

**INTERMEDIATE COMPOSITION –  
VAMPIRES: Writing to Sink Your Teeth Into ENGL  
2120-502**

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Student Hours: Wednesdays 2:00-4:00pm (Discord, Zoom, and Email)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course builds upon and refines the writing skills acquired in previous writing courses, with a focus on non-fiction prose. Research, composition, exposition and presentation abilities will be practiced and developed. Through analysis and revision, students will develop strategies to improve the versatility and impact of their writing. Course topics and emphases may vary by section.

**COURSE THEME**

The theme of this course is “Vampires: Writing to Sink Your Teeth Into.” Together, we’ll read vampire books, watch vampire movies, and play vampire games. We’ll examine the rise and fall of the vampire in popular culture, the evolving metaphor of the vampire over time, and where the vampire is headed in its apparently *undying* appeal.

Because this is primarily a *writing* course, you can expect to do a lot of writing. In addition to weekly reading responses and discussions, you’ll be tasked with writing a research summary, a comparative analysis, and a literary argument. There will be ample opportunity for customization and creativity within each assignment, and it is my hope that you’ll use this as a way to improve your writing on your own terms.

**REQUIRED TEXTS AND TOOLS**

All texts for this course will be made available via Canvas and/or the Library Course Reserves. Many of the texts this semester are also available in eBook format for free or cheap through apps and websites such as Project Gutenberg, Libby, Hoopla, Kindle Unlimited, or Comixology. There is no required edition or format for the written texts.

All movies or television episodes will be shared via Canvas, and I will host watch parties at least once per week on Discord (you should also feel free to host your own watch parties!). The two games we’ll be looking at/playing this semester will be made available in pdf format on Canvas or for download on itch.io.

Because this is an online course, a strong internet connection is required. Additionally, you will need to download Discord (free!) or access it in your browser. Zoom and Microsoft Word are also required (both available free through UNM).

If you prefer physical media, here are the required texts for the class that will be available for purchase in the bookstore:

*Books:*            *Dracula* by Bram Stoker  
                         *Interview with the Vampire* by Anne Rice  
                         *This Crimson Debt* by Rose Sinister  
                         *American Vampire vol. 1* by Scott Snyder and Rafael Albuquerque  
                         *Blood Stained Teeth vol. 1-2* by Christian Ward and Patric Reynolds

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR SUCCESS**

Each week, we'll read something, watch something, discuss something, and write something. It is my suggestion that you aim to finish each week's materials by Sunday evening so as not to fall behind. Begin with the instructor's lecture, which will be made available in both video and written format, then move on to the required readings/viewings before tackling the discussing and writing portion of the week.

There are no late penalties in this class. The deadlines are for your benefit, not mine. With that being said, I would *strongly advise* taking advantage of the creative writing options to stay caught up on the assignments, even if you can't stay caught up on the readings. This is designed to give you a little bit of breathing room if your other classes or personal lives become too much for you at any one point in the semester.

Discussions are the only thing that cannot be made up. I would urge you to avoid thinking of discussions as additional assignments or requirements and instead consider them opportunities for connection with your learning community. I have provided a rough "rubric" for how to earn points through discussion which emphasizes the variety of ways you can contribute to the conversation, but please consider this a "include but not limited to" situation and respond in ways that feel fun and natural. We're all reading and watching and writing about a subject that should be enjoyable, and I want us to revel in that as a community of learners.

Finally, you may notice that there are many "Supplemental" or optional texts on the syllabus and in our Discord. These are not required, but if you're struggling with some aspect of the course or an assignment, these supplemental texts are a great place to go to for help. Consider the supplemental list as our own mini and personally curated library. If you are already familiar with, say, navigating the UNM library databases, it would be wasteful for me to require you to watch or read an entire lecture on the subject. If, on the other hand, research is something with which you still struggle, I want to give you every opportunity to succeed and provide you with the tools to do so. Some of the texts on the supplemental lists are teaching and writing resources, others are there to provide you with some research options for your formal essays, and others are just there as fun recommendations. Take advantage of them (or not!) at your own discretion.

## CLASSROOM POLICIES

**Student Hours:** Student hours will be held Wednesdays from 2:00-4:00pm, virtually on Discord, Zoom, and by Email. If you need an immediate response to something, these are the best hours to contact me. Additionally, I am available by appointment and if you see my status in Discord or Zoom set to “Online” you should feel free to drop in or send me a message, even if it is outside posted hours. Student hours are times where I will be available to chat, answer questions, strategize, nerd out, and offer assistance to any student who drops in. These hours are for you. Use them however you want! If, for whatever reason, you aren’t able to drop into office hours, I am also available for appointments at other times, just send me an email or a message to schedule.

**Email:** Send any and all questions, concerns, or comments to [nsheppard1@unm.edu](mailto:nsheppard1@unm.edu). I generally am pretty quick to reply during normal business hours (M-F 9:00-5:00), but if you don’t hear from me by the next business day you should send a follow-up email. Additionally, you can expect at least weekly email updates or announcements from me with reminders and updates for the course. In an effort to maintain a healthy work/life balance (which I also encourage all of you to do!) I may take longer to respond on nights and weekends.

**Auto-Drop Policy:** If a student does not log in to Canvas, participate in the discussion, submit any assignments, contact me directly, or otherwise appear to engage with the course in any way within the first two weeks, they will be dropped automatically.

**Make-Up/Late/Missing Work:** The due dates for the weekly assignments and major projects are suggestions for your benefit. There are no penalties for turning in assignments, essays, or projects late and I don’t require any kind of request or reason for doing so. All weekly assignments, essays, and major projects can be turned in at any time before the end of the semester. With that being said, the course assignments are designed to build on the previous assignment, so major assignments *cannot* be turned in out of order and I highly recommend completing the reading responses each week. One of the main benefits of turning in work by the suggested due date is that you will receive feedback in a timely manner that will benefit you in the subsequent assignments, in addition to not being burdened with attempts to complete everything in the final week of the semester. Discussions cannot be made up for obvious reasons, but you are able to miss two without any consequence to your grade.

**Revise and Resubmit:** All major essays or projects are eligible to be revised and resubmitted for any reason so long as the author schedules a conference with me within one week of receiving their graded essay. The essay must show *significant* revisions beyond small editing/formatting corrections to be eligible for new feedback, which we will discuss in our conference.

**Neurodivergency and Accessibility Statement:** This course is designed to support diversity of learners. As a neurodivergent person myself, my hope is to create an inclusive and accessible environment for all students. If you want to discuss your learning experience, or have concerns

regarding the accessibility of the course, please talk to me as early in the term as possible. If you know you have, or suspect you have, any neurodivergency, learning disability, mobility or sensory deficit/impairment, chronic illness, or psychiatric disability (anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, post-traumatic stress, and others) that limits your ability to fully access and/or participate in this course, you may reach out to me directly to discuss resources, support networks, and/or course accommodations with or without disclosing any diagnoses.

**Artificial Intelligence/AI Policy:** AI can be a valuable tool for writers and creators, but we must also acknowledge the reality that we are still navigating how to use it ethically, legally, and responsibly. To that end, you should feel free to use AI such as ChatGPT for your own idea generation, pre-writing, research, or editing/revision if you feel that it is useful. If you use any of the AI's responses, please cite them appropriately (see the MLA style guide for guidance: <https://style.mla.org/citing-generative-ai/>).

Use of AI-generated art is even more fraught and many professional and amateur artists have spoken out about the AI's training model being based on the intellectual property of unpaid artist. To that end, AI-generated art may be used for your own inspiration but cannot be submitted for a grade of any kind (including for discussion credit), even if cited.

**Policy of Tolerance:** In order to foster a community of learning that is welcoming to all of us, we must engage in discourse that is respectful and kind. In many of our readings and discussions, we will be discussing sensitive topics that challenge your beliefs, thoughts, and opinions. This is to be expected and encouraged in any community of learning! But while we will almost certainly disagree with each other on a variety of things, a healthy and productive discussion or debate must be conducted respectfully and in good faith without personal or prejudiced attacks.

*I will not tolerate any discrimination, harassment, or generally not-nice behavior on the basis of sex, gender, race, ethnicity, age, disability, class, citizenship, religious affiliation, or personal difference in any written, verbal, or artistic expression.*

Consequences for this sort of behavior may include a mandatory conference, a failing grade, or being dropped from the course entirely. Disregarding this policy may also result in being reported to the Dean of Students or the Office of Compliance, Ethics & Equal Opportunity as a Code of Conduct or Title IX violation where applicable.

**Content Warning:** As part of our academic inquiry, this course will focus on texts, graphic images, sound recordings, and films that may include incidents or episodes of an extremely violent, graphically sexual, or otherwise potentially disturbing nature. These may include partial or complete nudity, extreme violence and/or graphic bloodshed, strong or obscene language, graphic sexual activity, and/or other such phenomena. While I will do my best to add content warnings for all potentially disturbing scenes, you know your own sensitivities better than I do. If you come across a scene that has the potential to cause you undue distress, you should feel free to skip ahead. This should *not* serve as an excuse not to engage with the material entirely. If you

believe the course content has the potential to offend you or otherwise harm your mental health, please drop the course now. I promise you will not hurt my feelings.

***By not dropping the course, you are formally and officially acknowledging that you are not offended by such course content.***

## UNIVERSITY POLICIES

**Accommodations:** UNM is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for students with documented disabilities. As your instructor, it is my objective to facilitate an inclusive classroom setting, in which students have full access and opportunity to participate. To engage in a confidential conversation about the process for requesting reasonable accommodations for this class and/or program, please contact Accessibility Resource Center at arcsrvs@unm.edu or by phone at 505-277-3506.

**Title IX:** Our classroom and our university should always be spaces of mutual respect, kindness, and support, without fear of discrimination, harassment, or violence. Should you ever need assistance or have concerns about incidents that violate this principle, please access the resources available to you on campus, especially the LoboRESPECT Advocacy Center and the support services listed on its website (<http://loborespect.unm.edu/>). *Please note that, because UNM faculty, TAs, and GAs are considered "responsible employees" by the Department of Education, any disclosure of gender discrimination (including sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, and sexual violence) made to a faculty member, TA, or GA must be reported by that faculty member, TA, or GA to the university's Title IX coordinator.* For more information on the campus policy regarding sexual misconduct, please see: <https://policy.unm.edu/universitypolicies/2000/2740.html>.

**Academic Integrity:** Each student is expected to maintain the highest standards of honesty and integrity in academic and professional matters. The University reserves the right to take disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, against any student who is found guilty of academic dishonesty or otherwise fails to meet the standards. Any student judged to have engaged in academic dishonesty in course work may receive a reduced or failing grade for the work in question and/or for the course. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, dishonesty in quizzes, tests, or assignments; claiming credit for work not done or done by others; hindering the academic work of other students; misrepresenting academic or professional qualifications within or without the University; and nondisclosure or misrepresentation in filling out applications or other University records.

**Indigenous Peoples' Land and Territory Acknowledgement:** Founded in 1889, the University of New Mexico sits on the traditional homelands of the Pueblo of Sandia. The original peoples of New Mexico – Pueblo, Navajo, and Apache – since time immemorial, have deep connections to

the land and have made significant contributions to the broader community statewide. We honor the land itself and those who remain stewards of this land throughout the generations and also acknowledge our committed relationship to Indigenous peoples. We gratefully recognize our history.

### ASSIGNMENT & GRADING BREAKDOWN

The way you will be graded in this course may be a little different from the way you've been graded in previous courses. In an effort to focus on feedback, improvement, and writing as an emergent process, I've designed my grading rubrics to focus on labor and minimum requirements rather than quality of writing (See Canvas for rubrics). This means your grade in this class is entirely up to you and your level of participation.

Essentially, if you complete all three essays to at least the minimum requirements, turn in at least 11 weekly reading responses and/or *TYOV* prompts, and even minimally participate in discussion, you are guaranteed at least a 'B' in this course, regardless of the quality of your writing.

An 'A' may be achieved either through performing additional labor (such as extra discussion participation or revising your essays), exceptional quality of writing, or extra credit opportunities. You may receive a 'C' or 'D' in the course for a number of reasons, including repeatedly and drastically failing to meet the minimum requirements for essays, reading responses, and/or discussions. And finally, you might fail this course for not turning in any essays or weekly responses, or for never/rarely participating in discussion. You may also receive an 'F' or be dropped from the course for inappropriate, offensive, or academically dishonest work.

For determining mid-term and final grades, the following scale will be used:

100-97=A+	89-87=B+	79-77=C+	69-67=D+	59-0=F
96-93=A	86-83=B	76-73=C	66-63=D	
92-90=A-	82-80=B-	72-70=C-	62-60=D-	

Your grade will be constructed from the following components. Failing to turn in *any* of these components in their entirety will result in an automatic failing grade. For example, if you refuse to participate in discussions in any way throughout the entire semester but receive an 'A' on every essay and reading response, you will still fail the course.

Assignment	Points
Essay 1 – Historic Investigation	150 points
Essay 2 – Comparative Analysis	150 points
Essay 3 – Vampire Argument	200 points
Discussions/Participation	20 points each, 300 total

Reading Responses/ <i>TYOV</i>	20 points each, 200 total
	<b>1000 Points Total</b>

### Essay 1 – Historic Investigation (150 points)

For the first essay, students will write a 1000 word research summary into a vampire trope, a culturally specific vampire or vampire-like creature from folklore/mythology, or a “real life” historic “vampire.” Essays should use at least **FIVE** outside research sources. See Canvas for more details.

### Essay 2 – Comparative Analysis (150 Points)

Students will write 1000 words comparing a piece of Vampire media we read/watched in class, with a piece of Vampire media we did *not* analyze in class (supplemental texts are a great place to find these!). This will take the form of an adaptation analysis, studying the same narrative across various media (for example, comparing a movie adaptation of *Dracula* with the book), or you might examine how a particular theme is addressed in two or more works. See Canvas for more details.

### Essay 3 – Consider the Vampire... (200 Points)

Students will write 1200 words answering the question “What does the Vampire represent?” There are a variety of ways to interpret this question. It could mean “what does the vampire represent to our society?” or more specifically, “what does the vampire represent to a certain group of people, such as young women or folx of Hispanic descent?” You might also read the question as “What does the Vampire represent in one piece of media, such as the film *Near Dark*?” Finally, this could also take the form of a reflection, asking you to examine what the vampire has meant *to you* as we’ve progressed through the semester. See Canvas for more details.

### Essay ? – Alternate Ending

Students may replace any ONE essay with a work of vampire-related fiction, poetry, comic, screenplay, work of visual art, or creative non-fiction of the same length. This may be a section or variation of your *Thousand Year Old Vampire* RPG, a reimagining of an existing media as vampires, or an original work. This should be accompanied by a 1-2 page analysis of your own work, in addition to the minimum word requirement. This may also be submitted as a substantial extra credit assignment, in addition to the three standard essays. See Canvas for more details.

### Discussions – up to 20 points per week (300 total)

Discussions should be fun, casual, and student-centered which is why I’ll be hosting them on Discord! Each week, I’ll try to get us started by asking a question or posting a prompt in the designated “Virtual Classroom” channel. Don’t feel like you have to answer the question posted; the more important thing is to be a part of the ongoing conversation. Participating in any way will earn you at least one point, and up to twenty. See the Discussion Rubric on Canvas for more information on how to earn points.

Discussion channels for the week will remain open from the Sunday of the given week until the following Tuesday at midnight. For example, the week-2 discussion channel in discord will be open starting on August 27 and will close at midnight September 5. Once a discord discussion channel is closed, you will still be able to view it but there will be no more opportunities to earn points for that week.

Reading Responses/*TYOV* – up to 20 points each (200 total)

Every week, students will be asked to write about 200 words or approximately one page responding to a prompt. These will be posted and submitted on Canvas. Alternatively, students may replace up to SIX weekly assignments by continuing their *TYOV* RPG on Discord in the same amount of words in one or two prompts. You can skip two weeks with no consequence, and an additional three for the weeks you turn in formal essays.

Extra Credit – Points to be determined by Instructor

*Students are only eligible for Extra Credit only if they are already meeting the minimum requirements for the course.* In other words, it can only be used to elevate your grade from a ‘B’ to an ‘A.’ See Canvas for the various ways you can earn extra credit in this course.

### **COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to change)**

All course readings will be available beginning the first week of classes, and all assignments, discussions, and lectures will be posted by MONDAY of the given week. Due to the limited storage capacity of Canvas, I can only upload two movies at a time, Feel free to read/watch ahead, but keep your discussions spoiler free for media the rest of the class may not have gotten to yet. All “due dates” are set for the Sundays of the given week, but will remain open until Finals Week. Discussions will be closed on Wednesday of the following week and *cannot be made up*. This gives you a few extra days to participate, should you fall behind on the readings, but I highly encourage you to contribute to the discussion as early as possible. Supplemental texts are entirely optional, but are a great resource for the Comparative Analysis Essay.

### **Week One (Jan 15-21) – Introductions**

*January 15 – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Campus Closed*

*January 16 – Classes Begin*

Texts:            Course Documents (syllabus, rubric, schedule, etc.)  
                      Instructor Introduction Video – Welcome to 2120!  
                      *Dracula* chapters 1-4  
                      *The Thousand Year Old Vampire* (solo RPG game, pdf on Canvas)  
                      “Nice to Eat You: Acts of Vampires” by Thomas C. Foster (pdf on Canvas)

Discussion:      Introduction to Discord (week-1, the-help-desk, off-topic, DMing)

Assignment: *The Thousand Year Old Vampire* Character Creation (Discord)  
+

**Week Two (Jan 21-Jan 27) –**

*January 26 – Last day to ADD sections and CHANGE credit hours on LoboWEB*

*January 26 – Enrollment Cancellation for Non-Payment*

Texts:           Lecture Video – Vampires and the Modern Woman  
*Dracula* chapters 5-11  
*Girl Walks Home Alone at Night* (2014)

Discussion:   Mina vs. Lucy vs. Girl (Discord)

Assignment:   Vampires and Predation (Canvas)  
                  OR *TYOV* prompt (Discord)

**Week Three (Jan 28-Feb 3) –**

*February 2 – Last day to DROP without "W" grade and receive a 100% tuition refund on LoboWeb*

Texts:           Lecture Video – Vampire Hunting *Dracula*  
                  chapters 12-16  
*Buffy the Vampire Slayer* s1e1 “Welcome to Hellmouth”

Discussion:   Human/Superhuman Vampire Hunters (Discord)

Assignment:   Where does the hunter draw his strength? (Canvas)  
                  OR *TYOV* prompt (Discord)

**Week Four (Feb 4-10) –**

*February 9 – Last Day to Change Grading Options*

Texts:           Lecture Video – The Ethics of Vampires *Dracula* chapters 17-22  
*Renfield* (2023)

Discussion:   Vampire Thralls and Issues of Consent (Discord)

Assignment:   Renfield Character Analysis (Canvas)  
                  OR *TYOV* prompt (Discord)

**Week Five (Feb 11-17) –**

Texts:           Lecture Video – *Dracula* wrap-up  
*Dracula* chapters 23-27

*Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992)

Discussion: Final Thoughts – Was it everything you expected? (Discord)

Assignment: Historic Investigation Pre-Writing (Canvas)  
OR *TYOV* prompt (Discord)

### **Week Six (Feb 18-24) –**

Texts: Lecture Video – 100 Years Later/Welcome to New Orleans!  
*Interview with the Vampire* pg. 1-95 (immediately after Claudia is created)  
*Interview with the Vampire* episodes 1-3 (AMC)

Discussion: Adaptation changes and why we make them (Discord)

Assignment: **Historic Investigation (essay 1, Canvas)**  
*TYOV* prompt (Discord, not required if turning in Essay 1)

### **Week Seven (Feb 25-Mar 2) –**

Texts: Lecture Video – Funny Vampires?  
*Interview with the Vampire* pg. 95-160 (up to Part II)  
*What We Do In the Shadows* season 1 episodes 1-2

Discussion: The terrible boredom of eternity (Discord)

Assignment: Who or what would you need to stay sane through immortality? (Canvas)  
OR *TYOV* prompt (Discord)

### **Week Eight (March 3-9) –**

Texts: Lecture Video – Back to Basics  
*Interview with the Vampire* pg. 161-202 (Up to Part III)  
*30 Days of Night* (2007)

Discussion: Zombie-Vampires to Byronic Anti-Hero: How'd that happen? (Discord)

Assignment: Vampirism as Virus (Canvas)  
OR *TYOV* prompt (Discord)

### **Week Nine (March 10-16) –**

*Spring Break*

Supplemental: (See Canvas)

**Week Ten (Mar 17-23) –**

Texts: Lecture Video – Are Ye Ready, Kids?  
*Interview with the Vampire* pg. 202-279 (through Madeleine’s creation)  
*Let the Right One In* (2008)

Discussion: Child Vampires – Why so creepy? (Discord)

Assignment: Eternal Youth and Why It Probably Sucks (Canvas)  
OR *TYOV* prompt (Discord)

**Week Eleven (Mar 24-30) –**

Texts: Lecture Video – *Interview Wrap-Up*  
*Interview with the Vampire* pg. 335-388  
*Interview with the Vampire* (1994)

Discussion: Final Thoughts (Discord)

Assignment: Vampire Media Analysis Pre-Writing (Canvas)  
OR *TYOV* prompt (Discord)

**Week Twelve (Mar 31-April 6) –**

*April 4 – Last day to DROP without Dean’s Permission on LoboWEB*

Texts: Lecture Video – Vampire Westerns  
*American Vampire vol. 1* by Scott Snyder, Stephen King, and Rafael Albuquerque  
*Near Dark* (1987)

Discussion: The “New Vampire” (Discord)

Assignment: **Vampire Media Analysis (Essay 2, canvas)**  
OR *TYOV* prompt (Discord, if not turning in essay 2)

**Week Thirteen (April 7-13) –**

*April 12 – Last Day to Withdraw Without Student Services Permission*

Texts: Lecture Video – My Friend, Rose *This*  
*Crimson Debt* chapters 1-19  
*Twilight* (2008)

Discussion: Teen Vampires (Discord)

Assignment: Vampires and teen romance (Canvas)  
OR *TYOV* prompt (Discord)

**Week Fourteen (April 14-20) –**

Texts: Lecture Video –Vampires and the Wealthy Elite  
*This Crimson Debt* chapters 20-29  
*Blood Stained Teeth* vol. 1-2 by Christian Ward, Patric Reynolds, Heather Moore

Discussion: The Rich (Discord)

Assignment: Vampires and Money (Canvas)  
OR *TYOV* prompt (Discord)

**Week Fifteen (April 21-27) –**

Texts: Lecture Video – *This Crimson Debt* wrap-up *This  
Crimson Debt* chapters 30-40  
*Only Lovers Left Alive* (2013)

Discussion: Questions/Comments for the Author! (Discord)

Assignment: Review for *This Crimson Debt* (Canvas)  
OR Consider the Vampire....Pre-Writing (Canvas)  
OR *TYOV* prompt (Discord)

**Week Sixteen (April 28-May 4) -**

*May 3 - Last Day to Withdraw With Student Services Permission*

Texts: Lecture Video – Sci-Fi/Afrofuturist Vampires  
*Tomb of Dracula #10* by Wolfman/Colan Blade  
(1998)  
*The Gilda Stories* by Jewelle Gomez (pages TBD)

Discussion: Black Vampires! (Discord)

Assignment: **Consider the Vampire.... (Essay 3, canvas)**  
OR *TYOV* prompt (Discord, if not turning in essay 3)

**Week Seventeen (May 5-11)**

*May 5-11 – Final Exams*

*May 10 - Last day to report removal of Incomplete*

*May 11 – Commencement*

**All Missing Assignments, Essays, Extra Credit Opportunities, and Revisions Due May 8**