

Short Paper #1 Prompt

Directions:

You're going to write three short papers this quarter (worth a total of 30% of your course grade). For each paper, I'm going to give you a question/prompt and you'll respond with 2-3 pages (double-spaced), addressing all aspects of the question and providing examples from class materials (readings, screenings, discussions, etc.) as needed. Be sure to give it a good look before turning it in, the more polished your short paper is, the higher your score will be. Each short paper is worth 10% of your final grade, so take this seriously.

Short paper #1 is due at the beginning of class on Tuesday, October 14.

Choose ONE of the following two questions to answer for Short Paper #1.

Question #1: "Discovering" Poverty and Dreading Affluence

Barbara Ehrenreich describes how poverty was "discovered" in the U.S. during the continued post-WWII prosperity and affluence of the early 1960s (when, in fact, it had always existed in this country). For many, the U.S. was now truly classless, a land where everyone could belong to what was known as the "universal middle class" and participate in the consumer culture closely associated with suburbanization and home ownership. Under their view, other classes may exist and poverty may be found in small urban or rural pockets but these were seen as deviations from the "white middle class standard" against which practically everything was judged. At the same time, that white middle class harbored a dread of postwar affluence and its possible weakening effects. This dread, in true horror movie fashion, was projected onto the scapegoated poor, externalizing the perceived threat of affluence and endless consumption in an economy about to be drastically altered by the turmoil of the late 1960s.

"The poor--the invented poor--came to serve as a mirror for the middle class," Ehrenreich writes, "reflecting its own dread submission to the imperatives of consumption, the tyranny of affluence. More than that, the poor became the scapegoats for an affluence they alone were fully excluded from and fully innocent of" (56). How does this relate to the supernatural horror film of the 1970s? How are issues of social class woven throughout this subgenre, especially in relation to haunted house stories? Give me some examples with these responses; they can be from films assigned in this class or any other outside films you've seen as well. Use the handout I gave you in Week 1 for help in answering this question.

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