Horror Writing Bootcamp
Lifelong Learning Class (LLWRC 862)
Fall 2026

Johnny Worthen
johnny@johnnyworthen.com
www.johnnyworthen.com

HORROR WRITING BOOTCAMP

Class Description: *Horror is more than a genre, it's a concept. It is the place where the unknown lurks, where nothing can be assumed, and anything can happen. Horror transcends labels and is part of every story as suspense, in the grotesque, in the stakes that make us keep reading.*

This class will look at the structure and forms of horror in literature, along with the psychological underpinnings and strange but tantalizing connection it has with its sister genres—Romance and Erotica. We'll explore the nuances and levels of fear, and when we have a handle on it all, slipping and sliding at the corners of our courage, we'll look at effective techniques to bring out the reactions we want in our writing.

This is an intensive three-week course of lecture presentation, practice and workshop over three Saturdays. Students will be given an opportunity to write and present their work for critique and discussion—which is in itself kinda' scary.

WARNING: This class may explore adult themes, language, and content.

Class Goal: *Students should leave the class with new confidence in their writing and deeper understanding of how, where, and why to use horror in any project.*

Recommended Reading: Writing in the Dark, Tim Waggoner.

Class Syllabus

Week 1:
The Ghost Inside
- Introductions
- Plans
- Sprints
- Fears
- Horror Dissection
  - Love and Death
- Levels of Horror
  - Revulsion
  - Horror
  - Terror
- Scene and Sequel

HOMEWORK
- *The Hanging Stranger*
- *Scene - Threat*

Week 2:
The Gooey Guts
- Critique & Workshop
- Story
- Conflict
- Characters
  - The Adversary
- Suspense
- Tension
- Stakes
- Setting
- Titillation
- Intimacy
- A Warning

HOMEWORK
- *Flash Fiction*

Week 3:
A Lingering Darkness
- Critique & Workshop
- What rules?

HOMEWORK
- *Submit*