

# History 510:253:E6 • History of Witchcraft and Magic

Summer 2017, June 27-August 3  
Tuesday/Thursday, 6:00-10:00 PM  
Scott Hall 207



Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.

—Exodus 22:18

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## Course Description

Witchcraft and magic are two components of the supernatural that shed light on the cultures that produced them, including how people thought about themselves and others, and how they reacted to changes in their society. Magic is sometimes used to find love or to connect to lost love ones, but is sometimes intended for the more nefarious purpose of hurting or achieving power over others. *Accusations* of sorcery and witchcraft, moreover, have also historically been employed to rob others of power. Witchcraft and magic are implicated in social, economic, and political histories, and are heavily tied into gender construction and the history of women. In this course we will investigate notions of witchcraft, magic and the supernatural in ancient, medieval, early

modern, and modern Europe and America, and also survey beliefs and practices around the globe.

### **Course Aims**

This course meets the following SAS core learning goals for Social and Historical Analysis:

- H: Understand the bases and development of human and societal endeavors across time and place
- I: Explain and be able to assess the relationship among assumptions, methods, evidence, arguments, and theory in social and historical analysis
- K: Explain the development of a society or culture over time, including the history of ideas or the history of science
- L: Employ historical reasoning to study human endeavors

### **Assigned Readings**

There is one required textbook for this course, Michael D. Bailey's *Magic and Superstition in Europe: A Concise History from Antiquity to the Present* (2007, ISBN 0742533875). Other assigned readings are posted online in the Resources section of our Sakai site.

### **Course Components**

Class time: We'll break our time up into lectures, small- and large-group discussions, films, writing, and group-work activities. Discussions provide an opportunity to ask questions about readings and lecture, and gain experience interpreting primary sources. As you will see below, 30% of your course grade is built around how well you contribute to these discussions. Come to class armed with ideas of your own, and be prepared to respond to your classmates' comments.

Reading: At the end of this syllabus you will find a schedule of readings assigned for each session. Some readings are secondary (as in, written by modern-day researchers), but primary source documents are an essential element of your weekly reading. These texts are a window into history as it happened, and allow you to interpret the past for yourself. There will also occasionally be short readings handed out during class.

\*\*\*Students are expected to bring assigned readings to class, including those from previous sessions. Printing them is preferred, because students will not be allowed to use laptops during open-book writing assignments or exams. Bare texts are useless, and marking them up (via highlighters, underlining, and marginal notes) and taking notes is a *required* part of the reading process.

Midterm Exam: The midterm exam will consist of short and long essay questions asking for synthesis of course readings and ideas (rather than rote reproduction of facts).

Final Project: In lieu of a final exam, you will prepare a project involving a topic you choose relevant to witchcraft and magic in 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup>-century pop culture. This might be a supernatural trend, such as "vampires in young adult literature," or a specific book or

movie franchise, like *Harry Potter*. You will prepare a 6-8 page paper and a 10-15 minute class presentation. More details to follow.

### **Attendance and Punctuality**

Regular attendance is vital for a history class, because your understanding of one time period will often greatly depend on your knowledge of what has come before. Attendance is a required component of this course and will affect your final grade.

Students are allowed to miss one class period or two half-periods, for whatever reason, with no harm to their grade. Lateness of 20 minutes or more counts as a half-period absence, as does leaving early. Each further half-period absence results in a deduction of one-third of a letter grade (e.g. a B+ dropping to a B). "Strategic absences," as in using the excused absence on an important class day such as presentations, can result in a lowered participation grade.

It is important to speak to me as soon as possible about any absences you know about in advance or to arrange for extra excused absences for valid reasons. Your MyRutgers page has an option to self-report absences, but you may also be required to provide evidence of the reason for your absence. Please arrange with a fellow student for class notes or chat with me during office hours.

Class will start promptly at 6:00 PM, so please be on time to avoid disrupting the class.

### **Office Hours**

Drop in any Tuesday and Thursday before class from 5-6 PM to discuss course material, assignments, and grades. Please have relevant papers with you, such as a graded exam or your copy of an assignment sheet. I can also make appointments to meet with you at other times.

### **Academic Integrity (Cheating and Plagiarism)**

This is a large and important subject, and one we will talk about together in class. It is also one you should continue to ask questions about if ever you do not understand university policies.

Essentially, "academic misconduct" is the representation of another's work as your own. This includes having a roommate write (or even heavily edit) your papers; finding old papers online; and retyping or cutting and pasting text you find in a book or on a website. *But even if you don't copy another source word-for-word, you must be careful about borrowing information, too.* For example, if you follow along a Wikipedia article about the Witch Craze, and write a paragraph describing the craze that uses information point-by-point from the article but in your own words, this is still dishonest. There are proper ways to cite sources used, and to incorporate information into your own ideas, which we will discuss in class.

Descriptions of plagiarism and Rutgers' official policy on academic integrity can be found at <https://slwordpress.rutgers.edu/academicintegrity/wp-content/uploads/sites/>

41/2014/11/AI\_Policy\_2013.pdf> and <<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>>. Offenses can result in failure of the assignment, failure of the course, or expulsion from the university.

### **Writing Center**

Rutgers' writing center in Murray Hall is open for reduced hours during the summer. For more information go to <<http://wp.rutgers.edu/tutoring/writingcenters>>.

### **Disabilities**

Students with disabilities, including learning disabilities, requiring assistance and/or accommodation are encouraged to contact Disability Services (<http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/>). You are asked to provide me with a hard copy of your accommodation letter from Disability Services as soon as possible.

### **Classroom Etiquette**

Devices like laptops, smart phones, and tablets can be useful research and learning aids, but they can also be nuisances. Use yours to access assigned readings during class, or even to hop online to find an answer to a question your classmates stump me with. But any student who regularly neglects lecture and discussion because distracted by these gadgets *will be counted absent*. Please respect your colleagues and instructor by paying attention to what they are saying; otherwise there is little reason for you to attend class.

### **Grading: Assignments and Percentage Breakdown**

The percentage breakdown for grades is as follows:

A (100-90) B+ (89-87) B (86-80) C+ (79-77) C (76-70) D (69-60) F (59-0)

Midterm exam 35%

Final project 35%

Participation and in-class assignments 30%

### **Sakai**

Access our Sakai site at <<https://sakai.rutgers.edu/portal>>. You should automatically be added to the course. You will find the syllabus and readings here, and I will post copies of paper assignments and exam review sheets as well as any relevant maps or pictures and some lecture slides. You will also use this site to submit your papers and receive feedback electronically. I will use Sakai to generate class announcements, so check your affiliated email account often.

### **Final Note**

Life happens, but disruptions to your coursework will be much easier to handle if you talk to me right away about any problems you are having with the class or any accommodations you might need.

## Reading/Class Schedule (subject to modification)

- 1) Tuesday 6-27 Introduction to the study of witchcraft and magic
- 2) Thursday 6-29 Magic around the Ancient and Medieval Mediterranean
  - Tikvah Frymer Kensky, "In the Body of the Goddess"
  - Michael Bailey, "Roots in the Ancient World" and "The Rise of Christianity and Early Medieval Europe" (in assigned textbook)
  - Selections from Greek and Roman magical texts
- 3) Thursday 7-6 Magic Becoming Modern: Pseudo-Science and Religion
  - Bailey, "Varieties of Magic" and "The Medieval Condemnation of Magic" (in assigned textbook)
  - Robert Turner, "John Dee"
  - Selected medieval texts on natural phenomena
  - Selected medieval ghost stories and Yiddish folk tales
- 4) Tuesday 7-11 Early Modern Magic: Protestant Reformation and the European Witch Craze
  - Brian Levack, "The Impact of the Reformation" and "The Social Context"
  - Theories on the origin of the witch craze (read only one):
    - Wolfgang Behringer, "Weather, Hunger and Fear: Origins of the European Witch-hunts in Climate, Society and Mentality"
    - Brian Levack, "State-Building and Witch Hunting in Early Modern Europe"
    - Marianne Hester, "Patriarchal Reconstruction and Witch Hunting"
  - Selections from *Malleus Maleficarum*
  - Case study, "The Starchy Seven"
- 5) Thursday 7-13 Witch Craze in Protestant Colonial America
  - Richard Weisman, "Witchcraft and Puritan Beliefs"
  - Cotton Mather, "Bewitchment of the Goodwin Children"
  - "Examination of Bridget Bishop"
  - Elaine Breslaw, "Tituba's Confession"

- 6) Tuesday 7-18 Global Notions of Witchcraft and Magic
- Dorothy Lee, “Religious Perspectives in Anthropology”
  - You will be assigned one of the following:
    - Louis Golomb, “The Relativity of Magical Malevolence in Urban Thailand”
    - Karen Brown, “Vodou”
    - Walter Roth, “The Medicine Man and the Kanaima”
    - Marc Simmons, “Pueblo Witchcraft”
    - Felicity Thomas, “HIV/AIDS, Witchcraft, and Social Tensions in Namibia”
- 7) Thursday 7-20 **Midterm Exam**; Film, *Cabin in the Woods*
- 8) Tuesday 7-25 Victorian Magic: Mysticism, Occultism, Spiritualism; Film *Nosferatu*
- Bailey, “Magic in the Modern West” (in assigned textbook)
  - Diane Purkiss, “Victorian Fairies” and “Photographing Fairies”
  - Gábor Klaniczay, “The Decline of Witches and the Rise of Vampires”
  - Starhawk, “The Goddess” and “Creating Religion: Toward the Future” (skim)
- 9) Thursday 7-27 From Dracula to Disney: Witchcraft and Magic in Modern Pop Culture
- Diane Purkiss, “At Play in the Fields of the Past”
  - Heidi Breuer, “Hags on Film: Contemporary Echoes of the Early Modern Wicked Witch”
  - Choose one:
    - David Jacobs, “UFOs and the Search for Scientific Legitimacy”
    - George Gmelch, “Baseball Magic”
    - “Electronic Exorcism”
- 10) Tuesday 8-1 Communist and Other Modern Witch Hunts; In-class reading of *The Crucible*; Student Presentations
- Arthur Miller, “Why I Wrote *The Crucible*”
- 11) Thursday 8-3: Student Presentations