

History of Witchcraft and Magic 01:510:253  
Summer 2013  
Tuesday and Thursdays 6-10pm  
Hardenbergh Hall Rm B4

Professor Jennifer Wilson  
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VD 013  
office hours: by appointment

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course will explore the phenomena of witchcraft and magic in early modern Europe and early America, with a brief look forward into post-enlightenment Europe and the modern world. Not only will we examine the particulars of the witchcraze, we will also explore the beliefs and social structures that made the craze possible and resulted in the execution of thousands of people (mostly women). The histories of witchcraft and magic will be considered within their social and cultural frameworks, and related topics such as the history of the religion, law, and politics, as well as the history of medicine, crime, and the theater will also be explored. Particular attention will be paid to the history of women, gender and sexuality throughout this class. The structure of this course is designed to encourage thought about these issues on both a high, intellectual level (e.g. looking at theories about the witchcraze), as well as at a local level (e.g. through the exploration of various case studies). Students will engage with both primary texts produced during the early modern period, as well as secondary articles.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

- Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre*
- Christopher Marlowe, *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Dr. Faustus*
- Various secondary articles and primary sources made available through the sakai site

**STRUCTURE/ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING**

Each class will consist of a lecture followed by a discussion of the assigned weekly readings. There will be three response papers that will be prompted with a set of questions that students will answer in class and hand in to be graded. While this will be an in-formal writing assignment (it does not require footnotes, outside research, etc.), it assumes that the student will have come to class prepared (having done the reading and preferably with prepared notes for those who want to do really well) and constitutes a high percentage of the student's final grade.

All assigned reading will be made available through the sakai website for this class

In-class presentations are meant to help you think about some of the issues we examine in this class from a contemporary perspective. Students can do this on their own or in groups of 2, and will chose a modern day phenomenon or news-story to present to the class. We will discuss the details of this assignment in class.

A final, take-home exam will constitute a large percentage of the grade and will cover the entire content of the course.

As there is no text book for this class, attendance is not only essential, it is also required.

The grading structure is as follows:

Weekly attendance and participation: 20%  
response papers: 30%  
presentations: 15%  
Final exam: 35%

## **PROCEDURES and GUIDELINES**

**Cell-phones** are not allowed to be used during class time. Please send texts during breaks and do not bring your phone out during class—cell-phone use during class is disruptive to me as well as to the people around you. **Laptops** are permitted to be used during the lecture portion of class time, but must be put away during our class discussion. This means that you will need to bring a hard copy of the assigned reading to class in order to write your response papers and participate in class discussion.

**Attendance** at lecture is required. You must sign in at the beginning of every class and if you need to leave early, please speak to me **BEFORE** the start of the class. If you leave early without speaking to me, your attendance will not count.

**Tardiness to class.** Please try to be on time for class as coming in late is disruptive to me and to the class. If you are consistently late, then it will be factored into your participation grade.

**Absences:** Emergencies, holidays or the occasional sickness come up sometimes, and each student is permitted 1 absence without it reflecting negatively on your final attendance grade. As this is a summer course, missing just 1 class is a serious matter and students should arrange to obtain class notes from another student. You are now supposed to use the university online reporting system, <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra>. It will automatically send an email to me. For more information on Rutgers absence policy, please see the below website: <http://sasundergrad.rutgers.edu/academics/courses/registration-and-course-policies/attendance-and-cancellation-of-class>

**Tardiness on or missed assignments.** Students must submit ALL assignments in order to pass this class, including response papers. If for some reason you must be absent during a class in which there is an in-class response paper, you must get in touch with me **BEFORE** the class in order to arrange a make up. Because of the pace of this course, no late papers will be accepted. Obviously, serious medical emergencies are a different situation and you should contact me if this is the case and obtain proper documentation.

**Plagiarism:** This is an offense that the university takes very seriously and will not be tolerated in this class—it will result in an immediate failing grade. We will discuss what constitutes plagiarism, which is often unintentional although still serious, and how to use information from outside sources without plagiarizing.

## LECTURE SCHEDULE

### Week 1:

#### **May 28: Introduction to the History of Witchcraft and Magic**

Lecture: The foundation of the witch-hunts/historical debates and the difference between witch-craft and magic

#### **May 30: Historical background: Society, Gender and Religion**

This lecture will examine the impact of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, the Inquisition, the overlap between politics and religion, as well as discuss Christian beliefs that influenced the witch-hunts. We will discuss gendered ideas about witch-craft beliefs and demonology (the sabbath, pact with the Devil, maleficium, etc), as well as look at witches as wives, mothers and neighbours.

Secondary reading: Robert Darnton, "The Great Cat Massacre," (sakai); Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis" (sakai)

### Week 2:

#### **June 4: Witchcraft Beliefs and Accusations: an over-view.**

primary reading: Heinrich Kramer, *Malleus Maleficarum* (sakai), Lambert Daneau: Protestantism and Witchcraft, 1574 (sakai)

secondary reading: Christina Lerner, "Was Witch-hunting women hunting?" in Darren Oldridge, *The Witchcraft Reader* (sakai); Wolfgang Behringer, "Weather, Hunger and Fear: Origins of the European witch-hunts in climate, society and mentality," In Darren Oldridge *The Witchcraft Reader* (sakai)

#### **June 6: The Witch-hunt and Witch-craft Trials: the making of a craze, trials, torture, and evidence.**

primary source: various depositions from early modern trials (provided in class), selections from King James VI: *The swimming and pricking of witches* and *The Trial of Janet Barker and Margaret Lauder at Edinburgh*, 1643 (sakai)

secondary source: Clive Holmes, "Women: Witches and Witnesses," in Darren Oldridge *The Witchcraft Reader* (sakai)

### Week 3:

#### **June 11: Crime in the Early Modern World**

secondary reading, *The Return of Martin Guerre*  
in-class response paper

#### **June 13: Witchcraft and Demon Possession: Medical knowledge, women's bodies and diagnosis**

case study: Mary Glover

primary source: selections from Edward Jorden's *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease called the Suffocation of the Mother* (sakai)

secondary source: selections from James Sharpe's *The Bewitching of Anne Gunter* (p. 43-63, sakai); Judith Bonzol, "The Medical Diagnosis of Demonic Possession in an Early Modern English Community," (sakai)

### Week 4:

#### **June 18: Demon possession and exorcism: confessional debates and the problem of performance**

case study: The Loudun possessions and the John Darrell/Samuel Harsnett debate

primary-source: letter of Thomas Killigrew (sakai)

secondary source: Thomas Freeman, "Demon, Deviance and Defiance: John Darrell and the Politics of Exorcism in Late Elizabethan England," (sakai)

in-class response paper

**June 20: Witchcraft in the Atlantic world**

case study: Puritanism and the witch-craze in Salem

movie: Arthur Miller's "The Crucible"

**Week 5:**

**June 25: Magic in the early modern world and on-stage: Dr. Faustus**

readings: Christopher Marlowe, *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Dr. Faustus*

in-class response paper

**June 27: Skepticism about witchcraft and the end of the witch-craze**

primary-source: Johann Weyer: *Witches as Melancholics*, 1563 and Reginald Scot: *The Unreality of Witchcraft*, 1584

secondary source: TBD

final exam review/take-home exam handed out

**Week 6:**

**July 2: Victorian beliefs and modern iterations**

secondary source: Brian Levack, "Possession in the Age of Reason," and "Possession: Past and Present," both chapters in *The Devil Within: Possession and Exorcism in the Christian West* (sakai)

in-class presentations

**July 4: No Class (Holiday)**

**Take-home exams due**