

University of Wisconsin-Madison
Department of History
Spring 2016

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O. H.: Thu. 1:00-2:30 pm

Cannibals and Cannibalism

Thursdays 11:00 am - 12:55 pm
Humanities-George Mosse 5245

Cannibals and Cannibalism examines western obsessions with the topic of man-eating, and the cultural and historical significance of this fascination. The seminar travels through time and space to probe key changes in cannibal practice and its representations. Using primary sources, fiction, and critical historical studies, it looks at the diffusion and the function of cannibal tales from ancient myths to contagion scares, vampires and zombies. The seminar also discusses non-western fears and rumors of flesh-eating.

Requirements and grading

Participation in class discussions: 20%

Serving as specialist for a primary source: 20%

Written Assignments (on equal measure): 25 %

Final Research Paper (10-page): 35%

Readings

All readings are available online, some on the course website at Learn@UW, others, if specified, on other websites including e-books in UW-Libraries.



Week 1. Thursday January 21 – From Outer to Inner Cannibals

Why are we still fascinated by cannibalism? And how has our vision changed? After a long history of repulsion and distancing, *The Silence of the Lambs* (J. Demme 1991) suggests that the modern cannibal can be an insightful and likeable character. Why such a turn? How can we historicize it?

Readings

• Priscilla Walton: “Lecter’s Lectures,” in *Our Cannibals, Ourselves* (2004): 145-147, • Maggie Kilgour, “The Function of Cannibalism at the Present Time” in F. Barker and al, *Cannibalism and the Colonial World* (2008): 248-255

Sources discussed in class

• Excerpts from *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991), • Excerpts from *King Kong* (M. Cooper and E. Schoedsack, 1933).

◇ **Introducing the seminar and how to work on your written requirements.**

Week 2. Thursday January 28 – Divine Hungers: Titans, Gods and Ogres

Deep-seated stories of killing and devouring in Western culture transformed from ancient myths (Greek and Roman myths, Celtic and Germanic legends such as the cycle of Odin) into popular tales and children stories. Why did this happen? What role did Christianity, court and elite culture play in these changes? What are the functions of cannibal metaphors of annihilation, sexual incorporation, transgression, parricide and renewal?

Readings

• Marina Warner, “Fee Fie to Fum: The Child in the Jaw of the Story,” in Francis Barker and al, *Cannibalism and the Colonial World* (2008): 158-182

Mini-Research for Cannibal Groups:

Read one of the following stories and work with your cannibal group:

• *Book 9 of Odysseus: The Cyclops*, available on the course website and on <http://www.theoi.com/Text/HomerOdyssey9.html>, • *Hansel and Gretel*, in W. Gag, *Tales from Grimm* (2006): 3-24, at Memorial Library <https://search.library.wisc.edu> • *Little Red Riding Hood*, in Charles Perrault, *Histories, or Tales of Passed Times. With Morals*, English Trans. 1755, <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/perrault02.html> & later versions by Grimm and others at: <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/type0333.html> • *Blue Beard*, in Perrault, *Histories*, <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/perrault03.html> • *Little Thumb*, in Perrault, *Histories*, <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/perrault08.html>

Primary sources shown in class:

Rhea presenting Cronus a stone wrapped in cloth as a substitute for Zeus, bas-relief of a Greek altar • *Cronus Castrating Uranus/Saturn Devouring his Son* (Anonymous painting, 1501) • *Jupiter Castrates Saturn who Devours his Children* (Anonymous painting, 1496) • Peter Paul Rubens, *Saturn Devouring his Son* (1636) • Giulia Lama (1681-1747), *Cronus Devouring his Children* • F. Goya, *Saturn Devouring his Son* (1819-1823) • Gérard David, *Three Legends of Saint Nicholas* (c. 1500 – 1520) • Paintings and Icons of the wonderworks of Saint Nicholas, bishop of Myra • Images by Gustave Doré in Pierre-Jules Hetzel, *Les Contes de Perrault*, (1862) • Gustave Doré, illustrations for *Contes de ma mère l'Oye* (1867 and 1869) • Robert Anning Bell, illustrations for *Grimm's Household Tales* (1912)

◇ **How to formulate a research topic?**



Week 3. Thursday February 4 – Caribs, Aztecs and Tupinambá in the New World

The origin of the word cannibal comes from the depiction of the Caribs by Columbus. In the New World, cannibalism marked people with utter strangeness and difference. How do we historicize local rituals through the veneer of Western misconceptions?



Send a 250 words description of a possible topic for your research paper on Monday Feb. 1 (email, no attachment). The description should include at least one primary source and one secondary source.

Readings

• Peter Hulme, “Columbus and the Cannibals,” in *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492-1797* (1986): 13-43

Mini-Research for Cannibal Groups:

- Eric Wolf, “The Aztecs,” in *Envisioning Power: Ideologies of Dominance and Crisis* (1999):133-195 [available online at <https://search.library.wisc.edu>] • Hans Staden, *Hans Staden's True History: an Account of Cannibal Captivity in Brazil* (c. 1557, reprint 2008) on the cannibal Tupinambá of Brazil

Primary sources shown in class:

- Hans Staden’s woodcuts of *the Tupinambá and their Cannibal Feasts* (1557) • Jean de Léry *History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil, Also Called America* (1578) • Théodore de Bry, *America* (1590-1634), and *Spanish Atrocities in the New World* (1598) • Albert Eckhout, *Tapuia woman. Brazil* (1641).

Week 4. Thursday February 11 - Eating Corpses: Medicinal Cannibalism

Meanwhile, Europeans had long used dead bodies to manufacture cures and treatment. How does the recent discovery of medicinal cannibalism change our perception of Western representations and performance of man-eating?

Mini-Research for Cannibal Groups:

- Louise Noble, “The Mummy Cure: Fresh Unspotted Cadavers,” in *Medicinal Cannibalism in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* (2011): 17-34 • Richard Sugg, “Corpse Medicine from the Middle Ages to Caroline England,” in *Mummies, Cannibals and Vampires* (2011): 9-37.

Primary sources shown in class:

Detail from *Trouble Comes to the Alchemist* (Dutch School, 17th-century) • Apothecary shop in Wolfgang Helmhart Hohberg, *Georgica curiosa aucta* (Nuremberg, 1697) • John Raphael Smith, *Sansanietto the High German Doctor* (1772) • Container for medicinal mummy (18th century, Germany) • Medicine jars for human fat (late 17th or early 18th century).

◇ **Discussion of topics in class. What is a thesis?**

Week 5. Thursday February 18 - Hoc Est Corpus Meum

The meaning of Christian Eucharist was at the center of the Reformation crisis. How did the Christian faith represent transubstantiation and communion? How, in turn, did Christians persecute the Jews with the blood libel and accusation of ritual murder and blood drinking?

- Jerry Philipps, “Cannibalism qua Capitalism,” in Francis Barker and al, *Cannibalism and the Colonial World* (2008): 194-203

Mini-Research for Cannibal Groups:

- Movie *The Merchant of Venice* adapted from Shakespeare (Michael Radford, 2004) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-bZWZEwY21Q>, and
- R. Po-Chia Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder: Jews and Magic in Reformation Germany* (1988): 1-55.

Primary sources shown in class

- Last Supper, Byzantine Mosaic • Fra Angelico, *The Institution of the Eucharist* (c. 1450)
- Joos van Cleve, *The Last Supper* (c. 1530)
 - Jesus rescuing a sinner from the jaws of Hell (engraving 13th c.)
 - Simon of Trent, in *Nuremberg Chronicle of Hartmann Schedel* (1493)
 - Etching from Brückenturm, *The murdered body of Simon of Trent and a Judensau* (18th c.)
 - Relief commemorating the murder of Simon of Trent, Palazzo Salvadori (Trent, Italy)
 - Jews burned alive during the Black Death, *Nuremberg Chronicle* (1493)
 - Postcard depicting the murder of Agnes Hruza (Poland, 1899)
 - Excerpts from M. Radford *The Merchant of Venice* (2004)

Week 6. Thursday February 25 – Renaissance Men-Eaters and Enlightened Cannibals

From the 16th to the 18th century, authors adopted a more relativist and civilizing attitude towards alleged cannibals. Cannibalism became a more central metaphor to reflect on European issues and own savagery. Cannibal humor also served trenchant political satire.



Send a formal topic statement and a short bibliography for your paper on Monday Feb. 23 (see guidelines)

Mini-Research for Cannibal Groups:

- Michel de Montaigne, “On Cannibals,” *Essais* Vol. 1, Chapter 30 (1572-1592): 740-77, read on <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/3600> [click on “EPUB (with images)”]
- Jonathan Swift, *A Modest Proposal For preventing the children of poor people in Ireland, from being a burden on their parents or country, and for making them beneficial to the publick* (1729), read on <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1080> [click on “EPUB (with images)”]
- Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)

Primary sources shown in class

- Portrait of Michel de Montaigne by Dumonstier (c. 1578) • Charles Jervas, Portrait of Jonathan Swift (1667) • Caricature on A Modest Proposal (19th c.) • F. Lydon, Robinson Crusoe Plate (1865) • English School, *Robinson Crusoe releases a Savage, whom he afterwards calls Friday* (1795)

◊ **Discussion on topic statements. How do you support and illustrate a thesis?**

Week 7. Thursday March 3 - Cannibalism and Colonialism: European Views

Cannibalism played a central role in the perceptions of Europeans of the exotic and the primitive in 19th c. Africa and, later, during formal colonialism. How did cannibal metaphors differ from that of the time of the Caribs and the Tupinambá? How were they informed by biomedicine, race, industrialism and capitalism?

Mini-Research for Cannibal Groups:

- H. G. Wells, *The Sea Raiders* (1896): 1-14 • H. G. Wells, *The Empire of the Ants* (1905): 1-20, both novellas to read with • Kelly Hurley, “Evolution and the Loss of Human Specificity,” in *The Gothic Body* (1996): 55-64.
- Paul Belloni du Chaillu, *Travels and Adventures in Equatorial Africa* (1861): 103-104 and 120, • Richard Burton *Two Trips to Gorilla Land and the Cataracts of the Congo* (1876): 212-217, • Robert H. Nassau, *Fetishism in West Africa* (1904): 234-235, all primary sources to read with • John Miller, “Meat, Cannibalism and Humanity in Paul du Chaillu’s Explorations and Adventures in Equatorial Africa; or, What Does a Gorilla Hunter Eat for Breakfast?,” *Gothic Studies* (2014):70-84

Primary sources shown in class:

Illustrations from Du Chaillu *Travels and Adventures* (1861) • Horrible feast of cannibals, illustration by Georges Buel for Stanley's *Through the Dark Continent* (1878) • Linley Sambourne, Cartoon of Richard Owen and Thomas Henry Huxley inspecting a water baby 1885 • Zoologist and taxidermist Abraham Dee Bartlett with gorilla collected by Dr. Du Chaillu for Professor Owen (c. 1870s) • Chained cannibals prisoners, Photog. Congo (c. 1930) • Skeleton of a pygmy woman, and a gorilla, Wellcome Foundation • Cover for H. G. Wells, *The Empire of the Ants* • Poster for the movie *Empire of the Ants* (1977) • Squid holding sailor, by Alphonse-Marie-Adolphe de Neuville in Jules Verne, *Vingt mille lieues sous les mers* (1870)

◇ How to write a good introduction?

Week 8. Thursday March 10 – European Cannibals and African Witchcraft

Africans have long envisioned European and American slave traders as cannibals and flesh-eaters. These visions changed during colonialism, adapting to a new context and to modern living. Today, modern witchcraft beliefs in Africa tend to recycle older views about the ambivalent power of “eating.”



Send by email (attached) a two page description of a source or event central to your paper on Monday March 7 (see guidelines)

Readings

John Thornton, "Cannibals, Witches, and Slave Traders in the Atlantic World," *The William and Mary Quarterly* (2003), pp. 273-294

Mini-Research for Cannibal Groups:

Luise White, "Bandage on your Mouth," in *Speaking with Vampires* (2000): 89-121 •
Luise White, "Roast Mutton Captivity: Labor, Trade and Catholic Missions in Colonial Northern Rhodesia," in *Speaking with Vampires* (2000): 175-207 •

Primary sources shown in class: TBA

◇ Reading and discussing 2-page paper on source

Week 9. Thursday March 17 – Vampires

Vampires emerged in the early nineteenth century as gothic figures of the ante-Christ. Blood, contagion and un-dying betrayed new obsessions with germ theory and medicine. Many vampire stories also expose popular obsessions with class and with sexual preying. How do contemporary vampire stories compare to the early blood-sucking monsters? What do modern vampires have to say?

Readings: TBA

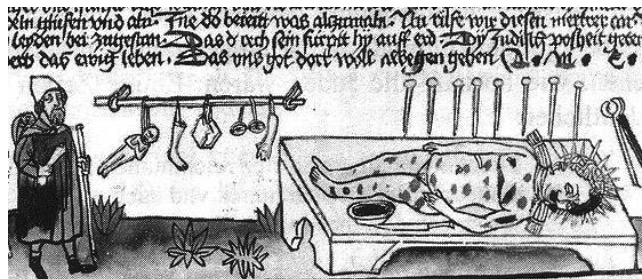
Mini Research with your cannibal group: TBA

Primary sources shown in class:

Title page of John Polidori, *The Vampyre* (1819) • Popular penny-dreadful illustrations of *Varney the Vampire* (c. 1854) • Photograph of Bram Stoker (c. 1906) • First edition cover of *Dracula* (1897) • John-Henry Fuseli, *The Nightmare* (1781) • Mary Shelley's Portrait by Richard Rothwell (1840) • Boris Karloff as Frankenstein's monster (1935)

◇ Talking about organizing your paper and writing a draft

Week 10. Thursday March 24 - Spring Break. No Class.



Week 11. Thursday March 31 – Prions, Contagion and Endo-cannibalism in Papua New Guinea

Studies among the Fore of Papua New Guinea showed that endo-cannibalism in mortuary ceremonies was the likely cause of kuru, a disease similar to Creutzfeldt-Jacob. Mad-cow disease in the West has also reactivated moral alarms about meat-eating, animal cannibalism, and fear of contagion. Recent archeological discoveries, on the other hand suggest that cannibalism was a wide-spread practice among early humans.



Partial draft paper due Monday March 28: Submit by email (both to instructor and to your writing partner) a partial draft of your research paper, including at least the following: an introduction (1-2 paragraphs), 8 double spaced pages from anywhere in the paper, and an outline of the whole paper.

Readings

Shirley Lindenbaum, “Understanding Kuru: The Contribution of Anthropology and Medicine, *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, No. 363 (2008): 3715–3720
Warwick Anderson, Chapter 3, 4 and 8 in *The Collectors of Lost Souls* (2008): 59-115 and 185-211

Primary sources shown in class: TBA

Week 12. Thursday April 7 – Modern Flesh-Eaters I: Zombies, Serial Killers, and Organs Trafficking:

We now live in a world where the ones we once called “others” live among us, precluding our ability to define ourselves in opposition to the primitive and the savage. How do we de-exoticize and reappropriate the cannibal? How do we move from denial to acknowledgment? What particular fears and fascination do zombies and serial killers convey?



Critiquing drafts: send a one-page comments and suggestions on your partner’s draft by email on Monday April 4, both to instructor and to partner. On April 7, bring back a hard copy of your writing partner’s draft with hand-written comments

Crystal Bartolovitch: “Consumerism, or the Cultural logic of Late Cannibalism,” in Francis Barker and al, *Cannibalism and the Colonial World* (2008): 204-237

Mini-Research for Cannibal Groups

• Movie: *Dead Alive* (or *Brain Dead*) by Peter Jackson, 1992 • Nancy Scheper-Hughes, “The Global Traffic in Human Organs,” *Current Anthropology*, 41-2 (2000): 191-211 •

Richard Tithecott, *Of Men and Monsters: Jeffrey Dahmer and the Construction of the Serial Killer* (1997), excerpts, book available online UW-Library: [search.wisc.edu/men and monsters](http://search.wisc.edu/men-and-monsters)

Primary sources shown in class:

- Anonymous painting: *Transplantation of a leg by Saints Cosmas and Damian, assisted by angels* (16th c.)
- Albert Schweitzer's equipment for blood transfusion, Lambaréné hospital (Gabon), c. 1920
- Excerpts from *Brain Dead* by Peter Jackson (1992)
- Excerpts from *World War Z* (M. Foster, 2013)

13. Thursday April 14 – Work on Your Research Paper and Meetings with Instructor

14. Thursday April 21 – Work on Your Research Paper and Meetings with Instructor

15. Thursday April 28 - Oral Presentations & Finalizing your Research Paper

16. Thursday May 5 - Oral Presentations & Finalizing your Research Paper

*****FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DUE ON MONDAY MAY 9 *****

