TRENT UNIVERSITY - DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY  
HIS 3580Y - Witchcraft and Magic in the Western World

Instructor: Dr. Frances Timbers  
Mondays & Wednesdays 9:00 am-1:00 pm (see below)  
Email: ftimbers@gmail.com  
Office Hours: By Appointment before or after class

The objectives of this course are to dispel the myths surrounding the phenomenon of witchcraft while examining the social-anthropological role played by witchcraft accusations. We will place the era of European witchcraft prosecutions (1450-1750) in its intellectual and religious contexts and examine the philosophies and ideologies that facilitated both the belief in witchcraft and its censure. The exploration of witchcraft prosecutions sheds light on many aspects of the premodern period including family and community structures, the legal system, health care, and the dissemination of ideas. The construction of the figure of the witch informs the history student about the construction of the ‘other’, which is very pertinent to today’s ‘age of terror’. The majority of the course deals with the persecution era in early modern Europe and New England; however, we will also explore modern witchcraft in the form of Wicca, African witchcraft, and Santeria.

This course has both a lecture component and a seminar component. There will be a two-hour lecture on Monday from 9-11am and a one-hour lecture on Wednesday from 9-10am. There will be two one-hour seminar sections on Wednesdays after lecture: one at 10 am and one at 11am. Prepared participation is mandatory. The onus is on the students to make presentations and carry the discussion.

Textbooks

Note: Of invaluable importance for your research projects is an on-line bibliography on magic and witchcraft at http://www.witchcraftbib.co.uk/. An older version of this will be posted on Blackboard, but more recent material may be included on the website.

Evaluation Criteria
Seminar Participation & Presentation 20%
Book Review of Micro-history (5-7 pages, due June 2) 20%
Project Proposal and Annotated Bibliography (due June 16) 5%
Research Essay on Primary Source (10-15 pages, due July 7) 25%
Final Exam 30%
**Deadline Policy**
Assignments are due in class. Electronic submissions are not accepted. Late assignments will be penalized 5% per day including weekends for a maximum of 5 days. Papers will not be accepted after 5 days. A doctor’s note is required for medical excuses.

**Academic Dishonesty**
Academic dishonesty, which includes plagiarism and cheating, is an extremely serious academic offence and carries penalties varying from a 0 grade on an assignment to expulsion from the University. Definitions, penalties, and procedures for dealing with plagiarism and cheating are set out in Trent University’s *Academic Integrity Policy*. You have a responsibility to educate yourself – unfamiliarity with the policy is not an excuse. You are strongly encouraged to visit Trent’s Academic Integrity website to learn more – [www.trentu.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.trentu.ca/academicintegrity).

**Access to Instruction**
It is Trent University’s intent to create an inclusive learning environment. If a student has a disability and/or health consideration and feels that he/she may need accommodations to succeed in this course, the student should contact the Disability Services Office (BL Suite 109, 748-1281, disabilityservices@trentu.ca) as soon as possible. Complete text can be found under Access to Instruction in the Academic Calendar.

**Schedule of Lectures and Seminars**

May 10: Introduction and Organization (No Seminars)
Screening and discussion of *The Burning Times*, National Film Board, 1990

May 12: Lecture: Historiography & Classical Magic

May 17: Lecture: Medieval Witchcraft
Read: Part One: Medieval Origins in *The Witchcraft Reader*, pp. 19-48

May 19: Lecture: Demonology
For Seminar Read: All of Part II “The medieval foundations of witch-hunting” in *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*.

May 24: Holiday - No Class
May 26: Lecture: The Witches’ Sabbath
Seminar will focus on images provided in class.

May 31: Lecture: Effects of the Reformation - Protestants and Catholics

June 2: Popular Culture and ‘Superstition’

June 7: Lecture: Witch-hunting or Woman-hunting?

June 9: Lecture: The Inquisition

June 14: Lecture: Geographical Variations outside England

June 16: Lecture: Geographical Variations in England and Scotland
Read: John Phillips, “The Examination and confession of certaine wytches at Chensforde in the countie of Essex,” (1566) pp. 6-23 [EEBO].

June 21: Lecture: Legal Aspects
Read: Part Five: Witchcraft and Authority in *The Witchcraft Reader*, pp. 165-204; the rest of Part IV “The trial and punishment of witches” in *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*.

June 23: Lecture: Ceremonial Magic Lecture
Readings for Seminar will be posted on Blackboard: to cast a magic circle; recipe to get a familiar (John Caius); to obtain the spirit of a deceased person; to find hidden treasure; to call angels

June 30: Lecture: Salem

July 5: Movie: *The Devils* (1971)

July 7: Lecture: Demonic Possession

July 12: Lecture: Theories of Decline

July 14: Lecture: Anthropological Approaches in African Witchcraft

July 19: Lecture: Santeria

July 21: Lecture: Wicca and Neopaganism

July 26: Review & Exam Prep