

HIS 300
History of Vampires

Summer-II
Online Asynchronous

Satisfies: SBS+ [DEC: F]

Thematic Categories: "Art, Ideas & Culture," "Law, Politics & Social Justice"

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This course will analyze the perpetrators (the blood suckers) and their victims locked in a confrontation on the frontier between reality and imagination. For example, one specimen of vampires discussed in this course, *Vampyrus Serviensis* (the Serbian Vampire), has been alive for quite some time. It first made his appearance in the legislation of 14th century when Serbian Emperor Stefan Dusan wrote Article 20 specifically addressing the illegal burning of exhumed bodies considered undead. By the mid-1700s, as the Enlightenment was in full swing in Europe and had promised to control and define nature and bodies in a rational way, *Vampyrus Serviensis* resurfaced again in remote Southeastern European villages. The frontier of the Habsburg Empire suddenly was not safe any longer. Doctors produced a description that used modern medicinal language, but the issue remained that the exhumed bodies inspected were not decaying and, through their unexplainable freshness, threatened to contaminate Western European reason. With the 1897 publication of *Dracula* by Bram Stoker, Western European anxiety had reached new heights in terms of hoping to contain the migration of the "barbaric and archaic" that threatened the "civilized and the modern." In 1992, *Dracula*, played by Gary Oldman wearing his famous sunglasses, had become a symbol of modernity. Recently, in the 2009 Romanian movie, *Strigoi: The Undead*, the vampire became a metaphor of post-Communism when commodification of life threatened traditional village relationships. Through readings and movies, this course will reveal the multiple lives of vampires, opening with prehistorical fears of dead bodies and concluding with postmodern questions about personal value. Grading will be based on weekly course discussions, one paper comparing two books about vampires, and a brief final project.