capitalist Realism*; (2014) *Ghosts of My Life*; (2016) *The Weird and the Eerie*; and "The Slow Cancellation of the Future" (recorded lecture).
- Saidiya Hartman (2019), *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments*.
- Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy (2018), *The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage: Toward a New Relational Ethics*.

Weekly schedule

Week	Date	Theme	Readings/Visual Material
Week 1	Sept. 23 W.	What Is a Specter?	Course introduction. Why spectrality is not the ghost story: the specter as absent presence, not apparition. Paul Celan, "I Can See You Yet" ("Ich kann dich noch sehn"). Sophie Calle, <i>Ghosts</i> — images shown and discussed in class.
Week 1	Sept. 25 F.	The Spectral Turn	María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren (2013), "Introduction: Conceptualizing Spectralities," in <i>The Spectralities Reader</i>, pp. 1–19. Online meeting with Prof. Esther Peeren
Week 2	Sept. 30 W.	Hauntology	Jacques Derrida (1993), "Exordium" and "Injunctions of Marx," in <i>Specters of Marx</i> , pp. xvi–xx and pp. 1–8.
Week 2	Oct. 2 F.	Self-Haunting and Gender	Virginia Woolf (1921), "A Haunted House." Jean Rhys (1939), <i>Good Morning, Midnight</i>, pp. 3–65.
Week 3	Oct. 7 W.	Hauntology	Colin Davis (2005), "État Présent: Hauntology, Spectres and Phantoms," <i>French Studies</i> 59.3, pp. 373–379.
Week 3	Oct. 9 F.	Haunted Rooms, Haunted Streets	Rhys, <i>Good Morning, Midnight</i> , pp. 69–110.
Week 4	Oct. 14 W.	Lost Futures	Mark Fisher (2012), "What Is Hauntology?" <i>Film Quarterly</i> 66.1, pp. 16–24.
Week 4	Oct. 16 F.	The Unaccounted Life	Rhys, <i>Good Morning, Midnight</i> , pp. 110–157 (complete).
Week 5	Oct. 21 W.	The Uncanny	Sigmund Freud (1919), "The Uncanny," selected pages.

Week	Date	Theme	Readings/Visual Material
Week 5	Oct. 23 F.	Revenants of the Crossing	<i>Atlantique</i> (2019), dir. Mati Diop — excerpts shown in class, followed by discussion. Achille Mbembe (2003), “Necropolitics,” excerpt.
Week 6	Oct. 28 W.	Republic Day	No class
Week 6	Oct. 30 F.	Spectropolitics	Sarah Moss (2018), <i>Ghost Wall</i> , pp. 1—50.
Week 7	Nov. 4 W.	Nation, Bog, Body	Moss, <i>Ghost Wall</i> , pp. 50—100.
Week 7	Nov. 6 F.	Nation, Bog, Body	Moss, <i>Ghost Wall</i> , pp. 100—149 (complete).
Week 8	Nov. 11 W.	Textual Haunting	Julian Wolfreys (2002), “On Textual Haunting,” in <i>Victorian Hauntings</i> , pp. ix—xiv. Midterm review.
Week 8	Nov. 13 F.	Midterm Exam	Midterm Exam (in class)
Week 9	Nov. 18 W.	The Archive and Its Silences	Saidiya Hartman (2008), “Venus in Two Acts,” 14 pp. Banu Cennetoğlu, <i>List</i> — shown and discussed in class.
Week 9	Nov. 20 F.	Restitution: Who Owns the Past?	In-class screening: <i>Dahomey</i> (2024), dir. Mati Diop, 68 min., followed by discussion. Jamaica Kincaid (1988), <i>A Small Place</i> , opening section (excerpt).
Week 10	Nov. 25 W.	Haunted Selves, Haunting Places	Julian Wolfreys (2018), <i>Haunted Selves, Haunting Places in English Literature and Culture: 1800–Present</i> , selected chapter.
Week 10	Nov. 27 F.	Voices That Inhabit	Jamaica Kincaid (1983), <i>At the Bottom of the River</i> : “Girl,” “Blackness,” “My Mother,” and the title story.

Week	Date	Theme	Readings/Visual Material
Week 11	Dec. 2 W.	Moments of Being	Virginia Woolf (1939—40), “A Sketch of the Past,” selected pages.
Week 11	Dec. 4 F.	Memory and Spectral Subjectivity	Iris Murdoch (1978), <i>The Sea, The Sea</i> , “Prehistory” (pp. 1—118).
Week 12	Dec. 9 W.	Haunting Identity	Murdoch, <i>The Sea, The Sea</i> , selections from “History”.
Week 12	Dec. 11 F.	Haunting Identity	Murdoch, <i>The Sea, The Sea</i> , concluded. Review of the term