COMPARATIVE LITERATURE 135: ZOMBIE METAPHORS is an interdisciplinary literature course that explores the representation and symbolic power of the zombie, the zombie horde, and associated creatures from which they have evolved—including the mummy and Frankenstein’s monster. For generations, these creaturely figures have unleashed troubling metaphors about modern identity, the nature of fear, the exercise and misuse of power, illness, mourning, death, and even “undeath”. How do these creaturely figures of the undead shape the way we see ourselves, our bodies and environments, our social order, life itself, and the world around us? What are the key genres in which zombies flourish and proliferate, and which artistic terrains do they have yet to conquer? How have zombies been understood, or misunderstood, in pre-modern artistic traditions, and what future awaits them in 21st-century artistic traditions? And finally, why do we love to watch them, read about them, think about them, talk about them so much? This course explores these questions and other zombie metaphors. Our texts tentatively include Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein; Dinner by Cesar Aira; selections from Kengo Hanazawa’s Japanese manga series I Am a Hero; ethnographic “accounts” by Zora Neale Hurston and William Seabrook; various zombie- and mummy-themed short stories by Stephen King, Tadeusz Borowski, and Naguib Mahfouz; classic genre films like Night of the Living Dead and 28 Days Later; selected episodes from Les revenants [The Returned] and The Walking Dead; and more. Satisfies the GER [HU] and L&S International Studies requirements. Affiliated with Cultures & Communities and Digital Arts & Cultures. No prior literature coursework or foreign language training required.

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