

Maisha Wester

The Use of the Black Body as a Marker of Non-normative Sexuality and Gender

BIO

Dr. Maisha Wester is an Associate Professor in American Studies, and African American and African Diaspora Studies at Indiana University. She



is currently a Fulbright fellow doing research in the UK where she is investigating Black Gothic writing as well as the deployment of Gothic tropes in British discourses on racial and ethnic subjects. Her first book, *African American Gothic: Screams from Shadowed Places* (2012), interrogates Black appropriations, revisions, and critiques of Gothic tropes and discourses. As one reviewer remarks “Nowhere else can readers so clearly grasp in so many examples so well analyzed how African

American authors have radically transformed specifically Gothic conventions to make them profoundly symbolic of the horrors and complexities of the black American experience.” She is currently completing her second book *Voodoo Queens and Zombie Lords: Haiti in U.S. Horror Cinema* as well as a co-edited collection titled *Twenty-First Century Gothic*

ABSTRACT

This seminar will interrogate constructions of race, particularly blackness, as they intersect with gender, sexuality, and class to define the (non)normative in American culture. We will explore the ramifications of such constructions for the individual and the black community to consider how trying to become “normal” results in perpetuating oppression intra-racially. In the course of our discussion, we will examine the representations of Sojourner Truth, the Hottentot Venus, and Black queer subjects