

# Monster classes probe new vein of scholarship

## 怪物研究成一門新學問



Most college students put in a monster study session or two. Marina Levina's students get to spend sessions studying monsters.

The course, "Film Topics: Monster Movies," at the University of California, Berkeley, is one of a number around the country that mix scares and scholarship, using zombies, vampires and other ogres to study popular culture.

And, no, it's not a frightfully easy course, says Levina.

"For a lay person, I suppose it does sound like, 'What? Do you watch horror films all day?'" she says. "But it's a really tough class. Students don't automatically do well in it because it does involve a lot of serious theory."

The class, an **elective** open to mass communication/media studies majors, has space for 50 students and fills up quickly. Students watch monster films and write about what the creatures represent.

They also make their own monster films as a final project.

As Halloween approached, the class was studying zombies, looking at the horrors they have represented.

In the 1980s, for instance, zombies personified mindless **consumerism**. After the Sept. 11 attacks, the raging undead represent "this post-apocalyptic nightmare where we lose control," Levina says.

Not the most attractive characters, zombies mostly want to destroy humanity and have developed disturbing eating habits — they picked up a taste for brains in *Return of the Living Dead*.

Vampires, on the other hand, are "sexy and hot, they are those things that we would like to be ourselves but can't be," says Levina.

Students find the gore **curriculum** thought-provoking.

"It's my favorite class, even though it is theory heavy," said Azeta Hatef, one of Levina's students, perhaps summing up what really **sends a shiver down the spine** of many students — the prospect of serious study.

(AFP WITH STAFF WRITER)

大多數的大學生是花時間埋首苦讀。但瑪莉娜·勒維那的學生卻得花時間研究怪物。

加州柏克萊大學開的這門「電影主題：怪物電影」課，結合了恐懼和學術研究，以殭屍、吸血鬼，和其他食人怪等角色來探討大眾流行文化；美國有若干學校提供此課程。

勒維那說，而且，不，這不是一門非常容易的課。

她說：「對外行人來說，我想他們八成會覺得：『什麼？你們整天都在看恐怖電影嗎？』但這其實是一門很艱澀的課。學生沒辦法隨便就拿到高分，因為這門課中包含了許多嚴肅的理論。」

這門課開放給主修大眾傳播、媒體學程的學生選修，五十個名額一下子就額滿了。修課學生要欣賞怪物電影，並寫下這些怪物所代表的意涵。

他們也得自己拍攝怪物電影，作為期末作業。隨著萬聖夜來到，他們正在研究殭屍，探討其所象徵的恐怖意義。

勒維那表示，舉例來說，殭屍象徵的是一九八〇年代的盲目消費。九一一恐怖攻擊事件後，這群暴怒的不死族則代表「失序的浩劫後夢魘」。

殭屍這種角色不甚吸引人，它們大多想要摧毀人類，還有著恐怖的吃人習慣——電影《芝加哥打鬼》中的殭屍嗜食人腦。

另一方面，勒維那形容吸血鬼「性感又令人興奮，他們是我們想要、卻又無法成為的那一類。」

學生們發現這門血淋淋的課相當發人深省。

勒維那的學生之一阿柴塔·哈特夫說：「雖然這門課有很多理論，卻是我所喜歡的課。」總歸來說，也許真正讓許多學生感到背脊發涼的是嚴肅的研究吧。

(法新社/翻譯：袁星塵)

Top: A villager dressed as a zombie attends a practice session in Gourin, in Western France, on Oct. 25, 2009, just before the start of the Thrill The World 2009 event, a global celebration of Michael Jackson. Left: A man dressed like a zombie tries to frighten visitors during a Halloween party at Frankenstein Castle, about 30km south of Frankfurt, on Oct. 23, 2009.

PHOTOS AFP

上圖：十月二十五日，法國西部古亨村一個扮成殭屍的村民，在紀念麥可·傑克森的全球「二〇〇九顫慄全世界」活動開始前，參加彩排。

左圖：十月二十三日在法蘭克福南部約三十公里處的弗蘭肯斯坦城堡，一名男子在萬聖夜派對上裝扮成殭屍嚇遊客。

照片：法新社

### TODAY'S WORDS 今日單字

#### 1. **elective** /ɪˈlektɪv/ n.

選修課程 (xuan3 xiu1 ke4 cheng2)

例：It's a good idea to take time choosing your electives. (花點時間慎重選修課比較好。)

#### 2. **consumerism** /kənˈsjʊməɪzəm/ n.

消費主義 (xiao1 fei4 zhu3 yi4)

例：Consumerism is sometimes blamed for many of society's problems. (消費主義有時是社會問題的肇因。)

#### 3. **curriculum** /kəˈrɪkjələm/ n.

課程 (ke4 cheng2)

例：The curriculum has been designed to challenge all students, regardless of their level. (這門課向來不分程度，是開給所有學生的課程。)

### IDIOM POINT 重要片語

#### send a shiver down your spine 讓人背脊發涼

If something **sends a shiver down your spine**, it scares you.

Examples: "I have to confess that the thought of touching a snake **sends a shiver down my spine**," or "Reggie is really creepy — every time he looks at me it **sends a shiver down my spine**."

若說某事「send a shiver down your spine」，就表示這件事讓你感到害怕。

例如：「我必須承認，想到要摸蛇我就背脊發涼」，或是「雷基真的很詭異，他每次看我的眼神都讓我覺得背脊發涼」。