Study of an Author: Poe and Popular Culture

Edgar Allan Poe was a literary genius and the original goth. His influence is felt in virtually every literary movement from his day to our own (including Romanticism, Symbolism, Psychological Realism, Modernism, Magical Realism, Postmodernism, Fantasy, and Horror) and in almost every conceivable medium (literature, film and television, music, theater, comics, graphic arts, and video games). He straddles High and Popular culture more extensively than almost any other author: he was a master of prose fiction and poetry, and the first great literary theorist in the U.S.; he invented the detective story and helped invent science fiction; he anticipated Freud’s discovery of the unconscious; he paved the way for the Saw franchise; he was worshipped by Charles Baudelaire and celebrated by The Simpsons; hundreds of movies have been inspired by his tales; he has been probed by theorists including Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, Barbara Johnson, and Stanley Cavell; and composers from Claude Debussy and Leonard Bernstein to Lou Reed and MC Lars have put Poe’s words to music. In this course we will intensively study Poe’s own writings, alongside of which we will explore his extraordinary influence on the entire range of cultural production in the U.S. and around the world, from the early 19th century to the present day.

required texts (available at Penn Book Center, 34th & Sansom):
握手 ISBN: 978-1-86189-515-8
握手 some of the other required works are videos linked to the syllabus, while others — marked with this symbol: 🔄 — are available at my pdf library for downloading and photocopying: http://www.english.upenn.edu/~cavitch/pdf-library/
握手 I strongly recommend that you procure a subscription to Spotify, (https://www.spotify.com/us/?carousel=1) where hundreds of Poe-related musical and spoken-word recordings can be listened to. With ads, the subscription is free. For a premium membership, ad-free, there is a student discount available: $5/month.

course requirements:
握手 attendance at every class meeting
握手 carefully reading and preparation of the assigned readings and other materials
握手 active participation in class discussion
regular unannounced quizzes, beginning promptly at the beginning of class
several very short essays (100-200 words), curating/interpreting an Item for the Museum of Poe and Popular Culture (Omeka site)
several very short in-class presentations
final project proposal (500 words minimum)
final project: options: critical/research essay (8-10 pages); original film (5-10 min.); original song, recorded with lyrics and instrumentation (3-5 min.); illustration project; material culture project; et al.—all final project ideas must be approved in advance

**schedule of classes:**

**8.27** _INTRODUCTION_

**HIGH-BROW, MIDDLE-BROW, LOW-BROW: WHAT IS POPULAR CULTURE?**

**9.1** Poe, “The Raven” (1845)
Bill Elder and Harvey Kurtzman’s adaptation of Poe’s “The Raven” for _Mad_ Magazine (1954)

**9.3** Poe, “How to Write a Blackwood Article” (1838)
anonymous, “The Vulture: An Ornithological Study. After the Late Edgar A. Poe” (1853)
Kevin Hayes, _Edgar Allan Poe_, pp. 7-14

**POE’S LIFE AND THE POPULAR CULTURE OF HIS TIME**

**9.8** Kevin Hayes, _Edgar Allan Poe_, pp. 15-71

**9.10** Hayes, _Poe_, pp. 72-105
in-class presentations of new Items

**INSTRUCTING POPULAR TASTE: POE’S CRITICISM**

**9.15** Poe, “The Philosophy of Composition” (1846)
Hayes, _Poe_, 106-165
in-class presentations of new Items

**POE AS ICON**

_S Stephen King vs Edgar Allan Poe. Epic Rap Battles of History Season 3: [https://vimeo.com/100023610](https://vimeo.com/100023610)
Angela Carter, “The Cabinet of Edgar Allan Poe” (1985)
in-class presentations of new Items

**EDITIONS AND ILLUSTRATIONS**

**TALES OF TERROR**
9.22 Poe, “The Pit and the Pendulum” (1842); “The Black Cat” (1843); “The Cask of Amontillado” (1846); “Hop-Frog” (1849)
in-class presentations of new Items

9.24 **special class meeting at Van Pelt Library (room number to be announced)**
we'll learn how to use the Omeka site to upload your own Items and organize them into Collections and Exhibits
everyone must bring one new Item for the Museum

**PSYCHOLOGY AND CIPHERS**

9.29 Poe, “The Man of the Crowd” (1839); “The Imp of the Perverse” (1845)
in-class presentations of new Items

10.1 Poe, “The Gold-Bug” (1843)
in-class presentations of new Items

**MATERIAL CULTURE: CLOTHING, COSTUMES, JEWELRY, FIGURINES, NOVELTY OBJECTS**

10.6 special set of in-class presentations of new material culture Items

10.8 **NO CLASS – FALL BREAK**

**MUSIC, POETRY, AND THE SUPERNATURAL**

10.13 Poe, “The Bells” (1848)
H. P. Lovecraft, “The Music of Erich Zann” (1922) [link]
in-class presentations of new Items

10.15 Poe, “Ulalume—A Ballad” (1847)
Jeff Buckley, arrangement and performance, “Ulalume” (1997) [link]
Poe, “Annabel Lee” (1849)
Stevie Nicks, “Annabel Lee,” from *In Your Dreams* (2011) [link]  
---, “Mr. Raven” from *The Edgar Allan Poe EP* (2012) [link]  
Queen, “Nevermore” from *Queen II* (1974) [link]
in-class presentations of new Items

**POE’S INVENTION OF THE DETECTIVE STORY, AND ITS INHERITORS**

10.20 Poe, “The Purloined Letter” (1844); “The Mystery of Marie Rogêt” (1842-43)
in-class presentations of new Items

10.22 Poe, “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” (1841)
special visitor: Andrea Goulet

10.27 Arthur Conan Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet* (1887) [link]
in-class presentations of new Items

10.29 **UNHALLOWED EYE: ONE TALE, THREE FILM VERSIONS**
Poe, “The Tell-Tale Heart” (1843)
Jules Dassin, dir., *The Tell-Tale Heart* (1941), 20 min. ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YlTCXIJEj-c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YlTCXIJEj-c))


in-class presentations of new Items

11.3 **Poe's Novel**

Poe, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1838), Preface and Chs. 1-5 (pp. 1003-1053)

in-class presentations of new Items

11.5 Poe, *Narrative*, Chs. 6-12 (pp. 1053-1103)

in-class presentations of new Items

11.10 Poe, *Narrative*, Chs. 13-24 and Note (pp. 1103-1182)

in-class presentations of new Items

11.12 **The Novel After Poe**

Mat Johnson, *Pym* (2011), Preface and Volume I (pp. 3-84)

in-class presentations of new Items

11.17 Johnson, *Pym*, Volumes II and II (pp. 87-225)

in-class presentations of new Items

11.19 Johnson, *Pym*, Volume IV (pp. 229-322)

in-class presentations of new Items

final project proposals due in class

**The Sublime and the Absurd: Two Great Directors Take on Poe**

11.24 [note: both films for today's class are on reserve at VPL under the DVD title: *Histoires Extraordinaires*]

Poe, “William Wilson” (1839)


Poe, “Never Bet the Devil Your Head” (1841)

Federico Fellini, dir., *Toby Dammit, or Never Bet the Devil Your Head* (1967)

in-class presentations of new Items

11.26 **No Class – Thanksgiving Recess**

**Death and Afterlife**

12.1 Poe, “Some Words with a Mummy” (1845); “The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar” (1845)

12.3 Poe, “The Premature Burial” (1844)

12.8 **Interminable Poe**

TBA Final projects due