Mary Shelley's "Frankenstein" in Her Time and Ours

Midcoast Senior College Fall Two

Wednesdays, 9:30-11:30 MSC Learning Center

Michele Lettiere

Class One, Wednesday, November 4:

Introduction to Shelley, Origin Stories, Narrative Strategies

Readings: Preface to *Frankenstein* (1818 edition), written by Percy Bysshe Shelley (PDF copy)

Introduction to *Frankenstein* (1831 edition), written by Mary W. Shelley (PDF copy)

Frankenstein, Volume I, Letters I—IV

Class Two, Wednesday, November 11:

Parenting, Science and Responsibilities

At what point in Volume I does Victor's pursuit of knowledge become morally questionable? Is it when he begins his experiments, when he isolates himself from family and friends, or when he brings the creature to life and immediately abandons it?

Reading: *Frankenstein,* Volume I

Critical reading (optional): Anne Mellor, "Frankenstein, Gender, and Mother Nature" from Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*: *Annotated for Scientists, Engineers, and Creators of All Kinds* (pp. 344-352). Kindle Edition. (PDF on class site)

Class Three, Wednesday, November 18:

The Creature's Sentimental Education

Is the creature naturally good and corrupted by society, or does Shelley present a more complicated relationship between human nature and experience? How have his readings informed his search for his own identity? How do you respond to the trajectory of his story?

Reading: *Frankenstein,* Volume II

Critical reading (optional): Eleanor Reft, "Education and Status in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*" *https://www.symposiumjournal.org/education-and-status-in-mary-shelleys-frankenstein/*

Class Four, Wednesday, December 2

Moral Responsibility and the Limits of Ambition

Does the ending vindicate Victor's condemnation of the creature, or does it expose the moral limitations of Victor's worldview? When he tells Walton his story, is he confessing his failures, or is he still trying to control the meaning of what happened?

Reading: *Frankenstein,* Volume III

Critical reading (optional): Josephine Johnston, "Traumatic Responsibility: Victor Frankenstein as Creator and Casualty," Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*: Annotated for Scientists, Engineers, and Creators of All Kinds (302-310). Kindle Edition. (PDF on class site)

Class Five, Wednesday, December 9 and Class Six, Wednesday, December 16

- *Frankenstein's* Cultural History: The Creation of Frankenstein, the Monster
- Issues in contemporary Science and Bioethics

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Full Films:

Silent Movie: Edison's *Frankenstein*
https://www.kirstinmills.com/blog/moving-monsters-first-frankenstein-film-1910/
Frankenstein (1931), James Whale
https://archive.org/details/frankenstein-1931-restored-movie-720p-hd
Young Frankenstein (1974), Mel Brooks
https://archive.org/details/young-frankenstein_202410/Young+Frankenstein.iso

THE Iconic Scene Clips:

Frankenstein Brings his Creature to life:
Whale, 1931 *Frankenstein:* *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hEB6s8wH1D8*
Branagh, 1994 *Frankenstein:* *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iI2Kk0BiCFI*
Del Toro, 2025 *Frankenstein:* *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AvtAyOdUmBU*
Brooks, 1974 *Young Frankenstein:* *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Ca-2FRsTx8*

Ballet:

Royal Ballet's *Frankenstein* (2016). "Creation scene"
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=POFQ7gxLwdw&list=PL52mqXJn4lYbUlm24mIPTWOXWjDHWYFfL&index=5