

## HIST BC2199: A History of Witchcraft and Magic in Europe



*Jan van de Velde II, The Sorceress (1626)*

Instructor: Dale Booth

### Course Description

This lecture course examines the social, cultural, and legal history of witchcraft, magic, and the occult throughout European history. We will examine the values and attitudes that have influenced beliefs about witchcraft and the supernatural, both historically and in the present day, using both primary and secondary sources. This course will pay specific attention to the role of gender and sexuality in the history of witchcraft, as the vast majority of individuals charged in the witch hunts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were indeed women. We will also study accusations of witchcraft, breaking down the power dynamics and assumptions at play behind the witch trials, and the impacts of these trials on gender relations in European society. This class will track the intersections of magic and science throughout the early-modern period, and the reconciliation of belief systems during the Enlightenment. We will carry our analysis into the modern period, touching on Victorian spiritualism and mysticism, McCarthyism in the United States, and contemporary goddess worship. We will conclude the semester with an investigation into the role of witchcraft in discussions of gender, race, and sexuality in popular culture.

## **Course Requirements:**

Students are required to attend and participate in course meetings, complete readings, and post on the class discussion board on the Courseworks. Students will receive guidelines on how discussions will operate and what will be expected of them in the first week of the course. Students are required to complete one primary source response (3-page response, typed, double-spaced) due on any of the “Regional Views” reading weeks. More details on this response will be forthcoming. You will also complete a midterm and final exam.

## **Learning objectives**

- Appreciation for the diversity and complexity of human experience
- Critical understanding of the relationship between past events and modern life
- The ability to conduct close readings of key texts, primary and secondary
- The ability to analyze and interpret historical materials
- The skill of presenting arguments cogently and logically in writing and speaking
- The skill of responding constructively and critically to the views of others

## **GER Designation**

Thinking with Historical Perspective

### **Assessment:**

**15% - Participation in Class Discussions**

**15% - Discussion Question Posts (5 in total over the course of the semester)**

**20% - Primary Source Response Paper**

**25% - Midterm**

**25% - Final Exam**

## **Required Texts**

- All readings will be posted to the course site

## **Student Absences**

Students are expected to attend all classes. That said, circumstances – illness, caretaking responsibilities, family/friend emergencies, etc. – come up. If you need to miss a class or two, please send me an email to let me know. Additionally, religious holidays are always excused absences. Again, I do ask that you inform me of such occasions.

## **Class Announcements**

All course announcements and any additional materials will be posted on our course site. It is each student’s responsibility to check the course site regularly.

## **E-mail Policy**

I will do my best to reply to any other emails within 48 hours.

## **Academic Integrity**

All students are expected to adhere to the Barnard College Honor Code. Approved by the student body in 1912 and updated in 2016, the Code states:

*We, the students of Barnard College, resolve to uphold the honor of the College by engaging with integrity in all of our academic pursuits. We affirm that academic integrity is the*

*honorable creation and presentation of our own work. We acknowledge that it is our responsibility to seek clarification of proper forms of collaboration and use of academic resources in all assignments or exams. We consider academic integrity to include the proper use and care for all print, electronic, or other academic resources. We will respect the rights of others to engage in pursuit of learning in order to uphold our commitment to honor. We pledge to do all that is in our power to create a spirit of honesty and honor for its own sake.*

I take plagiarism seriously - there will be zero tolerance for plagiarism of any kind. Assignments that reflect any form of direct copying without quotation marks and attribution will receive no credit. Please ask me or your Teaching Assistant if you are uncertain about any aspect of how to use and cite secondary sources. Additionally, the use of an AI text generator (such as ChatGBT) is prohibited.

### **Affordable Access to Course Texts and Materials**

All students deserve to be able to study and make use of course texts and materials regardless of cost. Barnard librarians have partnered with students, faculty, and staff to find ways to increase student access to textbooks. By the first day of advance registration for each term, faculty will have provided information about required texts for each course on CourseWorks (including ISBN or author, title, publisher, copyright date, and price), which can be viewed by students. A number of cost-free or low-cost methods for accessing some types of courses texts are detailed on the [Barnard Library Textbook Affordability](#) guide. Undergraduate students who identify as first-generation and/or low-income students may check out items from the [FLIP lending libraries in the Barnard Library](#) and in [Butler Library](#) for an entire semester. Students may also consult with their professors, the Dean of Studies, and the Financial Aid Office about additional affordable alternatives for having access to course texts. Visit the guide and talk to your professors and your librarian for more details.

### **Center for Accessibility Resources and Disability Services (CARDS)**

*If you believe you may encounter barriers to the academic environment due to a documented disability or emerging health challenges, please feel free to contact me and/or the [Center for Accessibility Resources & Disability Services \(CARDS\)](#). Any student with approved academic accommodations is encouraged to contact me during office hours or via email. If you have questions regarding registering a disability or receiving accommodations for the semester, please contact CARDS at (212) 854-4634, [cards@barnard.edu](mailto:cards@barnard.edu), or learn more at [barnard.edu/disabilityservices](http://barnard.edu/disabilityservices). CARDS is located in 101 Altschul Hall.*

Columbia information can be found here:

<https://www.health.columbia.edu/services/register-disability-services>

### **Barnard College Wellness Statement**

It is important for undergraduates to recognize and identify the different pressures, burdens, and stressors you may be facing, whether personal, emotional, physical, financial, mental, or academic. We as a community urge you to make yourself--your own health, sanity, and wellness--your priority throughout this term and your career here. Sleep, exercise, and eating well can all be a part of a healthy regimen to cope with stress. Resources exist to support you in several sectors of your life, and we encourage you to make use of them. Should you have any questions about navigating these resources, please visit these sites:

- Primary Care at Barnard: <http://barnard.edu/primarycare>
- Counseling: <https://barnard.edu/about-counseling>

- Wellness: <http://barnard.edu/wellwoman/about>

### **Course Schedule \*Subject to Change\***

Please note: You are expected to complete the readings prior to our class meeting. Asterisks indicate a selection or excerpt from a text. You will not be reading these books in their entirety.

#### **Wednesday, January 22 – Introductions, Guidelines, and Course Expectations**

#### **Monday, January 27 – The Meanings of Magic and the Definitions of Witch**

- Michael Bailey, “The Meanings of Magic” (2006)
- Ronald Hutton, “The Meaning of the Word ‘Witch’” (2018)

#### **Wednesday, January 29 – Ancient Roots**

- Richard Kieckhefer, “The Classical Inheritance,” in *Magic in the Middle Ages* (2014)
- Primary Source: Horace, excerpt from *Fifth Epode*
- Primary Source: A Sorcery Trial in the Second Century A.D.

#### **Monday, February 3 - From Magical to Miraculous: Early Christian Attitudes**

- Michael Bailey, “The Rise of Christianity and Early Medieval Europe,” in *Magic and Superstition in Europe: A Concise History from Antiquity to the Present* (2006)
- Primary Source: Caesarius of Arles, Sermon 54
- Primary Source: St. Augustine, excerpts from *City of God*

#### **Wednesday, February 5 – Cultural Exchange in Medieval Magic**

- Charles Burnett, “Arabic Magic: the Impetus for Translating Texts, and their Reception” in *Routledge History of Medieval Magic* (2019)
- Katelyn Mesler, “The Latin Encounter with Hebrew Magic: Problems and Approaches” in *Routledge History of Medieval Magic* (2019)
- Stephen Mitchell, *Witchcraft and Magic in the Nordic Middle Ages* (2011)\*

#### **Monday, February 10 – High Magic, Science, and Religion in the Medieval Court**

- Steven P. Marrone, “Magic and Natural Philosophy” in *The Routledge History of Medieval Magic* (2019)
- Richard Kieckhefer, “The Romance of Magic in Courtly Culture” in *Magic in the Middle Ages* (2014)
- Primary Source: Hugh of St. Victor, *The Didascalicon* VI.15
- Primary Source: Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles*: Sorcery and the World of Nature

#### **Wednesday, February 12 – Heresy and the Condemnation of Magic in the Medieval Period**

- Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*\*
- Sophie Page, excerpts on Demonic Magic
- Primary Source: “The University of Paris: A Condemnation of Magic, 1398”
- Primary Source: Nicholas Eymeric, “Magic and Heresy,” 1376

#### **Monday, February 17 - The Early Modern Context**

- Julian Goodare, “Witchcraft!” in *The European Witch-Hunt* (2011)
- Brian Levack, “The Dynamics of Witch Hunting in Early Modern Europe” in *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* (2015)

Wednesday, February 19 - **Demonologists and Demonology**

- James Sharpe, “The Demonologists” in *The Oxford History of Witchcraft and Magic* (2023)
- Primary Source: Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum*\*
- Primary Source: Henri Boguet, “The Threat of Witchcraft”

Monday, February 24 - **Gender and Witchcraft**

- Tamar Herzog, “Flies, Heretics, and the Gendering of Witchcraft.” *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 5, no. 1 (2010): 51-80.
- Rolf Schulte, *Man as Witch: Male Witches in Central Europe*, Chapters 6 & 7 (2009)
- Primary Source: Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum*\*

Wednesday, February 26 - **The Witches’ Sabbath**

- Martine Ostorero, “The Concept of the Witches’ Sabbath in the Alpine Region (1430-1440): Text and Context” in *Witchcraft Mythologies and Persecutions* (2008)
- Éva Pócs, “The Alternative World of the Witches’ Sabbat” in *The Witchcraft Reader* (2002)
- Primary Source: “The Vauderie of Lyon”
- Primary Source: Hans Frund, “Report on the Witchcraft in Valais”

Monday, March 3 - **Explaining of the Witch Hunts**

- Robin Briggs, “‘Many Reasons Why’: Witchcraft and the Problem of Multiple Explanation”, in *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Studies in Culture and Belief* (1996)
- Pick one of the following:
  - Wolfgang Behringer, “Weather, Hunger and Fear: Origins of the European Witch-hunts in Climate, Society and Mentality,” *German History* 13:1 (January 1995), 1–27,
  - Brian Levack, “State-Building and Witch Hunting in Early Modern Europe” in *The Witchcraft Reader* (2002)
  - Marianne Hester, “Patriarchal Reconstruction and Witch Hunting” in *The Witchcraft Reader* (2002)

Wednesday March 5 – **Review**

Monday, March 10 – **In-Class Midterm**

Wednesday, March 12 – **Library Visit**

Monday, March 17 – **Spring Break**

Wednesday, March 19 – **Spring Break**

Monday, March 24 - **Regional Views: Italy**

- Carlo Ginzburg, *The Night Battles*, Chapters 1 and 3

Wednesday, March 26 - **Regional Views: Spain**

- Lu Ann Homza, “When Witches Litigate: New Sources from Early Modern Navarre” *Journal of Modern History* 91:2 (June 2019): 245-274 -**or-** podcast interview with Dr. Homza (link posted on course site)
- Maria Tausiet, “Healing Virtue: Saludadores versus Witches in Early Modern Spain,” *Medical History Supplement* 29 (2009): 40-63.
- Primary Source: Lu Ann Homza, *The Spanish Inquisition, 1478----1614: An Anthology of Sources* (2006)\*

Monday, March 31 - **Regional Views: Germany and France**

- Lyndal Roper, “Witchcraft and Fantasy in Early Modern Germany” *History Workshop Journal*, 32:1 (AUTUMN 1991): 19–43,
- Alison Rowlands, “Witchcraft and Old Women in Early Modern Germany” *Past and Present* 173:1 (November 2001): 50-89.
- Primary Source: The Interrogatory of 1617

Wednesday, April 2 – **Regional Views: England and Scotland**

- Malcom Gaskill, “Witchcraft in early modern Kent: stereotypes and the background to accusations” in *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Studies in Culture and Belief* (1996)
- Primary Source: “The Trial and Confession of Elizabeth Sawyer” (1621)
- Primary Source: Survey of Scottish Witchcraft Database

Monday, April 7 – **Regional Views: Colonial America**

- Winsome Pinnock, “Reclaiming Tituba -The real story behind Arthur Miller's character,” *The Yale Review* 110: 4 (Winter 2022)
- Elaine G. Breslaw, *Tituba, Reluctant Witch of Salem: Devilish Indians and Puritan Fantasies* (1995)\*
- Primary Source: Excerpts from the Salem trial records.
- Primary Source: Salem Apologies

Wednesday, April 9 – **Memory and the Witch Trials**

- Karen Gardiner, “Witch hunt tourism is lucrative. It also obscures a tragic history” *National Geographic* (October 2020)
- Jill Christiansen and Rachel Christ-Doane, “The Salem Witch Trials Memorial: Finding Humanity in Tragedy” *Folklife* (October 2022)
- Sarah Durn, “Why is Scotland Apologizing Now for Witch Trials 300 Years Ago?: The gender politics of attempting to right a historic wrong” *Atlas Obscura* (March 2022)
- “Witches of Scotland” website – please have a look around this website

Monday, April 14 - **The Decline and Aftermath of the Witch Hunts**

- Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (1971)

- Pick one of the following:
  - Marie Lennerstrand, “Responses to Witchcraft in Late Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Sweden: The Aftermath of the Witch-Hunt in Dalarna” in *Beyond the Witch Trials* (2018)
  - Gábor Klaniczay, “The Decline of Witches and the Rise of Vampires in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Habsburg Monarchy” *Ethnologia Europaea* (1987)

Wednesday, April 16 - **Victorian Witchcraft, Mysticism, and Spiritualism**

- Maureen F. Moran “Light no Smithfield fires”: Some Victorian Attitudes to Witchcraft” *Popular Culture* 33:4 (Spring 2000): 123-151.
- Alex Owen, *The Darkened Room: Women, Power, and Spiritualism in Late Victorian England* (1989)\*

Monday, April 21 - **Magic and the Occult in the early-20<sup>th</sup> Century**

- Owen Davies, *A Supernatural War: Magic, Divination and Faith during the First World War* (2018)\*
- Thomas Waters, “Maleficent Witchcraft in Britain since 1900” *History Workshop Journal* 80:1 (Autumn 2015): 99–122.
- Primary Source: Sir Oliver Lodge, *Raymond* (1916)\*

Wednesday, April 23 - **Magic and the Occult in Post-War Germany**

- Monica Black, “Miracles in the Shadow of the Economic Miracle: The ‘Supernatural 50s’” *Journal of Modern History* 84:4 (December 2012).
- Podcast: Monica Black, “The Ghosts of Nazi Germany” *Smarty Pants Podcast*

Monday, April 28 - **Political “Witches” and “Witch Hunts”**

- Arthur Miller, “Why I Wrote the Crucible” *The New Yorker* (October 1996).
- Monica Black, “How Postwar Germany’s Witchcraft Trials Can Help Us Understand QANON and Other Conspiracy Theories” *Religious Dispatches* (March 2021)

Wednesday, April 30 – **Witchcraft Today**

- Pam Grossman, *Waking the Witch: Reflections on Women, Magic, and Power* (2019)\*
- Choose one or two news articles from list provided on the course site.

Monday, May 5 – **Review**

**Final Exam TBD**