**“Monsters in Literature and Film”**

IAH 207

Prof. Lam

**Description**

Your mid-term assignment is to write a brief essay connecting one of Cohen’s “monster theses” to two texts or films we’ve studied in the course so far. The essay should be between 750-1000 words in length. No additional research is required, though you may certainly use secondary sources (from the class or which you find on your own) if you wish. The mid-term essay is worth 25% of your final grade.

**Essay Prompt**

The following “theses” are from Jeffrey Jerome Cohen’s “Monster Culture (Seven Theses),” which we discussed extensively in class.

Thesis 1: The Monster’s Body Is a Cultural Body

Thesis 2: The Monster Always Escapes

Thesis 3: The Monster Is the Harbinger of Category Crisis

Thesis 4: The Monster Dwells at the Gates of Difference

Thesis 5: The Monster Polices the Borders of the Possible

Thesis 6: Fear of the Monster Is Really a Kind of Desire

Thesis 7: The Monster Stands at the Threshold… of Becoming

DIRECTIONS: First, choose and explain **ONE (1)** of the above theses. In your own words, what is the main idea of the thesis, and why is it significant? (Remember to explain; don’t just repeat.) Second, describe how this thesis might relate to **TWO (2)** texts or films we’ve studied in class. Use these two texts/films to help explain the thesis, and vice versa. How can the thesis help us understand the significance of each monster? How can each monster help us understand the thesis?

**Assessment**

In your essays, I am looking for a few things:

* Understanding of Cohen’s thesis/theses
* Ability to explain meaning and significance of Cohen’s thesis/theses in your own words
* Ability to explore multiple or complicated aspects of the above ideas
* Ability to connect Cohen’s thesis/theses to the two monsters you’re discussing
* Ability to interpret/analyze the two monsters being discussed
* Clarity of expression
* Original, creative, and/or complex interpretations
* Insightful connections between Cohen and the monsters you’re discussing
* Ability to connect all of the above to course themes
* Evidence of further thought (beyond discussion)

Your essay should be organized using paragraphs, complete sentences, topic and transition sentences, etc. It should be proofread, edited, and error-free. While grammatical mistakes are less important than the above criteria, they do distract from the reader’s understanding and muddle your ideas. If your short essay includes your own “thesis”—an overriding argument that can be summed up in a sentence or two—all the better.

**Details**

***Due:* Friday, March 30 (11:59 PM).**

*How/Where:*

You must submit the assignment electronically in a Dropbox folder in D2L, under “Assessment.” I will be using an originality checker, so please make sure you have cited all sources. The following are file formats accepted by TurnItIn: Microsoft Word® (.doc/.docx), OpenOffice Text (.odt), WordPerfect®  (.wpd), PostScript (.ps/.eps), HTML, Rich text format (.rtf), Plain text (.txt), Google Docs via Google Drive™, and Adobe® PDF.

See TurnItIn for details: <https://guides.turnitin.com/01_Manuals_and_Guides/Student/Classic_Student_User_Guide/09_Submitting_a_Paper>

*Plagiarism:*

TurnItIn will check your paper for originality. It will allow quotations, but it will detect any plagiarism. It will also compare your essay with all other student essays for originality. If you are unsure of what constitutes plagiarism, please see below.

*Documenting Sources:*

This is not a “research” paper. I do not want you to summarize the ideas of others. I’m interested in your own interpretation of Cohen’s thesis/theses, your own interpretation of the monsters you’ll write about, and how you draw connections between these ideas and your interpretations. Because this is a very short paper with a limited word count, I want you to focus on your own interpretations. However, *if* you decide to cite any outside sources (which you must do if you are using any outside sources), you must provide complete bibliographic information. Failure to do so usually constitutes plagiarism (see policies below).

*Academic Honesty and Integrity*

There are complicated ways of putting this, but let’s start with a simple piece of advice: Any time you use somebody else’s ideas, words, images, media, etc., you must cite the source. If you’re not sure whether you need to cite something, cite it—it’s always better to err on the side of caution. (The other side runs the gamut from plagiarism to academic dishonesty, and will have serious consequences.) The first instance of academic honesty will result in a failing grade for that particular assignment; the second instance will result in a failing grade for the course, with possible further action at the level of the University. You can find more information about MSU’s policies here: https://ombud.msu.edu/academic-integrity/

You might also keep in mind the Spartan Code of Honor, which states: “As a Spartan, I will strive to uphold values of the **highest ethical standard**. I will practice honesty in my work, foster honesty in my peers, and take pride in knowing that **honor is worth more than grades**. I will carry these values beyond my time as a student at Michigan State University, continuing the endeavor to build personal integrity in all that I do.”