

# Liverpool Film Seminar

2017 – 2018 series

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Every year, Liverpool Film Seminar invites experts to deliver a series of talks. Topics vary greatly and the series does not focus on a specific aspect of film. Instead, a range of genres and approaches are celebrated, from historical reach to the internet's impact on cinematic material.

**Professor Dana Heller (Old Dominion University, Virginia)**

## **Ordinary Zombies: A Requiem for George Romero's Night of the Living Dead**

George A. Romero, the filmmaker whose best-known work, *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) is widely regarded as the film that gave rise to a cultural explosion of gruesome, flesh-eating zombies in contemporary movies, television, literature, and video games, died on July 16, 2017. While Romero has now been consigned to the dead, the vibrant life that he breathed into zombie cinema lives on. From their humble origins as staples of lurid, low-budget B-movies, cinema zombies today are as ubiquitous and varied as the interpretations that proliferate about them in mainstream commentary, as well as in scholarly publications and university courses, where the zombie metaphor is mobilised to analyse everything from global capitalism, to animal rights, consumer psychology, Enlightenment philosophy, and the US Presidencies of both Barack Obama and Donald J Trump. Romero found all this fuss over the meaning of zombies peculiar. For him, zombies were, above all, meaningless and ordinary: "You can't really get angry at them," he acknowledged. "They have no hidden agendas, they are what they are. I sympathise with them."

Taking Romero on his own terms, this talk will serve, above all, as an occasion to reconsider the legacy of what is arguably the most influential zombie movie of all time. We'll start by putting to rest the question of what zombies mean so that we can focus on another question: why do the living need them so much?

## Biography:

Dana Heller is Eminent Scholar and Louis I. Jaffe Professor of English at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia, where she teaches courses in cultural theory, gender & sexuality studies, and histories of U.S. popular culture. Her publications include *Hairspray* (Wiley Blackwell), *Makeover Television: Realities Remodeled* (I.B. Tauris), *The Selling of 9/11: How a National Tragedy Became a Commodity* (Palgrave Macmillan), *Family Plots: The de-oedipalization of Popular Culture* (University of Pennsylvania), and *Cross-Purposes: Lesbians, Feminists, and the Limits of Alliance* (Indiana University Press).

