

Mad Scientists, Zombies, and Vampires in the Classroom:  
Medical Humanities Pedagogy and Curriculum in Undergraduate (Non-Major) Humanities Courses

In the past decade, many American universities have begun offering what appear to be an ever-increasing number of Zombie-related classes. This merging of popular culture, fandom, and curriculum has even bled over into the CDC who started posting in 2011 online tips on how to survive the Zombie apocalypse. Furthermore, in 2008, the San Diego Union-Tribune's Peter Rowe observed, "Zombies are red [Republicans], vampires are blue [Democrats]" -- an observation that further highlights the widening popularity toward cultural productions of the undead and their metaphorical uses in critical commentary. These trends have spawned discussions within the Humanities surrounding the (re)emerging of Monster Studies and its effects on curriculum design and pedagogical effectiveness, not to mention enrollment figures.

While much of the critical focus revolves around Gothic literary traditions and adaptations and its connections to modern horror, there is a bit of silence by undergraduate Humanities professors regarding the links between Monster Studies and Medical Humanities. In particular, the question remains as to how literature and history grapple with medicine and its scientific research and how this information can be utilized in non-major, general education courses. In an era where healthcare is a topic of debate (is it a right or a privilege for purchase?) and medical care is viewed as a consumer cafeteria (should parents be allowed to pick and choose their child's vaccines?), undergraduate Humanities pedagogy and curriculum would be well served to consider and apply texts and critical theories related to biomedical and body issues in their own classrooms.

In the Adventist context of higher education, the convergence of Monster Studies and Medical Humanities in general education classes may appear to be a problematic endeavor considering the faith's historical-cultural views towards monsters, the gothic, and even fictional cultural production. Nevertheless, this paper argues that Adventism's own mandates regarding the health message and medical evangelism could be supported and reinforced by looking at the rhetoric and historical-fictional metaphors and symbols that continue to pervade medical discourse and its histories, both inside the profession and in the general public. By offering such courses, the institution has the potential to enact two goals at once: 1) educate pre-med students in the Humanities traditions, including the analysis of various narratives and how they apply to current medical debates and cultures, and 2) educate non-major, non-med students regarding their position as potential patients and medical consumers while also providing them with the knowledge regarding the necessity of medical evangelical or missionary endeavors.