This issue of the Newsletter is devoted mainly to courses on witchcraft and magic.

Witchcraft and Magic in Medieval and Early Modern Europe

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I. Introduction to the course. History 4490/5490 (also WMST 4500), an advanced baccalaureate/master's level course, examines the history of beliefs about witchcraft and magic in Europe. We begin with a survey of the origins of Western credence in witchcraft, including its pagan, biblical, patristic, folkloristic, and Germanic sources. The course covers in greater detail the period from the twelfth century, when the Catholic Church began to see witchcraft and the practice of diabolical magic as growing threats, through the height of the witch-hunting mania in the late sixteenth century, to the development of skepticism about witchcraft's efficacy in the seventeenth century. We also compare European witchcraft beliefs to those of seventeenth-century America and the modern world. Lady Arian Rhod, a local coven leader, will come to class to present her views and beliefs about contemporary witchcraft in the Toledo area. Professor Alfred Cave, an expert on the subject, will give a guest lecture on the history of Native American religion and alleged witchcraft.

Students read a textbook, primary sources and two case studies of sixteenth-century witchcraft. The class will combine lectures and discussions.

II. Books. Students should purchase the following:

Joseph Klaits, Servants of Satan: The Age of the Witch Hunts (text)
III. Requirements. Students write a midterm examination in class on Thursday, October 15th. A paper (4-5 pp., typed and double-spaced) based on Carlo Ginzburg's *Night Battles* and/or Michael Kunze's *High Road to the Stake* is due any time during the semester, but no later than Tuesday, December 1st. A final exam is scheduled for Monday, December 14th.

The approximate weight of each exercise is as follows: midterm 30%, paper 30%, final examination 40%.

IV. Reading Assignments and Lecture/Discussion Schedule. Please complete each week's reading assignment for that week's Tuesday class meeting.

*Week 1:*

Reading: familiarize yourself with this syllabus and the books; begin reading for next week

Aug. 27: Introduction to the course.

*Week 2:*

Reading: Klaits (K), Introduction; Kors and Peters (KP), Introduction and no. 15

Sept. 1: Images of the Witch: Film, Literature and the Popular Imagination; Some Historical Background to the Period

Sept. 3: Explaining the Natural by the Supernatural: Ancient and Anthropological Origins of Magic and Witchcraft, I

*Week 3:*

Reading: K, chap. 1
Sept. 8: Ancient & Anthropological Origins, II; Brief Historiography of Witchcraft

Sept. 10: The Power of the Curse, of the Devil, and of Sin

**Week 4:**

Reading: K, chap 2; KP, nos. 1-6

Sept. 15: Medieval Magic

Sept. 17: The Church's Discovery of Witchcraft: The Twelfth Century

**Week 5:**

Reading: KP, nos. 7-14, 16-17

Sept. 22: Witchcraft, Heresy, and the Theologians of the Thirteenth Century

Sept. 24: Looking for Witches: The Papacy and the Inquisition

**Week 6:**

Reading: K, chap. 4; KP, nos. 18-30, 23

Sept. 29: The "Hammer of the Witches"

Oct. 1: Legal Procedure and Torture; Witchcraft as *crimen exceptum*

**Week 7:**

Reading: K, chaps. 3, 5; begin Ginzburg and complete over the next two week

Oct. 6: Witchcraft and Sexuality

Oct. 8: Learned Magic, Renaissance Humanism and the Occult

**Week 8:**

Reading: review K and KP for exam
Oct. 13: Class Discussion; Review for Midterm Examination

Oct. 15: Midterm examination

Week 9:

Reading: KP, nos. 21-22; begin Kunze, *High Road to the Stake*, complete over next two weeks

Oct. 20: Witchcraft and the Reformation, I

Oct. 22: Witchcraft and the Reformation, II

Week 10:

Reading: K, chap. 6; KP, nos. 24-32

Oct. 27: Witchcraft in the Late Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

Oct. 29: Case Study I: from good witches to bad: the case of the *Benandanti*

Week 11:

Reading: KP, nos. 33, 42

Nov. 3: case study II: the terrible case of the Pappenheimers

Nov. 5: American witchcraft, I: The Salem witch trials

Week 12:

Reading: none

Nov. 10: local witchcraft today: guest speaker: Lady Arian Rhod, Toledo-area coven leader

Nov. 12: no class; work on papers

Week 13:
Reading: K, chap. 7; KP, nos. 35-41, 43-44

Nov. 17: Skepticism and the decline of the witch hunt, I

Nov. 19: Skepticism and decline, II

Week 14:

Reading: review last week's reading, esp. KP, for discussion

Nov. 24: class discussion

Nov. 26: Thanksgiving--no class

Week 15:

Reading: none; complete paper

Dec. 1: vestiges of witchcraft in the 18th and 19th centuries in Europe; images of the witch in art; paper due in class

Dec. 3: American witchcraft, II: accusations of witchcraft among Native Americans: guest speaker: Professor Alfred Cave

Week 16:

Reading: review

Dec. 8: Never again? allegations of Satanic worship in in late 20th-century America, I: Ingram case from Washington State

Dec. 10: Never again?, II: discussion and conclusions

Religion and Magic

Richard Kieckhefer, Northwestern Univ.
This highly selective course (developed for the quarter system) begins with a nod in the direction of anthropological conceptions of religion and magic, then for purposes of comparison turns to aspects of the subject in Asia. More sustained attention is then devoted to the relationship between religion and magic in the West: in Graeco-Roman antiquity, in early Christianity, in Judaism, and late medieval Christendom. Finally, the class focuses on modern ritual magic.

One reason for examining Asian religions before turning to Western traditions is that fewer students bring to the topic preconceived ideas about what constitutes "religion" and how it differs from "magic", and it is thus relatively easy to show the complexity of the relationship. Even in the Atharvaveda one finds formulas similar to those in the other Vedas, and addressed by the same brahmans to the same deities; it is useful to discuss why the Atharvaveda has a distinctive status among the Vedas, and to trace the complicated story of its reception, without falling back on a simplistic distinction between the "magic" of the Atharvaveda and the "religion" of the other Vedas.

Gananath Obeyesekere's "Sorcery, premeditated murder, and the canalization of aggression in Sri Lanka," Ethnography, 14 (1975), 1-23, provides further material for reflection on the complicated relationship between religion and magic: Obeyesekere shows how the religious authorities in the Buddhist, Hindu, and Muslim shrines of Sri Lanka invoke the powers of deities and saints for purposes of sorcery. Apart from challenging any sharp distinction between religion and magic, Obeyesekere gives useful reflection on the moral implications of harmful magic, on the practitioners' expectations of efficacy, and on the criteria used to determine whether sorcery has been efficacious--all of which remain key questions throughout the course.

Further reflection on the connections between religion and magic can be developed from reading of the life of Milarepa, which is usefully seen against the background provided by Ádám Molnár, in Weather-Magic in Inner Asia (Indiana University, Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1994). (One word of caution: after I had lectured on the weather-magic of Milarepa and of other Asian magicians, one afternoon in mid-January, I returned to my office, looked out the window, and discovered that my lecture seemed to have had unexpected efficacy--about five inches worth. For the rest of the term, my students blamed me every time it snowed.)

Lee Siegel's Net of Magic: Wonders and Deceptions in India (University of Chicago Press, 1991) presents magic as a form of playfulness and downright charlatanry. The magician's
illusion does become an analogy for Shiva's working of *maya*, but what the students are likely to take from this book more than anything else is a sense that magicians are mountebanks. However one responds to this perception, it is in any event one that calls for discussion, and Siegel gives an appropriate stimulus. Again the relationship between religion and magic is raised: in their garb and in their patter, modern Indian street magicians adapt the traditional sacred vocabulary of both Hinduism and Islam, depending on their audience.

Among other works on religion and magic in Asia, another book particularly worth citing is Philip A. Kuhn's *Soulstealers: The Chinese Sorcery Scare of 1768* (Harvard University Press, 1990). One might assign this to students or use it for lectures.

Readers of this newsletter are likely to be well familiar with the issues and the literature for study of Western magic. I should mention, however, that Michael D. Swartz's *Scholastic Magic: Ritual and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton University Press, 1996) is especially helpful on the development of a characteristically Jewish form of magic. For this middle part of the course my purpose is first to give further attention to the issues already raised (the complex relationship of religion and magic, the morality of magic, its efficacy), and secondly to trace the historical continuities and discontinuities from late Antiquity through the Middle Ages, and between Graeco-Roman, Jewish, Muslim, and Christian cultures.

At the end of the course we skip all the way forward to twentieth-century magic, which we examine chiefly through T.M. Luhrmann's *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft: Ritual Magic in Contemporary England* (Harvard University Press, 1989). This book gives the practice of magic a special relevance to students, because the practitioners discussed are educated Westerners of the late twentieth century. It reveals not only the beliefs and practices of the magicians but also something of their lives and cultural settings. And it brings further sophistication to the key question why it is that intelligent and educated people believe in magic and its efficacy. Furthermore, one cannot examine the belief systems, ritual practices, and moral views of Luhrmann's subjects without recognizing that for them the magical fellowship is a form of religion. In short, Luhrmann's book brings all the key questions of the course nicely into contemporary focus.

What follows is the syllabus of readings and discussions for the nine-week class, allowing two periods for introduction, conclusion, or break:

*A. Anthropological conceptions of religion and magic*

1. Classical theories of religion and magic.

**B. Religion and magic in Asia**


5. Trials for magic in Asia.


**C. Religion and magic in Graeco-Roman antiquity and in early Christianity**


10. Anglo-Saxon charms and other Germanic texts. Read selections from G. Storms, ed., *Anglo-Saxon Magic* (Nijhoff, 1948): sayings of Oðinn (=Woden) from the *Hávamál* (pp. 2-4); Second Merseburg charm (p. 110); charm against a dwarf (no. 7, pp. 166-67, from the 11th-cent. *Lacnunga* manuscript); field ceremonies (no. 8, pp. 172-77, from a 12th-cent.)
manuscript); nine herbs charm (no. 9, pp. 186-91, from the Lacnunga manuscript); charm against theft (no. 13, pp. 206-07, from an 11th-cent. manuscript); remedies against the Devil and insanity (no. 28, pp. 260-61, from a 10th-cent. leechbook); remedies against witches and elvish tricks (no. 32, pp. 268-69, ibid.); use of the Sator-Arepo formula for aid in childbirth (no. 43, p. 281, in Latin, from an 11th-cent. manuscript).

D. Religion and magic in Judaism


E. Religion and magic in late medieval Christendom


**F. Modern ritual magic**


**Recent work on the history of magic**

The following works have come to the attention of the editors of the *Newsletter*.

**Jewish magic**


**Magic in literature**


**Miscellaneous**


Piomelli, Daniele, and Antonino Pollio, "*In upupa o strige*: a study in Renaissance psychotropic plant ointments," *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences*, 16 (1994), 241-73.


**Norse magic**


**Witchcraft**


Paton, Bernadette, "'To the fire, to the fire! Let us burn a little incense to God': Bernadino, preaching friars and maleficio in late medieval Siena," in Charles Zika, ed., No Gods Except Me: Orthodoxy and Religious Practice in Europe, 1200-1600 (Parkville, Vic.: History Dept., University of Melbourne, 1991), 7-36.


