

POE

»Imps of the Perverse« Edgar Allan Poe and the Gothic Tradition

Course instructor: PD Dr. Stefan Brandt

Course number: GV 32 113

Room and Time: R 340, Thu, 14-16 Uhr

Basic information: MA Modul B,
Grundlagenveranstaltung
und Magister Hauptseminar
2 SWS

Short description: Edgar Allan Poe is undoubtedly one of the most powerful and imaginative writers American literature has produced to this very day. Despite his lasting influence on European writers and his impact on the creation of modern psychology, Poe has been widely neglected and even ostracized by U.S. literary criticism. (F.O. Matthiessen, for example, excludes him from the canon of important writers of the »American Renaissance«.) In this course, we will immerse ourselves in crucial writings by Edgar Allan Poe, including his poetry, tales, satires, grotesques, and his only novel. We will discuss works such as »The Fall of the House Usher« (1839), »The Purloined Letter« (1844), »The Black Cat« (1843), »The Cask of Amontillado« (1846), »The Raven« (1845), and his cosmological treatise »Eureka« (1848), exploring the aesthetics of Poe's style as well as the issues of genre, humor, authorship, gender, sexuality, and race. Special emphasis will be put on the origins of the modern detective story and the redefinition of the Gothic tradition in Poe's writings.

Reading and viewing material: It is highly recommended to purchase *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*, published in the Penguin Classics series (e.g., via www.amazon.de). Additional material can be found in Handapparat 9 of the Kennedy-Institute Library.

Credit requirements:

1. Regular attendance and lively participation in class discussions plus at least 9 entries in the discussion forum on Blackboard (<https://lms.fu-berlin.de/webapps/login/>) (1/3);
2. Oral presentation as part of an expert group (1/3);
3. Final paper (17-20 pages) on a course-related topic (1/3).

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Deadline for Final Papers:
Monday, March 2, 2009.

There is no (!) extension of this deadline.

Syllabus

- Oct. 16** **Introduction: Edgar Allan Poe and Gothic Fiction**
- Oct. 23** **Reinventing the Gothic Tradition – Fear, Doom, and Guilt, Made in America**
Main text: »The Fall of the House of Usher« (1839), in: *Complete Tales of Edgar Allan Poe*¹ (abbreviated as *CT*), pp. 231-245.
- Oct. 30** **The Gothic Short Story as Satire – Immortality and Death**
Main text: »Metzengerstein, A Tale of Imitation of the German« (1832), in: *CT*, pp. 672-678.
Secondary text: »Preface« to *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* (1840)
<http://www.eapoe.org/works/misc/tgap.htm>
- Nov. 6** **The Horrors of Initiation – Poe’s Only Novel**
Main text: »The Narrative of A. Gordon Pym« (1838), ch. I-III, in: *CT*, pp. 750-773.
- Nov. 13** **The City as Labyrinth**
Main text: »The Man of the Crowd« (1840), in: *CT*, pp. 475-481.
- Nov. 20** **The Gothic Text as Allegory – Fantasy Architecture and the Omnipresence of Death**
Main text: »The Masque of the Red Death« (1842), in: *CT*, pp. 269-273.
Additional text: THE MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH (1964, dir. Roger Corman)
- Nov. 27** **The Power of Detection – Poe as Inventor of the Detective Story**
Main text: »The Murders in the Rue Morgue« (1841), in: *CT*, pp.141-168.
- Dec. 4** **Reality as a Nightmare – The Shadows of History**
Main text: »The Pit and the Pendulum« (1842), in: *CT*, pp. 246-257.
- Dec. 11** **Obsession and Superstition**
Main text: »The Black Cat« (1843), in: *CT*, pp. 223-230.
- Dec. 18** **Repression and the Power of the Unconscious**
Main text: »The Tell-Tale Heart« (1843), in: *CT*, pp. 303-306, OR »The Imp of the Perverse« (1845), in: *CT*, pp. 280-284.
- Jan. 8** **Think Simple! Rationality and Psychology**
Main text: »The Purloined Letter« (1844), in: *CT*, pp. 208-222.
- Jan. 15** **Extra! Extra! Poe Invents Science Fiction!**
Main text: »The Balloon-Hoax« (1844), in: *CT*, pp. 71-81.
- Jan. 22** **Dark Poetry**
Main text: »The Raven« (1845), in: *CT*, pp. 943-946.
Secondary text: »Preface to Poems« & »The Poetic Principle«, in: *CT*, 888-907.
- Jan. 29** **Claustrophobic Imagination**
Main text: »The Cask of Amontillado« (1846), in: *CT*, pp. 274-279.
Additional text: TALES OF TERROR (1963, dir. Roger Corman)
- Feb. 5** **Cosmology and Mysticism – Poe’s (Un)Popular Philosophy**
Main text: »Eureka« (1848), in: <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/POE/eureka.html>.
- Feb. 12** **Edgar Allan Poe in Popular Culture**
Main text: HOUSE OF USHER (1963, dir. Roger Corman)

¹ In the following, this collection of Poe tales and poems is abbreviated as *CT*.