

**CRE Faculty Member:** Joy C. Schaefer

**Working Project Title:** Teen Body Horror: The Non-Monstrous Feminine in *Thelma* (2017) and *Blue My Mind* (2017)

**CRE Course:** MCO 4073 - Emotional Outlaws

**Student Researcher Name and Major:** Ashley Rini (Media Communication)

### **Project Description:**

Ashley Rini and Dr. Joy Schaefer are researching the representation of teenage girls in what they call the “teen body horror” film--a genre that depicts the monstrous metamorphosis of the human body as an allegory for the hormonal, behavioral, and physical changes that occur during adolescence. They are producing an original scholarly essay and related medium-length video essay. They will submit an abstract of their traditional essay to the 2021 Cine-Excess conference, and they plan to submit their finished video essay to InTransition.

Current abstract:

In “Not Your Average Teen Horror,” Coco D’Hont explains why *Excision* (Richard Bates, U.S., 2012) is a feminist step forward for the teen horror film genre: it veers from the trend of female-led films that maintain the trope of the teen-girl-as-violent-monster who must be demolished in order to reinstate social order. While *Excision* reveals a useful philosophy of social construction—D’Hont shows how the film illustrates that media and society, rather than puberty, renders the teenage girl ‘insane’—the protagonist maintains the trend of patriarchal violence by unwittingly killing her sister at the film’s end. This paper will examine *Thelma* (Joachim Trier, Norway, 2017) and *Blue My Mind* (Lisa Brühlmann, Switzerland, 2017) as more productive feminist teen body horror films because, unlike *Excision*, they represent adolescent female protagonists that obtain non-monstrous agency through their budding sexuality.

We will compare tropes in post-2000 teen body horror ‘feminist revenge’ films to two European art house films released in 2017, both of which represent a teenage girl’s transition from innocence to (queer) sexual experience. While Mia’s pubescent monstrosity in *Blue My Mind* is necrosis of the legs--she ultimately transforms into a mermaid--*Thelma*’s protagonist develops uncontrollable telekinesis, harkening back to Brian de Palma’s *Carrie* (1976). We argue that these films offer a template for a new type of teen body horror film: a feminist narrative and form that revokes the imperative to seek vengeance on individual men, as represented in horror-comedy films such as *Teeth* (Mitchell Lichtenstein, U.S., 2007). By melding the ‘art house’ genre with teen body horror, *Blue My Mind* and *Thelma* offer us the radical potential for something different: a feminist future in which teen girls find introspection, agency, empowerment, and queer connection in their sexual awakening.