

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](mailto: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

*The Witchcraft Reader*, ed. Darren Oldridge (London: Routledge, 2008). [on hold BF 1566.W395]  
*The Witchcraft Sourcebook*, ed. Brian P. Levack (London: Routledge, 2004). On-line through Trent E-Books.

**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

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| 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](mailto: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

Read: Jacqueline Simpson, "Margaret Murray's Witch Cult," in Part Three: The idea of a witch cult in *The Witchcraft Reader*, pp. 87-98; All of Part I "Witchcraft and magic in the ancient world" in *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*.

May 17: Lecture: Medieval Witchcraft

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

May 19: Lecture: Demonology

Read: Part Three: The idea of a witch cult in *The Witchcraft Reader*, pp. 87-130 and Virginia Krause, "Witchcraft Confessions and Demonology," in Part Eight: Reading confessions in *The Witchcraft Reader*, pp. 305-310.

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' Sabbat  
Seminar will focus on images provided in class.

May 31: Lecture: Effects of the Reformation - Protestants and Catholics  
Read: Part Four: Witchcraft and the Reformation in *The Witchcraft Reader*, pp. 131-164.

June 2: Popular Culture and 'Superstition'  
Read: Part Two: Witchcraft, magic and fear in *The Witchcraft Reader*, pp. 49-86 and Part V "Witchcraft trials in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries" in *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*.

June 7: Lecture: Witch-hunting or Woman-hunting?  
Read: Part Seven: Witchcraft and Gender in *The Witchcraft Reader*, pp. 247- 300 and Louise Jackson, "Witches, Wives and Mothers," in *The Witchcraft Reader*, pp. 305-310.

June 9: Lecture: The Inquisition  
Read: Geoffrey Parker, "Some Recent Work on the Inquisition in Spain and Italy," *Journal of Modern History* 54 (1982); John Tedeschi, "The Roman Inquisition and Witchcraft: An Early Seventeenth-Century Instruction on Correct Trial Procedure," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 200 (1983): 163-80; "Innocent VIII: Papal Inquisitors and Witchcraft, 1484," "Heinrich Kramer: The Torture of Accused Witches, 1486," and "Friedrich Spee: a condemnation of torture" in Part IV of *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*.

June 14: Lecture: Geographical Variations outside England  
Read: Jonathan Seitz, "The Root is Hidden and the Material Uncertain": The Challenges of Prosecuting Witchcraft in Early Modern Venice," *Renaissance Quarterly*, 62:1 (2009): 102-133; C. Erik Midelfort, "Heartland of the Witchcraze" in *The Witchcraft Reader*, pp. 99-106. [JSTOR]

June 16: Lecture: Geographical Variations in England and Scotland  
Read: John Phillips, "The Examination and confession of certaine wythes 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 28: Movie: *The Crucible* (1996)

June 30: Lecture: Salem

Read: David Harley, "Explaining Salem: Calvinist Psychology and the Diagnosis of Possession," *The American Historical Review*, 101:2 (Apr. 1996): 307-330; and "The Salem Witchcraft Trials, 1692" in Part V of *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*.

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

July 7: Lecture: Demonic Possession

Read: Part Six: Witchcraft, possession and the Devil in *The Witchcraft Reader*, pp. 205-246 and Part VI "Demonic possession and witchcraft" in *The Witchcraft Sourcebook*.

July 12: Lecture: Theories of Decline

Read: Part Nine: The decline of witchcraft in *The Witchcraft Reader*, pp. 337-372.

July 14: Lecture: Anthropological Approaches in African Witchcraft

Read: Victor W Turner, "Witchcraft and Sorcery: Taxonomy versus Dynamics." *Africa* 34 (1964): 314-25; E. E. Evans-Pritchard, "Witchcraft" *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (Oct., 1935), pp. 417-422; Cyprian F. Fisiy, "Containing Occult Practices: Witchcraft Trials in Cameroon," *African Studies Review*, 41: 3 (Dec., 1998), pp. 143-163.

July 19: Lecture: Santeria

July 21: Lecture: Wicca and Neopaganism

Read: Part Ten: Witchcraft Today in *The Witchcraft Reader*, pp. 373-388

July 26: Review & Exam Prep